



Ready - Respectful - Responsible

Parent Briefing 06.10.23

Dear Parent/Carer,

Post Covid schools have had the challenging task of **rebuilding resilience in students** whose self-esteem or mental health has suffered as a result of the various lockdowns, time out of education and general anxieties created by the pandemic. In some very specific cases this has not been easy. However, as John Colet's new Headteacher I have witnessed first hand an **exceptional pastoral system**. I have never worked in a school that has such a professional and dedicated team among them: a full-time highly qualified medical officer, a counselling service, student engagement officers, and a multitude of student support officers and LSAs and these are additional to the excellent pastoral system and care offered by teachers and other non-teaching staff. All of these people work tirelessly to build **resilience and thus character** in our young people. This sometimes requires what I would describe as **'Tough Love'**. Yes, we will frequently ask young people to return to continue with their learning if we feel they need to develop a little more resilience in managing minor ailments.

Very occasionally though we are banjaxed by young people texting or calling home of their own accord; frequently because they may be a little unhappy with our professional decision. This creates unnecessary tension so could I please ask that you actively discourage such contact. It is important that we work in **partnership** to build the right kind of habits in our young people. We will always contact parents/carers directly if we feel the need for a young person to be collected or for a parent to be informed of an issue.

That aside I should point out that I have been impressed by the number of parents/carers who have sent children to school with very minor ailments and encouraged them to manage themselves proactively. All good character building stuff!

This week has seen our usual, extremely busy, open evening with parents/carers beginning to assess relevant secondary placements for their children. It was great to meet so many current and prospective parents and our students gave a fantastic account of themselves in promoting our **positive learning community**.

This week's **safeguarding advice** concerns the on-line game of **'Among Us'** and even if you have not heard of the game some of the advice given is worth considering.

Finally, please be aware that **school finishes this half-term on Thursday 19 October** and **students return on Tuesday 31 October**.

Take care,

Ian Brierly -Headteacher

REMINDERS & NOTICES

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Year 10/11 GCSE Art Trip** - 2 November
- **Year 11 Consultation Evening** - 2 November (4.00-7.30pm)
- **Half-term finishes on Thursday 19 October** and we **return to school on Tuesday 31 October**.

SAFEGUARDING LEADS & INFORMATION



Mr Crawford
Deputy Headteacher
DSL



**Be Safe,
Be Kind**



Mrs Rowland
*Operational Safeguarding Lead
DDSL

County Lines

For parents who are unsure about what County Lines refers to, it can be defined as: *...where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. (National Crime Agency, 2023)*

If parents have any concerns about this practice or, believe that any young person at John Colet School might be at risk, then please do contact one of the members of our Safeguarding Team via safeguarding@johncolet.co.uk

MENTAL HEALTH & PARENT SUPPORT



With the term well underway, our programme of webinars for you has plenty to offer. Explore our diverse series of webinars below, and follow the links to register.

October 4, 2023 - 10:30 BST [The Story of Afro Hair – Book](#)

[Discussion with Kandace Chimbiri and Professor Damien Page](#) Join Kandace Chimbiri and Professor Damien Page as they discuss Kandace's book 'The Story of Afro Hair, 5,000 Years of History, Fashion and Styles', which details the fascinating 5,000-year history of Afro hair. This webinar will be of interest to anyone wishing to learn more about Black history and how to celebrate children's individuality and identity.

November 14, 2023 - 19:00 GMT [Intercultural Couple Relationships with Dr Reenee Singh](#)

Intercultural, interracial and interfaith couples are on the rise all over the world. In this webinar, we'll look at what the latest research tells us about intercultural relationships, the discussion around them, and a few practical tools and techniques which both teachers and intercultural parents will be able to adopt.

November 21, 2023 - 19:30 GMT [Understanding Girls with Dr Tara Porter](#)

Clinical psychologist and author Dr Tara Porter explores why girls are struggling with their mental health so much at present and the potential underlying causes. In our webinar, she will discuss factors which may contribute to girls' suffering, and provide parents with ideas for supporting their daughters.

December 5, 2023 - 19:30 GMT [An Insight into Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\) with](#)

[Kate King](#) Difficulty in processing what we hear can have a significant impact on learning, daily living and social interaction. APD can be hard to identify, sharing traits with both ASD and ADHD. In this webinar, Kate King explains what parents and teachers might observe and provides practical strategies to support learners.

