

Dear Parent/Carer

Potential unsafe incident

I am sorry to be contacting you over the weekend. However, I need your help to address a potential safeguarding issue. There is a Tik Tok trend that is spreading quickly across schools, which you may have seen in the news. This encourages students to protest about the way that some schools are managing uniform and toilets. Sadly, these protests have disrupted learning and in many cases quickly escalated into riots which have been dangerous. We are aware that this has already happened in schools local to us and also across the country. There has been speculation that this might spread to other schools in the days ahead, including Wildern.

Planned unsafe behaviours at Wildern

Sadly, in such situations, some students see an opportunity to deliberately cause trouble for the sake of it. We have been contacted by some students and parents this weekend to make us aware that there is a group of students currently organising a protest for Monday via social media. We are very grateful for this information. I am therefore asking all parents and carers to check their child's social media accounts today to help us identify who is doing this and whether other dangerous behaviour is being planned. Please send any information you think might be useful to: safeguarding@wildern.org. We can then follow up with students, parents and where appropriate, the police.

Safely expressing views at school

It might be that your child feels strongly about one of the issues on Tik Tok, like toilets or uniform. It would be a shame if their interest in wanting to express their views on this got caught up in and overshadowed by planned anti-social behaviour.

We always provide ways to collect student views on these issues, and these are available to all students everyday. Any student who would like to raise an issue or concern about any topic can use the student 'MyWildern' google form to contact the Leadership team. Students regularly have opportunities to share their views through Education for Life, surveys and weekly meetings with the senior staff. As a result of all of these, we have made significant changes to our anti-bullying policy, changed how the lunch queue systems work and changed duties to improve staff supervision of toilets.

We are therefore asking you to advise your child not to participate in protest groups. We believe these will become unsafe and as previously mentioned, have many platforms for students to share their views with us in a safe and constructive way.

Please can you find some time today to have a conversation with your child about these developments.

We are keen for students to get these same messages from home and school:

1. If you or your child has concerns or ideas about any issue, we are keen to hear these.
2. We provide opportunities for students to discuss and tell us their views on any issues that they feel need to be addressed. They can do this by speaking directly to a member of staff or submitting a [MyWildern Suggestion form](#) via the Wellbeing Hub.
3. We do act on student feedback when appropriate (see above)
4. Please ask your child not to join large groups of students and run or shout in groups as this can very quickly become dangerous; people can get hurt and it can be very upsetting for our more vulnerable students.
5. Please report to us any information about planned unsafe behaviours, which we will sanction.
6. Please tell your child that you support the school approach here and expect them to follow it.

The rest of this letter clarifies school policies on the two issues highlighted by TikTok to help you in any conversation related to them.

Protests about Toilets

In the protest schools, students are banned from going to the toilet during lesson time. Wildern students can use the toilets during lesson time, as well as break times, though we do use our discretion to occasionally stop a student from going immediately after break or immediately before a lesson ends if it isn't urgent. We issue toilet passes to all students with a known, evidenced medical condition. In some of the protest schools, students having their period are given a red card to show their teacher to allow them to leave lessons to go to

the toilets. Clearly, this does not happen at Wildern but free sanitary products are available in the First Aid room and student services.

At times we do need to take toilets out of action, lock them, or restrict numbers accessing them for a variety of reasons including maintenance, cleaning, managing student behaviour, eg a student displaying challenging behaviour in a toilet, a group of students arranging to meet in the toilets. However, we will always ensure that if one set of toilets is closed, another will be open. We have introduced staff supervision of toilets at break times in response to student feedback; students report they feel happier and safer using them now.

There has been some speculation about the school's use of CCTV cameras in toilets. We have CCTV cameras focusing solely on the sink areas to help us ensure safe and responsible behaviour and to help us identify who was in the area at the time any damage or anti-social behaviour occurred. They are not directed at urinals or cubicles, do not capture students at urinals or in cubicles and as such they respect students' privacy when using the toilet.

Protests about Uniform

In the protest schools, students have complained about strictly enforced uniform rules, in particular ensuring that the hem of students' skirts touches the knees and having skirt lengths measured. We do not do either of these things at Wildern, though we do challenge students whose skirts stand out as being short.

We have high standards of uniform which we uphold because we know that when students wear the jewellery they want, the designer jackets and branded hoodies/trainers they want then the division between rich and poor, between fashionable and unfashionable is on display for everyone. This can bring peer pressure, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy and bullying. We do adapt our uniform for student comfort. We allow students to wear coats in cold classrooms and to come to school in PE kit when the weather is hot. Our uniform policy which you can read on our website also allows for expressions of cultural diversity and religious faith; it is gender neutral.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Ways for Students to Protest

We want to encourage students to form opinions, to feel confident in expressing these and to feel they can bring about change on issues they care about. We want them to be able to highlight things that are not working for them. Students often express their views and ideas by emailing or meeting with me or other staff. We also ask for student views by discussing things in tutor time and encouraging them to feed these ideas to make school improvements via the [MyWildern Suggestion form](#) or by speaking to their tutor.

However, students need to understand that refusal and disruption are actually less likely to achieve change: staff have to investigate and deal with this behaviour and do not then have the time to focus on positive changes.

We would prefer to spend our time engaging with students and listening to their views but if they decide to behave badly we will need to spend our time sanctioning this behaviour instead. Everyone loses out when behaviour is poor.

In protest schools last week, student behaviour became dangerous with setting off fire alarms or extinguishers and missing class. If this was to happen at Wildern then sanctions would be issued (as you would expect) and these would include Year 11 missing our Prom, Year 7-10 missing out on our Paultons Park trip as well as other sanctions being issued.

Our mission is to always work with our students, and you, as their parents/carers but this needs to be positively about improving our school rather than just following an online trend. This week we will therefore be encouraging all students to use the [MyWildern Suggestion](#) form or speak to staff to share any ideas they have.

Your help and support with this matter is greatly appreciated

With best wishes,

Mrs Oakley