

ALEC REED ACADEMY

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Principal and CEO: Phil Cosby - BSc (Hons), MA



5th October 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

We have already been back at school for a month and it is pleasing to report that the children have settled back into the rhythm and routines of school. I wish to use this opportunity to bring you up to speed with some changes that have been introduced recently and also to share with you some flyers and adverts that have come from the local organisations. I am sharing this information with you as it is important to be as prepared as possible for dealing with the issues that children face as they enter their teenage years.

Attendance

We are seeing an improvement in our rates of attendance which is pleasing, I thank you for your efforts in getting your child to school as regularly as possible. **We must aim for at least 96% attendance rate**, if not there is clear evidence that a child's success in education will be severely affected. I remind you that I am unable to approve any requests for a leave of absence for holiday or to go and see elderly relatives. These journeys must take place at the weekend or in the school holidays.

Safer Schools Officer

Last week **PC Lance McKenzie, our newly designated Safer Schools Officer** took up post. He will be in school at least one day a week and be able to provide support and guidance on all areas of the law. He will also provide a familiar face around the community. Some of you will have seen him walking around the local area last Friday after school. I remind you that you should **call 101 if you want to report a minor crime or incident**, such as:

- a stolen item
- property damage
- a civil dispute
- if you suspect drug use or dealing in your neighbourhood
- to share information about possible criminal activity in your area
- antisocial behaviour
- non-urgent enquiries

Or call 999 if:

- a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed
- someone is in immediate danger or harm
- property is in danger of being damaged
- a serious disruption to the public is likely

'The Collins PiXL Award for Outstanding Progress' National Award Winners 2014



Vaping

In recent years vaping amongst young people has increased significantly despite it being **illegal for a child under 18 to be sold a vape**. The liquid within a vape often come in a variety of 'flavours' that can appeal to children and the long term health concerns related to their use is still unknown. Most vapes contain the addictive chemical **nicotine** and can also be laced with **THC**.

Children who vape could be at risk of:

- Becoming addicted to nicotine
- Experiencing side effects such as throat and mouth irritation, headache, coughing and feeling sick
- Experiencing other, as-yet unknown health effects
- Being exploited by people who provide them with vapes
- As well as health risks, there are significant environmental risks caused by the manufacture and discarding of vapes.

Teenagers hear that it's not as bad for your health as smoking cigarettes and many think there is no harm. The packaging is enticing and does little to convey the risks which leaves them to think that they are inhaling a pleasant, flavoured gas, this is not the true. We discuss the dangers associated with vaping with our pupils through our PSHCE programme. It is though very important that parents remain alert for the signs that their child may be vaping and seek support from the school if they feel that this is the case.

To ensure vaping does not take place in the academy we have installed vape detectors that will signal when a child is vaping. When these sensors are triggered, we will use CCTV to identify the pupils involved. The vape will be confiscated by academy staff and destroyed. The Academy will then communicate with the child's parents/carers regarding the incident and a sanction set. Sanctions will escalate over time should the child reoffend and they may be excluded from the academy should they continue to disregard school policy

Mobile phone bans in schools

I expect many of you have read the recent report that the Conservative Government are planning to push through measures to ban the use of mobile phones in school. This is because mobile phones are the main source of cyber bullying and can be a noticeable distraction not only in school but also at home during bedtime.

I remind you that Alec Reed Academy, like most schools, already has clear policies in place to restrict mobile phone use during the school day. Phones should be turned off and hidden from view. If a child uses their mobile phone without the explicit agreement of a member of staff then it will be confiscated and will only be returned on collection by a parent or carer at the end of the school day.

Book Fair

The Book Fair will be arriving in school next week, with hundreds of new children's books to browse and buy. Come and join us!

- WHEN: Tuesday 10th October 2023 to Friday 13th October 2023
- TIME: After school each day until 4.00 pm and the Year 10 & 11 "The Year Ahead" Evening.
- WHERE: Main School Building – Library

What Parents and Carers Need to Know about WIZZ

Following on from my comments about mobile phones there are concerns surrounding a new App that is aimed at children but has explicit content. I have included a flyer that has been produced by the National Online Safety Agency that provides more details so that you are aware of the risks.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, news and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WIZZ

AGE RESTRICTION 12+
12+ App Store
Teen Google Playstore

Wizz is a networking app which allows users to connect and chat with other people around the world. Its principle is similar to a dating platform: users have a profile with up to three photos, along with optional interests and hobbies tags. This allows other like-minded people to be recommended in searches. If a user likes what they see on someone's profile, they can initiate conversation through the instant message feature, otherwise they swipe on. The app does use age verification technology when an account is created and groups users by age.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

OVER-SHARING

Immediately after setting up an account, users start receiving friend requests (mainly from the opposite gender). For many young people, this will be exciting and a boost to their confidence. As young people tend to be more trusting online and may believe what others tell them, however, this can lull them into dropping their guard and revealing personal information to strangers.

CATFISHING AND PREDATORS

Wizz uses Yoti, a digital ID system, to verify users' ages. The AI only detects approximate age, though – so an older person who looks younger could be grouped with teens (or vice versa). Also, profile pics on Wizz don't have to match the face of the person who did the initial age verification: it would be fairly easy to create a fake account using another person's photos with a made-up name and age.

EXPLICIT CONTENT

During our research, conversations on Wizz very quickly turned sexual. Users frequently suggested taking it to Snapchat (Snapchat's disappearing image feature can make it conducive to sharing explicit selfies), connecting on other social media, swapping nude or semi-nude pictures, or having sexual chats. These users created an impression of the platform being sleazy and unsafe for young people.

INTIMATE IMAGES

It's not unheard of for young people to be coaxed into sending suggestive images of themselves over apps of this kind. Given that Wizz connects users with strangers, who may not be honest about their real intentions, a teenager might conceivably be persuaded to share sexually suggestive selfies by someone who they believed they had a trusting relationship with.

NO PARENTAL CONTROLS

The app claims to provide a secure and inclusive environment, but our researcher couldn't find any parental controls or safety features in evidence. If you report another user for inappropriate behaviour, you are offered the option to block them – but there's no indication as to whether the block has actually been successful and there was no follow-up contact from the developers.

SECRETS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Wizz sent our researcher occasional "mystery" friend requests from a blurred-out profile. To discover the sender's identity, users can either watch a video (usually an ad for a game or app) or take out a monthly subscription. Cynics might suggest this could be a way to exploit young people's curiosity into making them pay for the app, and that the "secret admirers" are bots rather than real people.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TALK IT OUT

If your child has downloaded Wizz, talk to them about why they like it and who've chatted with. Have they shared any personal details with this person or connected with them on other social media platforms? Refresh your child's memory of the various risks that can arise from engaging with strangers online and get them to consider using a similar app with more robust safety features.

BE SUPPORTIVE

When connecting with strangers on apps like Wizz, seemingly innocent chats can quickly progress to become sexually explicit and lead to nudes being sent. Make sure your child knows to come to you if they're uncomfortable about anything they've been sent or been asked to send. If they've already shared something that they now regret, reassure them that you'll support them no matter what.

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Young people are far more inclined to see the good in others; they often overlook the fact that scammers set up fake accounts on apps like this with the intention of getting money or personal data. Remind them that not everyone online is who they claim to be, how easy it is for someone to create a bogus profile, and why it's vital to think twice about sharing anything on networking apps.