December 7, 2023 - 19:00 GMT [Mistakes and Mattering with Dr Kathy Weston](#)

Join Dr Kathy Weston as she talks about the importance of normalising mistakes in family life to reduce academic anxiety, and allow children an optimal chance of doing well in school. She looks at current research in this area and the practical ideas it offers to parents.

WENDOVER SKATEPARK - LOCAL PROJECT

Please support this very worthwhile project:

- The project has an Instagram account "Wendover Skate Park" and a Facebook page.
- You can find out more about the project on the Crowdfunding page - Wendover Skatepark - a Community crowdfunding project in Aylesbury by Mark Standen (crowdfunder.co.uk)

SAFEGUARDING ADVICE FOR PARENTS

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many games which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

AMONG US

A multiplayer 'social deduction' game set in outer space, Among Us enjoyed a surge in popularity in 2020, and has since maintained a dedicated fan-base (globally, around 60 million regular players each month) thanks to its unique nature, simple premise and ease of access across numerous platforms. The game's on-screen action revolves around danger, disguise and deception – and there are certain parallels to be drawn with some of the real-life risks that parents and carers of young Among Us players need to be aware of.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SENSITIVE PREMISE

In Among Us, up to three players are secretly assigned to be alien imposters, tasked with murdering their colleagues while the survivors try to unmask them. While the concept's not far removed from traditional games like Wink Murder or TV shows such as The Traitors, some parents may feel uncomfortable about their child playing a video game in which deception and killing are prioritised.

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

The on-screen death of characters may be fundamental to the gameplay of Among Us, but the majority of the animations depicting this are deliberately cartoonish and only appear very briefly. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the game has a PEGI age rating of 7 – meaning that certain elements (however heavily stylised they may be) could still upset some younger players.

CHAT BETWEEN PLAYERS

With up to 15 people participating in each game online, a large part of Among Us' appeal is speculating with fellow players who the imposters might be and making accusations. This dialogue through the in-game text chat can occasionally become heated – and could, of course, involve your child being put into contact with people (including adults) who they don't know in real life.

GOING OFF PLATFORM

While Among Us provides basic ways to communicate, many gamers prefer to use external services such as Discord: a popular app which offers voice and video chat functions. These undeniably make cooperation easier, but also create a potential route for children to hear inappropriate language – or for strangers to message them privately in an environment which isn't regulated by the game itself.

IN-GAME PURCHASES

Among Us is free to download on mobile devices, and costs less than £5 to obtain on console and PC. A related longer-term pitfall, though, is that the game also includes options to pay for upgrades such as removing ads on the mobile version or adding cosmetic touches to characters (such as different costumes). It's certainly possible that a child could spend a significant sum without realising it.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CONSIDER SOFTER ALTERNATIVES

Although Among Us is hugely popular with young gamers, it's possible that some children might find the murder themes unsettling. If so, plenty of similar social deduction games are available (in both digital and traditional board game formats) which downplay the potentially gristlier elements: some centre around undercover spies, for instance, and there's even a Marvel superhero-themed variant.

CHAT ABOUT CHATTING

You might feel it's prudent to talk to your child about the risks associated with voice chat while gaming, explaining in particular that strangers online aren't always who they claim to be. Keeping the conversation relaxed will reinforce your child's confidence that they can always come to you with any online concerns – not just about Among Us, but any potential future issues as well.

DISCUSS DISCORD

In general, Discord is an excellent app for keeping online communities together because of its use of dedicated individual servers, which allow comprehensive control over who can join – and who can't. Once you're familiar with the platform, you could set up a secure server for your child and their friends to communicate during games of Among Us, with no access for people they don't know.

AMONG US, AMONG FRIENDS

When your child and their friends get together, they can enjoy a private game of Among Us by choosing a 'local' lobby – that is, only people connected to the same WiFi (your home network, for example) can enter. This prevents any random online users – who may be total strangers – from joining and removes the need for voice chat, as the players are all physically in the same location.

STOP SURPRISE SPENDING

If you're concerned about the possibility of your child racking up an unexpected bill on Among Us' microtransactions, you could consider using a prepaid card with a set limit. Likewise, you could specify in the game's options that adult authorisation is required for every purchase – or you could make sure that no payment methods are enabled on the device that your child plays the game on.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent who understands the value of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including iGCN and TechRadar.



