



Horsforth School

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Headteacher: Dr P C Bell

Our Ref: PCB/TRH

Wednesday 15th November 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you today because I would like to update you on what we have done, what we are doing and what we plan to do in light of the tragic events last week. This list is by all means not exhaustive, and naturally our response will evolve, but we feel it important to share our current interventions and our forward planning.

Our thoughts remain with Alfie's family and friends at this difficult time as well as with any young person feeling the effects of the incident. We are aware that this will have a ripple effect and we hope that our planned provision will go some way into supporting a range of students' needs or questions.

I also want to reassure you that students and staff are safe at Horsforth school, safeguarding is of paramount importance to us. It is an area of school life we continually promote and check.

School is calm, safe and orderly. I want to reassure you that this is a unique and tragic occurrence and I am incredibly proud at how our students have reacted and are managing.

Additional support for students and staff safety:

We always have a Leadership Team presence on the gates and in the community. We are increasing this and when I am in school and available I will be around the crossing near to St Margaret's Primary School.

Our Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) programme will be responsive; the usual learning journeys are being altered so that for the next two terms we will address safety, belonging and weapons awareness including the dangers of knives, gangs and conflict. This will be for all year groups and will be age appropriate. Further details about our planned educational experiences will be released in the coming weeks. However, the first whole school PSHCE lesson will focus on talking to each other, listening and supporting each other as peers. It is very much skills based and will support all students.

Our searching procedure is included within our Positive Behaviour Policy (all secondary schools have a procedure for this) and we always search if there is a reasonable suspicion that a student is carrying a banned

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item. We highlighted what our banned items are to all students on our return in September and will revisit this at key points this term and into next term. Please be assured we will search students, including whole classes where necessary.

We are planning, in conjunction with other local schools and the Police, a series of workshops for students where an adult with lived experience will talk to small groups of students about the dangers of knife crime and gang involvement. Not all students will experience this, only a selected few. We have also secured an educational package about knife crime which will be used in our annual Safeguarding Week with all students.

We are marking national Anti-bullying Week in school next week. This will be a chance for us to promote the positive aspects of kindness, mindfulness, respect and cooperation which are key cornerstones and values for us all right now.

How we have supported students so far:

- Whole school assemblies which focussed on safeguarding, mental health and signposting support.
- Immediate support in the first week for students via the Police and Educational Psychologists.
- 1:1 trauma counselling with Northpoint Counsellors.
- Group support sessions around shock, trauma, bereavement and mental health.
- Pastoral support via the Pastoral Behaviour Officers (PBO's) and Safeguarding Team.
- Increased support with our mental health ambassadors.
- Flyers and posters detailing school support as well as external help lines, local agencies and charities which support emotional wellbeing of young people.
- Memorial wall and quiet reflection space in the school hall.
- Drop in sessions for groups or 1:1 at break and lunchtimes.
- Taking flowers down to the memorial bench with some of Alfie's closest friends.
- Delaying Year 11 mock exams by a day for all students and longer for a smaller group of students.
- Bespoke support for students in Year 11 with mock exams.

What our Student Council have requested:

- Forums to talk to other students/staff.
- Talks about knife crime and safety.
- Police talks to highlight the dangers and consequences of possessing a knife.
- Mental health days.
- More staff on the gates and in the community.
- Promotion of strategies for managing stress so that people too afraid to speak out have ways to help

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themselves: relaxation sessions (breathing techniques, mindfulness, reading etc).

How we will further support students in the next 3 weeks:

- Bespoke pastoral support packages for selected students. Police are in everyday this week and next and we are manning a drop-in room at various points of the day should students need to talk.
- We are working with Leeds Mind to offer a 6-week structured mental health and bereavement course to support our most affected young people.
- We have secured additional time for general counselling from Northpoint whose workload will focus on students affected by the incident.
- Horsforth Children's Services are offering a parental course- 'Supporting you and your teenager's emotional wellbeing' course starting on Wednesday 22 November. We have emailed details to all parents.
- We are gathering student voice this week on ideas for charities and further memorial work.
- Supporting affected students with Church visits on Thursday this week and working closely with Rev Nigel Sinclair and other faith leaders.
- Keeping the reflection space open this week.
- Student help drop-ins continue.
- Non-uniform Day to support charity linked to the incident – whole school vote on this to get everybody involved.
- PSHCE Monday 20th November -focussing on universal support for mental health, targeted students offered a tailored session.

Longer term interventions to support our students:

- External visitors to give talk to students about gangs and weapons w/c 4th December 2023
- Police talk about weapons awareness planned for January 2024.
- A planned spiral PSHCE offer to cover aspects of trauma, safety, gangs, weapons and conflict.
- Police support and input into PSHCE lessons from December about knife crime and dangers of knives.
- Ongoing bereavement support and counselling; the school has acquired 6 months support.
- Assemblies around behaviour in the community.
- Bespoke sessions around gang activity for KS4 PSHCE.

How we can further support you as parents:

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On Monday we sent an email around Supporting YOU and YOUR teenager's Emotional Wellbeing Course run by Horsforth Children's Services.

- Good emotional wellbeing is vital for young people to develop the skills and resilience they need. In life, things happen that we can't control and as parents/carers it can be really difficult to know how to support our young people through this type of situation.
- These sessions will provide lots of ideas and tips to benefit both the parent/carer and young person through practical support and therapeutic ideas that you can use within your home environment.
- The programme runs over a period of 3 weeks on Wednesday evenings from 7.30pm to 8.30pm on Zoom, starting 22 November 2023.
- To reserve a place on the programme, please contact Horsforth Children's Services on 01133367724 or email info@horsforthchildrensservices.co.uk.

I know this must have been shocking and worrying. I want you to know that ensuring our students' health, safety and wellbeing is my top priority. We will communicate further over the coming weeks as our provision evolves.

Thank you for your well wishes and offers of support.

Yours faithfully

Dr Bell

Headteacher

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