KEEP THINGS TRANSPARENT

It might feel awkward, but regular chats about your child's online life can be beneficial. If they seem suddenly anxious or secretive around their phone or tablet, they may have something they need to get off their chest. You could also consider not allowing digital devices in their bedroom, especially overnight – that's when a lot of the riskier conversations on apps like Wizz tend to take place.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Duffell is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented online learning and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government concerning internet use and online behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

Source: https://www.google.com/news/press/what-is-wizz-app?hl=en_00694811 | <https://www.netdoctor.co.uk/online-safety-advice/parents-information/what-is-wizz-app/>


@notonlinesafety /NationalOnlineSafety @nationalonlinesafety @national_online_safety

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 26.04.2023

Local Events and Activities

For those of you that may be interested I have attached some flyers about out of school activities that will be available in the local area,

Volunteer Police Cadets



- * **Subscription**
Junior Cadets £60 per year (£5 per month)
Senior Cadets £120 per year (£10 per month)
- * **Uniform**
Free after 10 week probation period. Cadets will need to provide black leather shoes or boots.
- * **Meetings @ Villiers High School, Southall**
Juniors (age 10—13) Monday 5—6 pm
Seniors (age 13—18) Monday 6—8.30 pm

Duke of Edinburgh Award

At police cadets you will be offered the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, the worlds leading Youth Achievement Award. The cadet program lends itself to completing all aspects of the award, Volunteering, Physical, Skill and Expedition sections. Many of our leaders are also trained to deliver Duke of Edinburgh Expeditions.

Achieving a Duke of Edinburgh's Award opens doors to education and employment opportunities for any young person. Volunteer, get fit, learn, go on expeditions, it's one amazing adventure after another that you'll never forget.


Contact Us

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**Volunteer
Police
Cadets**



EALING



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

HOLIDAY CAMPS 23-27 OCTOBER



EARLY BIRD OFFER
£30* BOOK BY 13 OCTOBER
*EXCLUDES LEARN LIKE A TRAILFINDER

TRAILFINDERS TOTAL FOOTBALL
Do you fancy yourself as the next Hoopland or Mboopie? Come and join our Trailfinders Total Football Camps!

TRAIN LIKE A TRAILFINDER
The Rugby Players of the future can get involved with our rugby specific camps, taking part in a variety of rugby activities, developing their physical and mental wellbeing.

MULTI-SPORTS
Enjoy taking part in a large variety of sports ranging from hockey and cricket, to netball, football and of course rugby.

NON-STOP NETBALL
Drive across the court and catch the netball bug with non-stop netball. Whether you're a shooter, defender or centre court player, our camp will let you explore your skills and jump ahead of the competition. We will use a mix of adapted games and practices to make sure your child has a unique and enjoyable experience.

£40 PER CHILD PER DAY • 10AM - 3PM

LEARN LIKE A TRAILFINDER
Our Learn Like A Trailfinder camp is a wonderful opportunity for you to get a feel for the exciting programmes we have planned. Children in both Year 5 and Year 6 will both benefit from this valuable and entertaining experience. We will provide an exciting look into KS3 English and maths content, as well as securing topics essential for 11+ exams to come.

£60 PER CHILD PER DAY • 9AM - 3PM

Half-term HOLIDAY CAMPS 23-27 OCTOBER



	MON 23 OCT	TUE 23 OCT	WED 23 OCT	THU 23 OCT	FRI 23 OCT
RUGBY U12	X				
MULTI SPORT U11	X			X	X
RUGBY U13-U16		X			
FOOTBALL U11		X			
RUGBY GIRLS ONLY			X		
FOOTBALL GIRLS ONLY			X		
FOOTBALL U12-U16				X	
NETBALL U12-U16					X

£40 PER CHILD PER DAY 10AM - 3PM

EARLY BIRD OFFER
£30* BOOK BY 13 OCTOBER
*EXCLUDES LEARN LIKE A TRAILFINDER

	MON 23 OCT	TUE 23 OCT	WED 23 OCT	THU 23 OCT	FRI 23 OCT
LEARN LIKE A TRAILFINDER	X	X	X	X	X

£60 PER CHILD PER DAY 9AM - 3PM

Email: community@etprm.com
TRAILFINDERS SPORTS CLUB

As always do make contact through enquiries@alecreedacademy.co.uk should you require any further information regarding what I have included in this letter.

Kind regards

Phil Cosby
Principal & CEO