

20th July 2023

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Dear Parent/Carer

As I say goodbye to the students today, I will then be focusing on preparation of the site for receiving 800+ students and many new staff in September. There is much work to do and I am looking forward to working with the Site/Operations Team over the next six weeks to ensure we achieve the goals we have set out. This also feels like an opportune moment to thank the Activate Learning Education Trust for the immense moral, practical and financial support given to Theale Green School over the last five years. Unlike other Trusts, the staff who are employed centrally are constantly in our schools; there is no separate office “the Trust” operates out of on a limb, and that is what makes it very special. This summer in particular, the Trust is directing a significant amount of funding to the continued improvements of Theale Green School to meet the needs of our current and future students as we grow. The improvements underway for this summer include:

- The new Fitness Zone (gym) supported by an additional grant we bid for from the DfE and will involve opening the gym to our community in evenings and at weekends as the year progresses
- Removal of the old and small gym and refurbishment into a performance space
- Refurbishment of both student and staff showers in the sports hall
- Refurbishment and redecoration of the student changing rooms
- Resurfacing of the main outdoor courts
- Redecoration of the Brooks Centre, including new carpets, locker facilities, new doors to home the new Maths Hub
- New main gate, intercom and access control system to improve security
- Completion of the LED lighting replacement project across the whole school
- Refurbishment of two science labs
- New catering equipment (ovens) for the main canteen
- Additional CCTV in several areas of the site
- Installation of a new cricket strip, supported by a generous donation from the husband and adult son of an ex-student (1970s) who passed away last year. We will dedicate the opening of the strip to the family after the holiday.

In addition to this, there are many other smaller jobs and fixes that will directly impact students on their return, with brightened up classrooms, posters and displays all being worked on.

We have considered the responses to our consultation around CCTV in communal areas of the toilets.

As a reminder, our toilet culture has improved greatly. Since the Easter holiday the continued and persistent work throughout the summer has paid off in change of general toilet culture. We have also seen a very significant reduction in the issue of vaping. We have:

- Staff in hi-viz jackets outside toilets at break and lunchtimes
- Refurbished and repaired toilets (and redecoration)
- A Year 10 group of students and School Council who have worked on a student led messaging campaign with Mrs Badarello
- Sanitary items in the girls' toilets
- Regular and better cleaning checks
- Publicising the very real dangers of disposable vapes (and their chemical contents) to students
- Addressed the dangers of vaping through our RSHE programme
- Worked with the Local Authority to lead a West Berkshire wide schools' letter to all parents re: health risks of vaping and requesting parental support

Much of the time at break and lunches the toilets are empty, and this has been helped by the opening of the new toilets in the canteen this year as well. Students report back to us that they feel much safer and happier.

The results of our consultation for CCTV in communal areas are below:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Students (115)	48%	20%	25%	4%	3%
Parents (132)	73%	14%	5%	4%	4%
58% of respondents were for male students, 41% for female students and 1% preferred not to say 62% = Year 7/8 30% = Year 9/10 8% = Year 11/12					

Typical comments from parents involved recognising safety and preventative measures as the priority and included were these two comments that summed up most others :

- I believe as a school you will always have safeguarding as your priority and therefore installing CCTV in certain areas will work alongside and reinforce your other ways of keeping children safe and to prevent the occurrence of poor behaviour
- The safeguarding set out is comprehensive and once this is in place I know that the school will have to follow procedures at all times and the safeguarding governors are there to ensure this is the case, so parents and pupils should be reassured that there will be no privacy issues. I hope that the cameras will stop bad behaviour but also may encourage pupils to be cleaner so it's a better environment in more than one way. I would hope that this would encourage my children not to often wait until they get home from school.

The small number of comments from those who disagreed tended to be around invasion of privacy, a misunderstanding of the proposal, or creation of the urban myths we have set out to avoid. Equally, one or two comments were made around preferring human beings to cameras. It would not be appropriate for staff to be on duty in the toilets, for both the staff and the students.

Typical comments from students included:

- I would like CCTV around. It would make me feel safer knowing if anything unkind was to happen to me, it could be watched and teachers can help me.
- So he can go to the toilet in peace - without the worry that someone is going to open the doors or be silly
- Was concerned until I explained safeguarding elements so maybe more communication on that required

There were certainly a handful of student comments similar to the last one above, and this will be explained in detail to students. We really appreciate the time that parents have taken to explain this detail to children / students, and your continued support will be valued.

We will continue to remind students that it all new build schools, the washing / communal areas are generally now large open spaces covered by general CCTV, with the toilet cubicle itself being the only private area. Equally, any public toilets such as at motorway service stations or railway stations use CCTV in the communal areas, as do an increasing number of schools as a preventative measure.

As a reminder to you, I have included below the proposal set out in the consultation, which approved by both our Safeguarding Governor and at Trust level:

As safeguarding is the priority, moving forward we are going to ensure that all corridors outside and communal areas within our toilets have CCTV coverage through either reconnecting or installing new cameras. To ensure that students fully understand and feel confident that there is no intrusion into their personal space, we have worked with the CCTV company to ensure that :

- *Under no circumstance would any camera have any viewing capability into either cubicles or towards urinals*
- *all cameras in toilets would be linked to a dedicated CCTV recorder that is NOT viewable over the network and would be located in a locked area in the Executive Office.*
- *as an additional restriction, viewing of the CCTV cameras will only be possible whilst logged into the recorder, with auto log out enabled.*
- *only the Head of School and the senior Designated Safeguarding Lead would have a log on to this recorder, and if viewing was required, they would be required to view as a pair, not alone. They would only be able to see the communal areas and the reason for viewing (i.e. a specific incident) would need to be recorded alongside the double sign in record*
- *if either the Head of School or the Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead was unavailable, another named member of the safeguarding team would act as the second person.*
- *this log in record would be available for scrutiny by the Safeguarding Governor*

I have personally worked with the CCTV company and inspected each toilet to ensure that we have a system which is a preventative measure towards behaviours which cause poor and unpleasant cultures in communal toilet areas, whilst protecting the privacy of any individual student using the toilet. All students who wish to simply use the toilets for their designed purpose and feel safe and secure as they walk in, will notice very little difference. The CCTV will only be viewed, as described in the bullet points above, should the need arise through poor behaviours or an incident occurring.

By sharing this detailed information with you, I am aiming to prevent any "urban myths" or stories being created about use of CCTV in toilets. In summary, children's privacy is entirely protected, but given the sensitive nature of the environment, considerable layers of protection have been added on top to ensure that there can be no doubt.



As we move forward, when students return in September, they will notice significant changes around the anti-bullying ladder and also new and different ways of reporting concerns, including an anonymous text facility. We are confident that all of these measures will support a positive culture of safeguarding as the school continues to grow and thrive, and the staff are looking forward to sharing this, and all of the exciting changes ahead with students on their return.

I will send a brief letter of sign off at the end of the summer holiday, but in the meantime, I wish you all a safe and happy summer ahead.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Halliday
Executive Principal