

CWA/KRE

24 September 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Our Students' Personal Safety and Wellbeing

I am writing to all of the academy's parents and carers regarding our students' personal safety and wellbeing after some concerning incidents occurred last week.

Firstly, it was reported to me on Friday morning that a group of Year 7 female students had been followed home by a man who got on the 95A bus that, after going all the way to Tollesbury, the girls' home village, resulted in him getting off with the girls and continuing to pursue them, including into and out of a local shop. He had no reason to be on the bus, no reason to travel to Tollesbury and is seemingly not from the area. This was fortunately tackled and managed by the girls' parents as well as members of the village, and reported to the police. These same parents then reported it to me and I spent a fair part of the day liaising with them as well as my own Designated Safeguarding Team, the girls themselves and finally, getting on the same bus at the end of the day. This was primarily to reassure both the girls, but also their parents as well as the other students on the bus that we will always endeavor to provide a presence as best we can should anything serious like this arise, and that ultimately, we care greatly about them. However, getting on the bus also allowed me to speak with the same driver, I had ascertained during the day, who was driving the bus when the incident occurred. As a result of all of this, I now have a detailed picture and will come back to this matter at the end of this letter.

Secondly, we also had two road related incidents involving students last week that most fortunately only resulted in minor injuries to both. Now again, after a significant amount of ensuing discussion and investigations, including Mr Brunt, Vice-Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead, and I quickly being at the scene of one of these incidents, it appears that neither of our students were really at fault. However, what both have very much highlighted are the real and increasing dangers of modern day traffic, increasingly congested roads and sadly, an escalation in impatient and aggressive driving. This is especially the case in and around schools at both the start and end of the day, and when literally thousands of young people are starting and ending their school day.

Our own actions will remain the same in that we will continue to conduct the necessary road safety and awareness assemblies (including reminder assemblies over the next few weeks for all year groups), providing a presence in and around the town, liaising with local police about any concerning driving or issues that arise and that we report accordingly, and continually drip-feeding the same messages through Personal Development lessons and form group time. We will also continue to bring in external agencies such as the police, fire service, cyber-technology and social media specialists to reinforce our messages via extra assemblies, separate workshops and whole specialist days. However, your ongoing support continues to be of absolute importance and if you could therefore further reinforce as well as note the following, I would be most appreciative:

- dropping off and picking up your children safely and considerately. This very much includes parking around both campuses but especially along Mill Road and in relation to our Year 7 and 8 campus;
- adhering to the local speed limits at all times;
- reminding your children as to how we expect them to travel to and from the academy whilst in our uniform, especially those who ride bikes or scooters; and
- reporting any dangerous driving to the local police.

I will conclude, as stated above, by coming back to the issue of personal safety and whilst endeavouring to keep a realistic and level-headed approach with this in mind. The bottom line, as I am sure you will agree, is that our town and surrounding areas are good places to live with the majority of people in them being decent, considerate and respectful. However, we must, at all times, be mindful of the fact that there will always be the odd exception to the norm and last week it appears this could have been one of those very rare situations. Nevertheless, through the sensible and sharp actions of those involved, other than some lingering upset, everyone is fine and the girls involved can start the week in a positive manner. Therefore, I want to reassure our parents and carers that whilst we will, as per the road safety points highlighted above, continue to work with your children, our students, to always be aware, take care and try never to

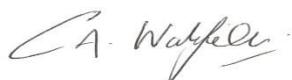
put themselves at risk, could I also take this opportunity to politely ask you to use what arose last week to remind your child/children of the following:

- keep your mind on your surroundings – if you are chatting on your mobile phone or have earphones on, you will not hear trouble or an issue approaching. Young people, we know, are increasingly travelling around with earphones in or headphones on and sadly, this does make them more vulnerable;
- trust your instincts if you think you are being followed. As confidently as you can, cross the road, turning to see who is behind you and head for a busy area where you can tell people what is happening. If necessary, call the police. Never be afraid to let someone know you feel anxious, worried or frightened as the vast majority of people will always look to help you;
- always try and avoid walking alone as often as you can, especially at night or when it is dark;
- avoid danger spots like quiet or badly lit alleyways or isolated car parks. Instead, try to use well lit, busy streets and use the route you know best; and
- the age old message of never accepting a lift from a stranger or someone you do not know very well even if you are wet, tired or running late.

As I have said on many occasions over the past three years, and since becoming Principal of Plume Academy, it is an absolute honour and a privilege to be in such a position, and to head up the town's only secondary education provider. Our students will always matter greatly to me and I believe we have an excellent partnership in ensuring they are looked after and catered for accordingly. However, as I know you will agree, this will always be a very demanding task and for multiple reasons. Events, incidents and situations will invariably happen from time to time, but if we continue to work in collaboration and keep communicating as and when these arise, as was the case on Friday and by a very proactive set of parents, we can act swiftly, decisively and in a proactive manner. This in turn will hopefully then lead to not only a damage limitation situation, but also allow us to use what may have occurred to further reinforce key messages and raise awareness at the same time.

Thank you in advance of your usual level of support, understanding and collaboration.

Yours sincerely



Mr C A Wakefield
Principal