



# The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College

14<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Schools are communities which work most effectively when there is a common understanding of the institution's expectations. At AVS our expectations are set out for all students, parents and carers in 'The Avon Valley Way' and this document has been shared with students and parents alike. We have always taken pride in ensuring that students work towards being respectful and kind to each other, 'The Avon Valley Way' is unique to our school and it is what sets us apart. I am grateful that most parents/carers support us with our basic expectations around uniform and appearance, our detention system and the way that our staff work with students to ensure discipline in our classrooms and corridors. These things **must** be done consistently for a school with 1100 students to function effectively; there is no place for dissent and discussion over these basics in our code of conduct. One child cannot be treated differently from the next when the expectations are clearly laid out and have been shared with students and parents regularly over time. If a child arrives at school breaking our rules on uniform, nose piercings, hair colour, and nails it is only to be expected that we will raise concerns and issue sanctions. If a child arrives late to school a sanction will be issued as we are working to ensure that students understand that in the adult world punctuality is important.

It is of course the case that in a busy school, where young people not only learn about academic subjects but also learn to work together as part of a community, there are sometimes friendship issues and 'falling outs'. We know that adults do not always behave well towards each other; it is unsurprising that young people make mistakes as they develop their understanding of appropriate behaviour. As a school we work hard to resolve this type of conflict and have had a great deal of success with using a restorative approach over the years. Our vision is to develop our students to be young adults who show empathy and care to others, have the ability to listen and understand another person's point of view and know how to speak appropriately to both adults and their peers; this is our 'Avon Valley Way'.


Despite all of the work that we do, there are still occasions where tempers get frayed and students behave towards each other and to staff in an unacceptable manner. If this happens your child will then come home and tell you 'their side of the story.' I ask that you remember that, whilst theirs is a perfectly valid perspective, other people will have different and potentially equally valid viewpoints, and the school will be working hard to resolve the issue. After all, it is very rare that there aren't two sides to a story.


Sadly, over the last few months many staff have received hostile phone calls during the school day and challenging emails, often sent in the evening, which cause distress to our hard working colleagues. When you communicate with us on any issue, please ensure that you remain respectful to the staff that are trying to help. They may well have evidence that you are not aware of and will be working hard to get an appropriate outcome to any given situation. In short, as role models for our children it is important that all the adults involved behave appropriately when dealing with these difficult issues. In particular, speaking disrespectfully to staff in front of your child undermines the staff and makes it more difficult for them to work effectively in the classroom and around the building.

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The school has systems in place to work with you if you are unhappy about a situation or an outcome, and asking to speak to the Headteacher immediately is not usually the most appropriate response. Avon Valley, like all secondary schools, has pastoral and academic leads who should always be the first point of contact when an issue arises as they are the colleagues who will be most informed about any given situation. In nearly all cases these colleagues are able to resolve issues to everyone's satisfaction and it is only after these conversations have taken place that it would be appropriate to speak to the Headteacher's PA if you have an ongoing concern. It should go without saying that arriving on site without an appointment and demanding to speak to any member of staff is inappropriate. Staff will only be able to answer questions if they have had an appropriate opportunity to prepare for meetings, and therefore appointments should be arranged before entering the school building.

I ask you to bear these points in mind and would like to thank you in advance for continuing to support the school and our staff. The world is a difficult place for all of us at the moment, and as I often say to the students, 'We are strongest when we work together.'

Yours sincerely,



Alison Davies  
Headteacher