



# NEWSLETTER

## Dear Parents/Carers

I am delighted to share with you this week's newsletter. Again this is a real celebration of our pupils' and their successes. It was an absolute joy to attend LIPA and watching our pupils perform on the stage at such a prestigious venue. They were all amazing and I was very proud Principal. What an amazing opportunity for them all, massive thanks to Miss Brown and Mrs Austin for making this happen.

Obviously we want all pupils in school every day but if your child is so unwell they can't come in, please follow our procedures. Currently the team are having to make numerous calls to establish where pupils are, and ring the School to give an explanation of this absence. I would ask for your support in this matter.

Amanda Ryan, Executive Principal

## Last Weeks PE Star Performers



Robyn	9 OM
Charlotte	9 EB
Rafael	8 SKe
Amelia	8 CR
Rosie-Jayne	7 RS
Jake	7 JMu
Samuel	8 SKe
Gianna	8 SKe
Rhys	7 RS
Konstantinos	11 LB
Aasef	9 TH
Max	9 EB
Emma	8 RLC
Emmanuel	8 SO
Vivian	7 HP
Andrei	9 OM
Frankie	7 CL
Thomas	7 CSY
Tish	9 EB
Tamim	10 The
Gabriella	9 KBH
Peggy	7 CL
James	8 HT
Charlotte	8 RLC
Thomas	7 JMe
Dylan	11 GMW
Nell	7 JMu
Divine	9 OM
Praise	10 The
Marina	7 HP
Remi	10 DH
Lily	9 OM
Nevaeh	7 JMu
Sofia	9 EB
Toby	7 RS
Luna	8 SA
Lithuli	7 HP



Round of applause for LIPA- Fest!

The Performing Arts Department kicked the new year off with an exciting trip to the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts. This is one of the country's most prestigious higher education settings that offers training in many aspects of the arts. We are lucky to be one of LIPA's partnership schools, which means we work with them on a regular basis delivering Performing Arts programmes in our school. Last term a cohort of our Year 8 & 9 pupils took part in "LIPA-fest", a project which saw over 30 of our pupils have some additional training in dance, drama, music performance and backstage. Pupils took part in six weekly workshops to enhance their skills and develop their own performances based on a theme of their choice. Our musicians created their own band and worked on a performance of "A Million Dreams", whilst our actors devised a musical theatre based piece called "Strictly Musicals". Our dancers developed some wonderful choreography to a song from the musical "Come From Away", whilst our technician team spent the project creating lighting & set designs, creating playbill posters and props. For the finale of the project our pupils were invited to perform at the Paul McCartney auditorium, sharing their work on a professional stage in a real theatre and boy, did they do us proud! The talent, energy and professionalism our pupils brought to the stage simply blew us away, they gained a standing ovation from us all! It was also a delight to see our technicians behind the desks operating the equipment like pro's! Another fantastic project for the performing arts department and another example of our pupils doing team Hillside proud, well done all!

LIPA have offered our pupils the opportunity to join their Saturday Arts Club at their campus. This is for any pupils age 13-16 who are interested in the backstage element of theatre (costume / lighting / props etc). If you would like some further information see Miss Brown.

January 2026		February 2026	
26th January	Year 11 English and Maths Progress Evening – Invited parents	5th February	Year 9 Progress Evening - 4:15pm - 6:45pm
		13th February	End of Term — Last Day of School
		23rd February	INSET Day (School Closed to Pupils)
		24th February	Start of Term — Back to School at 8.30am



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about DISCORD

AGE RATING

13+

Servers and channels marked as 'NSFW' require users to be 18 or older to join.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Discord is a free app which allows users to communicate in real time via text, video or voice chat. Available on desktop and mobile devices, it was originally designed to help gamers cooperate – but has evolved into a more general networking platform for a range of online communities, discussing topics like TV series, music, Web3 and more. Discord is organised around closed groups, referred to as 'servers'. To join a server, users must be invited or provided with a unique link. It's a space for users to interact with friends, meet others with shared interests and collaborate privately online – but it's also a place where young people can be exposed to risks if the right precautions aren't taken.

## CYBERBULLYING

Discord's easy accessibility and connectivity, unfortunately, makes it an ideal place for cyberbullying to occur – especially as audio and video streams disappear once they've ended, meaning that bullying could take place without leaving any evidence. Closed groups can also be created, giving young people the opportunity to exclude their peers or send cruel messages without adult oversight.

## DIFFICULT TO MODERATE

Like many private communication apps, Discord's real-time messaging can be difficult to control. The system enables content moderation through each individual server – so different groups can set their own rules for what's acceptable, and some groups may not monitor for unsuitable content. Anything that happens in an audio or video stream is also virtually untraceable once the stream has concluded.

## INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Discord mainly hosts private groups, making it easier for unsuitable or explicit content to be shared on channels. Pornography, racism and inappropriate language can be found in some groups. Server owners are required to add an age-restriction gate to channels where 18+ content is being shared – but this solution isn't foolproof, as the platform doesn't always verify users' ages when they sign up.

## ACCESSIBLE TO PREDATORS

On many chat platforms, users can lie about their age or true identity – and Discord is no exception. Predators have attempted to abuse the platform by using it to contact and communicate with underage users – by initially chatting with a child on an age-appropriate channel, for example. While Discord has improved its safety settings, some users will still try to bypass them for malicious reasons.

## CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Discord does have strict Terms of Service and Community Guidelines to protect its users – but, sadly, not everyone adheres to them. Criminal activity including grooming, hate speech, harassment, exploitative content, doxing and extremist or violent material have all been found on Discord servers over the last two years. In 2020, Discord received almost 27,000 reports of illegal activity on the platform.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### REVIEW SAFETY SETTINGS

Discord has a series of safety settings, enabling users to choose who can direct message them or send them friend requests. Your child's experience on Discord will be much safer if the app's privacy and safety settings are configured to only allow messages or friend requests from server members. This will minimise the chances of potential predators from outside the group contacting them.

### MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITY

It's wise to regularly review your child's activity on Discord. This can include checking their safety settings to ensure they're correctly enabled, talking about which servers they've joined and reviewing some of their friends and direct messages. Ask if anything has made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Things can change quickly online, so plan routine check-ins and follow up frequently.

### EXPLAIN AGE FILTERING

While Discord requires users to be at least 13 to sign up, many servers geared towards older users are flagged as NSFW (not safe for work), which indicates they probably contain material that's inappropriate for children. It can be easy to click through settings without properly reviewing them, so ensure your child understands why age filtering is important and that it's there to protect them.

### DISCUSS GOOD ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

The anonymity offered by the internet often leads people to communicate more openly online and behave differently than they would at school or home. It's crucial to bear in mind, though, that every internet user is still a real person. Talk to your child about the severe and lasting consequences that cyberbullying or exchanging inappropriate material online can have in the real world.

### SCREEN OUT EXPLICIT CONTENT

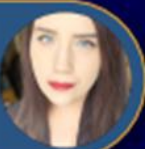
In the privacy and safety settings, Discord users are offered the ability to filter direct messages for inappropriate content: a setting that should be enabled if your child uses the platform. Discord automatically tries to flag images that are explicit, but the setting must be manually enabled for text. If a young user is sent explicit content in a direct message, Discord will scan and (if necessary) delete it.

### HAVE CANDID CONVERSATIONS

It can sometimes be awkward to discuss topics like grooming, pornography, racism or explicit content with your child – but it's important to ensure they're aware of the harms these things can pose. Talking openly about these subjects is a great way to help your child feel more comfortable about coming to you if they experience an unwanted encounter on Discord (or anywhere else online).

## Meet Our Expert

Coral Cripps is a Canadian-born, London-based tech journalist at gaw3.com: a website specialising in all things Web3, gaming and XR (extended reality). With a focus on brands and culture, she researches and writes about the ways that our current innovations – including the metaverse and Web3 – are impacting people, places and things.



National  
Online  
Safety

#WakeUpWednesday



# Safeguarding, Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

## Holocaust Memorial Day

This week's assemblies have been focused on the extremely important theme of Holocaust Memorial Day. This event is marked annually on the 27<sup>th</sup> January as we commemorate the 81<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945.

Pupils were reminded that this is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution and in the genocides that have followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

In assemblies we discussed the theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, Bridging Generations, and the reminder that responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with survivors and it lives on through their children, grandchildren and through all of us. We must engage actively with the past and listen to the lessons so that we may build a bridge between memory and action, between history and hope for the future.

As part of this theme, Hillside welcomes the son of a Holocaust survivor into school on Holocaust Memorial Day to speak to year 9 pupils, who are currently studying the Holocaust in their history lessons. Mr Canter spoke to pupils last year and we are honoured that his mother's memories will be shared with pupils each year to ensure that the bridge between generations at Hillside has certainly been built.

We are also commemorating HMD at Hillside with 15 of our year 9 pupils taking part in a community event at the Plaza Cinema in Waterloo, where they will watch "The Island on Bird Street" which tells the story of a Jewish teenage boy who tries to survive on his own in a Polish ghetto after his family are taken away.

We also called for all our pupils to take part in the national 'Light the Darkness' campaign by perhaps lighting a candle and placing it safely in a window at 8pm on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, in memory of the victims and to stand against prejudice and hatred today.

There is still so much to do for everyone and HMD is an ideal opportunity to start this process as we honour the experiences of those people who suffered and challenge ourselves to work for a safer, better future.

## Reflection Questions

- Why is it important that younger generations learn about events that happened before they were born?
- Survivors are getting older. Who do you think will be responsible for remembering and sharing their stories in the future?
- What could happen if events like the Holocaust are forgotten or ignored?
- What part of the HMD assembly made you think the most, and why?

Mr Rayson, AAVP, Subject Leader History.

## **AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS**

Monday – Boys year 7&8 Football/ Netball Girls and boys

Tuesday – Boys all years Rugby / Netball matches

Wednesday – Boys & Girls all years Basketball

Thursday – Everton in the Community girls Football Y7/8/9

Friday – Boys and Girls all years Badminton

**Congratulations**  
**Winner of Year 11, Period**  
**6 Attendance raffle is**  
**Christopher M 11 LG**