[@natonlinesafety](https://twitter.com/natonlinesafety)

[/NationalOnlineSafety](https://www.facebook.com/NationalOnlineSafety)

[@nationalonlinesafety](https://www.instagram.com/nationalonlinesafety)

[@national_online_safety](https://www.tiktok.com/@national_online_safety)

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 04.10.2023

UNIFORM

- **Shoes** - Please check that they will conform - there are diagrams on the website to help.
- **Piercings** - the rule is for a small, single, plain stud in the earlobe of each ear. Getting additional piercings that are not healed in time for the start of term means spending time in isolation until the item can be removed.
- Optional plain black v-neck jumper (worn with, not instead of the blazer). **A number of black sweatshirts have crept in. These are not acceptable.**
- **Plain outdoor coat**, no large logos. So no hoodies, zipped or otherwise.
- **No visible body art**, please ensure holiday tattoos are removed.
- Clear nail varnish may be worn but **fingernails must be short and nail extensions of any kind are not permitted.**
- **False eyelashes are not permitted.**
- **Jewellery** (except a watch and earrings as stated above) is not permitted. In the case of jewellery and other accessories, the student will be asked to remove the item, which will be confiscated. A parent/carer will then need to come into school to collect the item in line with school policy.

The full uniform policy can be viewed in the policies section of the school website.

LOCAL UPDATES / EVENTS

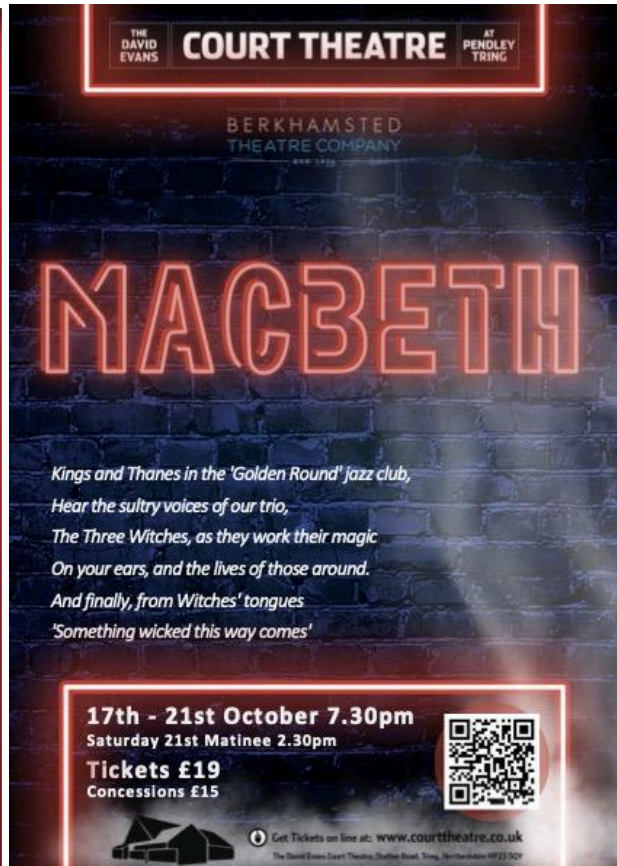


Save the Date

Wendover Christmas Celebration Event
Saturday 2nd December, 4 - 7pm
on Manor Waste

Ellesborough Silver Band
at the December Local Produce Market
Saturday 16th December, 10am - 2pm
on Manor Waste

Carols Around the Tree
with Chinnor Silver Band
Friday 22nd December, 6.30pm - 7.30pm
on Manor Waste



THE DAVID EVANS COURT THEATRE AT PENDLEY TRING


BERKHAMSTED THEATRE COMPANY

MACBETH

*Kings and Thanes in the 'Golden Round' jazz club,
Hear the sultry voices of our trio,
The Three Witches, as they work their magic
On your ears, and the lives of those around.
And finally, from Witches' tongues
'Something wicked this way comes'*

17th - 21st October 7.30pm
Saturday 21st Matinee 2.30pm

Tickets £19
Concessions £15



Get Tickets on line at: www.courttheatre.co.uk

The David Evans Court Theatre, Station Road, Tring, Berkhamsted HP23 3DZ