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Dear Parents/Carers

Safeguarding Update

As we approach the end of the first half term of the academic year, I am writing to give you an update on safeguarding developments. I appreciate that there is a lot of content in this letter, but I would be grateful if you could find the time to read it and discuss it with your child. You may wish to bookmark this letter for reference in future should the need arise.

The Importance of Attendance

The table below shows our actual outcomes from this summer and clearly demonstrates the importance of the highest possible attendance. **Students that attend school 98% of the time or more are likely to achieve a grade 6 in every GCSE subject compared to an average grade of a 2 in every subject if a student attends less than 70% of the time.**

Attendance %	Average GCSE Grade in 2026 at King Edward's
<70	Grade 2
<80	Grade 3
<90	Grade 4.5
<94	Grade 4.7
<98	Grade 5.5
98-100	Grade 6.5

This offers strong evidence that supports if attendance improves so does the chance of improving grades at GCSE, so every day counts!

Regular attendance is also the first step in ensuring the safety of our children during school hours. Your child's first attendance statement for the year will be sent in the first week back after half term.

Contextual Safety

A contextual issue that we must remain watchful for is **county lines**. Our location and demographic means that our town is at risk from organised criminal gangs from elsewhere to deal drugs and engage in criminal activity. Students and staff are aware of this potential issue and are able to recognise the signs of county lines. Further information about County Lines can be found at this link.

We have good relationships with Northumbria Police and liaise with them regularly to share intelligence and ensure the safety of our students. In a recent meeting, the police shared concerning information about young people from our catchment area who are mixing with unsavoury characters which is putting them at risk of **child sexual exploitation** and **child criminal exploitation**. This risk is heightened if your child is travelling into Newcastle and hanging around "Hippy Green" at Eldon Square or the Baltic on the Quayside. I have to say that the information shared was very disturbing.

We also liaise with the community police team and security staff at Sanderson Arcade to try and reduce **anti - social behaviour**. Whilst we know that the vast majority of students display impeccable behaviour in the community, some instances of anti-social behaviour persist, especially at the bus station. To be clear, people should only frequent the bus station if they are catching a bus. We would appreciate parental support in discussing these dangers and issues with your children. In particular, **it is important that parents know where their children are and who they are with at all times.** Parents should be vigilant to any changes in behaviour, including sudden possession of expensive clothes, mobile phones, jewellery or unexplained quantities of money.

Internet Safety

It is clear that parents perceive internet safety as one of the biggest threats to their child's safety. I would encourage parents to use the information on this website to openly discuss online behaviour. From time to time, we do get asked by parents to share training opportunities. This course on extremism may be of use to some parents.

We plan to send parents a monthly Internet Safety newsletter this year. Please find here the newsletter for October 2026.

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I would also **urge you to carry out regular checks of your children's online activity, including their mobile phones.** If you pay the bill, you have every right to do this.

Mental Health support
Many of our students have recently received assemblies delivered by Kooth in which they talked about Soluna, their new mental health platform for young people. Further details can be found at this link including a parents / carers guide.

Road Safety
Generally our students are very sensible in employing good road safety awareness, but we must not become complacent. In particular, on Cottingwood Lane students must walk on the pavement and not on the road. I would appreciate it if parents could spend some time reiterating to your children the importance of staying safe by the roads.

I would like to thank my colleagues in school who continue to provide a warm welcome at the gates every morning from 8.40am, ensuring a calm and orderly start to the day. **To support staff at the school, may I remind parents that students should be dropped off in the town centre. Only students with medical needs should be driven up Cottingwood Lane.**

E scooters and Electric Bikes
Ahead of Christmas, Northumbria Police have asked all schools to share their message to parents to help make informed decisions about the presents that you buy for your children. As we are sure you are aware from the news and possibly personal experience, these illegally-ridden vehicles cause not just nuisance to our communities but also pose a huge risk to the safety of the public including that of our young people. Further details from Northumbria Police can be found here.

Bonfire Night
With Bonfire Night approaching, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service is encouraging parents and carers to talk to their children about the dangers of deliberate fire setting. Deliberate fires can put people, property, and the environment at risk, while placing additional pressure on emergency services.

Please take a moment to read this Deliberate Fire Setting Leaflet, which highlights the risks and consequences of fire setting and provides details of support services available.
We also encourage families to celebrate Bonfire Night safely by attending organised displays where possible and ensuring any fireworks used at home are handled responsibly and under adult supervision.

Operation Encompass
We are proud to be an Operation Encompass school. This is a partnership between school and police that ensures that intelligence is shared by the police with schools if they have been called to an incident of **domestic abuse**. This enables us to provide support for young people who are affected by this issue. Further information about the Local Authority's approach to domestic abuse can be found here. Please take the time to look through these resources.

Drugs Awareness
We would like to share important information from the government's drug awareness campaign, which aims to alert young people to the serious risks associated with:

- Ketamine
- Synthetic opioids in counterfeit medicines
- Adulterated THC vapes

This campaign is part of a national effort to keep young people safe and informed about the dangers of drug use, particularly substances that are increasingly being misused by teenagers.

Key Risks Highlighted:

Ketamine: Can cause irreparable damage to the bladder, even with short-term use.
Counterfeit medicines: May contain deadly synthetic opioids and are often purchased online without any regulation.
THC vapes: Frequently contain dangerous synthetic cannabinoids (such as Spice), not actual THC, and can have unpredictable and harmful effects.

Resources for Parents:
Ketamine Effects: Effects of Ketamine | FRANK
Synthetic Cannabinoids: Synthetic cannabinoids | Effects and Risks | FRANK

Campaign Videos:
Ketamine (1 min 24 sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example-ketamine
Synthetic Opioids (50 sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example-opioids

We believe that by working together, we can help our young people make informed, safe choices. Please take a moment to review these materials and speak with your child about the risks.

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Vaping

The selling of illegal vapes continues to be an issue in the community and we are hugely concerned at the number of young people who use them. These are unregulated and as such, can contain unsafe quantities of chemicals. For example, recent analysis of the "mazza" vapes has revealed traces of rat poison, anti-freeze and crystal meth.

We are also aware that there are "dabs" in the wider community. These are vapes that claim to contain cannabis. These are dangerous and can spark unusual reactions in people, possibly because they can contain other psychoactive substances.

The effects of vaping for teenagers include:

- Addiction
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety and depression
- Attention and concentration difficulties
- Exposure to harmful chemicals which can affect long term health
- Impact on brain development
- Changes in behaviour
- Other long term health problems

This resource may also prove useful to you.

Sources of Support

We know that being a teenager, as well as being the parent of a teenager is not always easy. The resources below signpost other avenues of support, as we know that sometimes students and parents try to resolve issues without involving the school.

External support for students
External support for parents

Within school we have lots of support available for students, ranging from their Form Tutor, the Year Office and our Counselling service.

In addition, all schools are in a pre-paid area for emotional health resources. This means parents can access a range of **online support to better understand children's emotional health, brain development and wellbeing**. These resources can be found here.

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We would also recommend the support available from Northumberland Family Hubs which can be found at this link.

The Red Button

Our "Tell us" email address continues to be a well used tool by students when they feel the need to tell us something. For example, being concerned about a friend or if they are feeling unhappy. In order to make it easier for students to use this facility, we installed a red button on all of the pages on our website. It is marked Tell Us - Support for students. If a student clicks on this button, it will instruct them how to contact our Tell Us email.

We hope you find the information in this update useful as we continue to work together to ensure all students within our care feel safe and secure.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Clark
Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead