



Queen Mary's Grammar School

A message from the Headmaster, January 2023

First word

I write to you at the end of an exceptionally busy month, which has seen the Year 13 mocks, Year 11 academic reviews and the fantastic Burns night, hosted by the QMA (see below). There have been lots of trips, including some to Farchynys, and the Mandarin department have been celebrating lunar new year with their Saturday learning experiences. The School's [Twitter](#) account has full coverage of the co-curricular activities this term, including lots of sporting headlines. We also published the QM Observer as a summary of the autumn term and this can be read [here](#). We look forward in February to the soloist music concert on 9th February and the production by the Queen's Players drama group on 15th February.

We also look forward, in February, to the Mental Health Week initiatives and I have included a full list later in this document, including lots of opportunities for parents to get involved. The parental webinars are excellent and are provided by charities, often free of charge. You can donate through ParentMail to the charities that are supporting us during Mental Health Week. Please get in touch at your earliest convenience if you think that their child will feel vulnerable at any of the workshops.

National teacher strikes

Please refer to the [letter](#) sent on Wednesday 25th January, with regards to the upcoming teacher strikes and the impact on student programmes. The first one of these takes place on Wednesday 1st February and most students will have a day of inline learning via MS Teams.

Queen Mary's Association

The QMA hosted a fabulous Burns night ball on Saturday 28th January, with over 200 people in attendance. The pictures can be seen on the QMA's [Twitter account](#). Thank you to everyone who was involved in planning the event and to those who attended and bought raffle tickets. We are still totalling up the final amount that was raised, but we hope to match the £5000 raised by the Taste of the World event to pass the £10000 mark for the year. All proceeds will be going towards the School's Future Sports campaign. Raffle prizes will also be drawn this week and winners contacted directly.

Our final event of the year will be a summer arts and music festival, taking place on Saturday 8th July. It will include lots of student performances and there will be some great food and refreshment. Watch this space for details.

Each event has a committee to run it and we have a separate group who manage the running of the bar. We also have a separate group to support Farchynys and are looking to have a maintenance weekend there in the new year. If you are interested in supporting the work of the QMA, please contact Prveen Kataria-Raulia (alumni officer) at: alumni@qmg.walsall.sch.uk Also, please contact us if you can provide a good quality raffle prize for any of the events. I have also included a summary of the progress made on Easy Fundraising at the end of this email. This is a simple and effective way of supporting the school through your online shopping.

Music concert (Mr Vause)

We are holding a Soloists' Concert on Thursday 9th February School Hall at 7.30pm. Tickets are available from [Ticket Source](#), priced at £3.50 (also available on the door)

National Online Safety Centre

The School are now signed up to the National Online Safety Centre. Mr Lally recently [wrote to parents](#) about how you can create an account. We will be sending out regular updates on specific E-safety matters. We will be providing monthly E-safety updates. This month, we focus on an app called Hi Pal and the parental guide can be found on page 7.

QMGS Mental Health Week 2023

6th-13th February



Throughout the week:

- All Lunchtime Talks (open to Y11-13 only) will take place in the Lecture Theatre, 1.20-1.50pm.
- Sixth-formers on SPS may sign up to attend any talks.
- Art lessons: All year 7, 8 and 9 pupils will be completing a Zentangle activity that introduces pupils to the use of doodling for Art therapy.

Form Time: Form Tutors and Group Tutors to be provided with a selection of materials from Place2Be, or may choose to take their forms on a 'wellbeing walk' around the QMGS field. Some forms will have sessions specially created and delivered by members of the Y12 Change Your Mind team.

Monday 6th February

- **KS3 Assembly:** Bella Dhariwal and Rhea Baley, Mercian Trust Occupational Therapists - Interview with the Headmaster
- **Y8 (Lecture Theatre):** Suicide awareness (Bella Dhariwal and Rhea Baley)
- **Y11 (Lecture Theatre):** Exam stress (Bella Dhariwal and Rhea Baley)
- **Y7 (H4):** Sport and mental health (Mr Ryley) - precise schedule to be confirmed
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** *Finding yourself through your late teens and twenties* (Priya Kanda, ex-QMGS) - A first-hand account of navigating your way through early adulthood, with a focus on identity, gender and mental health challenges
- **7-8pm (Zoom) for parents and staff:** Teen Mental Health (Julie Turner, Charlie Waller Trust)
 - Join Zoom Meeting
 - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83402721627>
 - Meeting ID: 834 0272 1627
 - Passcode: 917799

Tuesday 7th February (Safer Internet Day)

- **KS4 Assembly:** Chris Hemmings
- **Y12 (Lecture Theatre):** Men's mental health and masculinity (Chris Hemmings)
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** Honour-based abuse and forced marriage (Surwat Sohail, Roshni Birmingham)

Wednesday 8th February

- **Y8 & 9 (Lecture Theatre):** Mental health issues, spotting the signs and how to help a friend (Sarah Ashworth, Charlie Waller Trust)
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** *Positive mental attitude and perspective* (Mr Mitchell) - How to take the positives from a bad situation and put things into perspective
- **7-8pm (Zoom) for parents and staff:** The Teen Brain (Debbie Spens, Charlie Waller Trust)
 - Join Zoom Meeting
 - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89724813243>
 - Meeting ID: 897 2481 3243
 - Passcode: 866090

Thursday 9th February

- **KS5 Assembly:** Andrew Bernard (Bernie) - interview with the Headmaster
- **Y10 (Lecture Theatre):** Andrew Bernard (Bernie), domestic violence and healthy masculinity speaker and campaigner
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** *Living with loss after a tragedy* (Mr Collins)

Friday 10th February

- **KS5 (Lecture Theatre):** Living Independently & My Money Personality (Louise LeVell, The Money Charity)
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** *My mental health journey* (Mr Farnell)

Monday 13th February

- **Y9 (Virtual workshops in timetabled classrooms):** Hope Virgo, eating disorder campaigner
- **Y8 & Y11 (Lecture Theatre):** Harmful substances (Asha Fowells, DSM Foundation)
- **Lunchtime talk (Lecture Theatre):** *It ran in my family until it ran into me: addressing generational trauma* (Ms Morgan)
- **7-8.30pm (Zoom) for parents and staff:** Harmful Substances (Asha Fowells & Fiona Spargo-Mabbs, DSM Foundation)
 - Please click the link below to register for the event:
 - https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hoFKmnDLS6KjwQk5ASsXUQ

Wednesday 15th February

- **6-7pm (Zoom) for parents and staff:** Hope Virgo, eating disorder campaigner
 - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564636445?pwd=bWdLODcydW8xN1QrMHdIQkZ2T21UQT09>
 - Meeting ID: 865 6463 6445
 - Passcode: 495984

Mental health and wellbeing

The School continues to support staff and students with their wellbeing through the usual communication channels. Any member of the school community can raise concerns via the wellbeing email address well-being@qmgswalsall.sch.uk or by using the QR code below.

This account is monitored by the SEMH team and is checked regularly:

- Mr Collins (Assistant Head and DSL)
- Mr Farnell (Safeguarding and Welfare Officer)
- Ms Burgess (SEMH mentor)
- Mrs Mohan (6th Form Operations Manager)



Cost of living support (Mrs Youngman)

We are very aware of the current economic challenges and want to support our families as much as possible. Mrs Youngman sets out two initiatives below and parents can view other resources both on our [website](#) and through [Walsall council](#).

QMGs Breakfast Club (Mrs Hill)

The breakfast Club, in partnership with the National Schools Breakfast Programme, offers free bagels and spreads every morning from 8am until 8.30am in the Canteen - all pupils welcome! Click on the [link](#) for more information on the National Schools Breakfast Programme, weekend breakfast ideas and quizzes

Pre-loved Uniform Store (Mrs Hill)

"Thank you to parents and alumni alike who have generously donated uniform and sports kit to our Pre-loved Uniform Store. This is always very much appreciated. We have a healthy stock of pre-loved items, so please do contact Mrs Hill at d.hill@qmgsmerciantrust.org.uk if any items are required."

Food hampers (Mrs Hill)

Thanks to Balbir Seimar and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Branch and thanks also to Adil and Aayan Parkar from the Masjid Al Falaah Mosque who kindly donate food hampers to support our families and the community. Please contact Mrs Hill at d.hill@qmgsmerciantrust.org.uk if your family would benefit from a food hamper.

Snow arrangements

In the event of school closure due to adverse weather, notifications will be sent by school email and will appear on Twitter. Once Teams is operational in the new year, students should be set work via Teams for the lessons they miss, but there is no expectation for live lessons.

Summer exam updates

OFQUAL have updated their guidance to support students in 2023 Summer exams, which can be found via this [link](#).

Catering

Please follow this [link](#) for the latest catering updates. Full details of the School's catering offer can be found the [website](#). I have included an infographic below of the theme days coming up in 2023.

AWESOME THEME DAYS COMING UP THIS SPRING

| JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| ASIA JAN 31ST - FEB 2ND Street Vibes | CHINESE NEW YEAR 1ST FEB | WORLD BOOK DAY 2ND MARCH |
| VEGANUARY 9TH - 20TH JAN | Valentine's! 6TH - 10TH FEB | AFRICA 7TH - 9TH MARCH Street Vibes |
| | pancake Day 21ST FEB | EASTER Specials 20TH - 31ST MARCH |

Homework club

Homework club is running again this term, on a Monday-Thursday. More information can be found on the School's [website](#).

SIMS Parentapp

The majority of school communication, including Reports, is sent by email and Parent App so it is crucial that you keep your contact details updated. Please check your account and ensure you can access it. If you have any access issues please email parentapp@gmgs.walsall.sch.uk for assistance. Please send any updates of parental contact details to absences@gmgs.walsall.sch.uk

Dates for your diary

The full school calendar can be found the [School website](#), but I have included some key dates in February below:

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| Thu 2 Feb | Year 12 futures evening |
| 6-10 Feb | Mental health week |
| Thu 9 Feb | Music concert |
| 10-12 Feb | CCF Antarctic training |
| Mon 13 Feb | Y9 Vaccination (DTP/MenACWY) |
| Wed 15 Feb | Performance of the Queen's Players |
| Thu 16 Feb | Year 9 parents' evening |
| Fri 17 Feb | Finish for half term at 3.40pm |
| Mon 27 Feb | Spring term 2 begins at 8.45am |
| Thu 2 Mar | Year 12 parents' evening |

Absences for appointments and religious observance

May I remind parents/carers, as per the [Attendance Policy](#), the below process for absences relating to appointments during the school day:

- Medical appointments should be arranged outside of school time wherever possible
- The school must be notified a minimum of 3 days in advance of any medical appointment that have been made. Without this prior notification and proof of the appointment, the absence will be marked as unauthorised
- This notification should be sent to absences@qmg.s.walsall.sch.uk with a copy of the appointment notification
- If you are attending the appointment from school you are required to collect your child from Reception and sign them out using the Exeat Book, you will need to sign them back in on their return
- If the appointment is before school you are required to accompany your child back into school and sign the Exeat Book
- Parents are not allowed to drive onto the school site, please park off site legally and with consideration for local residents
- Parents need to ensure that their child is aware of what time he/she is being collected. The student will be responsible for making their way to Reception so that they are ready for collection when you arrive to sign them out.
- If you require some absence for the purpose of religious observance, please complete and return the form which is available on the school website via this [link](#)

Traffic and parking around the School

I recently wrote to parents with regards to traffic around the school site. This letter can be found [here](#). Please continue to work with us in making the school environment a safer place. In particular, please consider the following:

- Not undertaking dangerous manoeuvres (such as U-turns or overtaking) on Sutton Road or surrounding streets
- Not parking inconsiderably near to resident driveways
- Not using access roads or resident only parking areas
- Dropping the students further away from school
- Encouraging the student to use public transport
- Walking or cycling; a helmet must be worn when cycling and students should make sure they are fully visible (through lights and clothing) in the winter months
- A white line has now been installed at the entrance to the flats on the corner of Princes Avenue and Sutton Road. The white line should NOT be crossed under any circumstances

Parents driving onsite

A reminder that the general rule is that parents should not drive onto site unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been pre-arranged.

Nitrous oxide advice from Walsall police

Please see some guidance on pages 8 and 9 from Walsall police, with regards to the dangers young people in the area are facing from nitrous oxide abuse.

Final word

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to seeing you at a school event soon.

Mr Langton



We have currently raised £4,864.18, from 276 supporters. The top 4 supporters have raised £1303.35 between them!

One supporter has raised a magnificent £521.09 thus far! Just imagine what we could raise if every household signed up, and used, Easyfundraising. It would help us to provide even more opportunities and facilities for our young people. Please support this initiative which does not cost you anything as it is the retailers who donate on your behalf based upon the amount that you spend with them.

We need your help to raise much needed funds!

- easyfundraising has over 4,400 shops and sites which will donate to us at no extra cost to yourself, including lots of big name retailers like John Lewis, Argos, Uswitch, eBay, M&S, Just Eat, Now TV, Domino's Pizza and Audible.
- Donations are applied on everyday brands and shopping outlets such as Amazon (Up to 1.5%), TK Max (1%), George at Asda (5%), Selfridges (8%), M&S (Up to 3%), Argos (3%), Groupon (Up to 8%)
- There are big donations on travel bookings. A small selection is below but there are many more:
 - Expedia (Up to 5%)
 - Trainline 2.5%
 - Travelodge 2%
 - Haven Holidays 2.5%
 - Booking.Com 4%
 - Crystal Ski Holidays 0.5%
 - TUI 2%
 - First Choice 1.5%
- All you have to do is sign up to support us using the link below and the next time you shop online go through the easyfundraising website or App and we'll receive a free donation.
- We really need all the help we can get at the moment and any funds we raise will make a big difference to us!
- You can find our easyfundraising page at this [link](#)

Thank you

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

HIPAL

AGE RESTRICTION
12+

(with reduced functionality for under-12s)

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

HIPal is a trending social media app which turns phones into walkie-talkies, allowing people to have voice conversations with friends or strangers. There are two account options: one for users aged under 12 and one for those aged 12 or above. The former has fewer features and limits interaction with strangers, enabling use of the walkie-talkie feature or photo sharing with friends and family only. The 12+ accounts offer more options, including adding strangers as friends, sharing photos and videos publicly, sending private messages and holding voice chats with strangers as well as friends.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

HIPal's under-12 accounts don't allow direct connections with strangers (although children seeking more friends can share their 'Friend Code' on other platforms), but for older users, chatting with strangers seems to be the app's main appeal. The 'Public Square' shows new online users (hitting 'refresh' replaces those with another nine), and clicking on someone's profile starts a conversation.

SEXTING AND SUGGESTIVE PICS

Almost immediately after our expert downloaded the app, strangers began to message privately – asking for provocative images or sharing explicit photos of themselves. Likewise, in the 'Explore' feed, many of the pictures and videos are innocent, but some are far more explicit. There is always the risk of other users secretly saving a revealing photo and re-sharing it elsewhere.

NEED FOR VALIDATION

Some users – particularly girls – post photos on apps of this type hoping for positive reactions and comments to boost their self-esteem. Suggestive images tend to attract more flattering feedback, encouraging the user to post more frequently and with more explicit content. Conversely, receiving unkind comments about their picture can impact a young user's confidence and sense of self-worth.

NO AGE GATES OR MODERATION

Although users are given an initial choice of the under- or over-12 profile, there is no verification method to confirm someone's age. It is quite clear that the 'older' option offers a more complete experience on the app, but there seems to be no content moderation in place. Likewise, there is a reporting button for users to make a complaint but these reports do not appear to be followed up.

INTRUSIVE FEATURES

HIPal's walkie-talkie gimmick is no different from a normal phone call and seems rarely used; although it allows conversations to still be heard while a phone is locked, which could have awkward results. HIPal also offers 'boom' messages; unmissable large-text notifications which are highly distracting and briefly take over the phone – users can't access other apps until the message fades.

LARGE GROUP CHATS

The app offers group chats with up to 100 people – both friends and unknown users. This not only means excessive 'boom' messages taking over your child's device, but near-constant notification alerts and – most worryingly – the potential for walkie-talkie chatting and sharing photos with strangers outside parental supervision and apparently with no moderation from the platform itself.

Advice for Parents & Carers

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Remind your child of the dangers of connecting with strangers online. Some may be using the app innocently; others may have sinister intentions. Encourage your child to consider what information they disclose in private messages and emphasise that they should inform a trusted adult if someone on the internet ever attempts to persuade them to meet in person.

TALK ABOUT SEXTING

It can be an awkward conversation (which young people are often reluctant to have), but it's vital to talk openly and non-judgmentally about sexting. Discuss the legal implications of sharing explicit images, as well as the emotional impact. Make it clear your child should never feel pressured into sexting – and that they should tell a trusted adult if they receive any unwanted explicit images.

BUILD RESILIENCE

With HIPal's lack of moderation, it's imperative that children are prepared for comments they might receive after uploading an image. You can build their resilience and equip them to manage these situations by having them show you any comments they've received. Together, discuss how the nice ones made them feel – and what they could do if someone posted a comment that upset them.

AVOID OVER-SHARING

Young people should think carefully about what they share in their profile, bio and posts. Talk to your child about not disclosing personal details such as phone numbers, other social media accounts or images which could reveal where they live or go to school. It's essential for children to recognise that strangers can assemble a detailed profile of someone based on things they can find online.

CONSIDER MENTAL WELLBEING

Many users on HIPal publicly share photos that are intended to be alluring in the hope of gaining more likes, friends and positive feedback – boosting their self-esteem and making them feel more self-assured. When young people regularly engage with social media platforms, it's important that parents and carers keep in mind the potential impact such platforms can have on mental wellbeing.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Clare Sullivan is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



<https://hipal.app/about/privacy.html>

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Nitrous Oxide Briefing

January 2023

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) would like to alert commissioners, police forces and public health, and – through them – their local partners, to increasing reports of harm from nitrous oxide misuse.

The ask for all local partners is to ensure that all front-line staff who come into contact with young people are aware of the risk of nitrous oxide misuse, particularly the emerging evidence of increased harm and the use of larger canisters, know where to access accurate information and have referral pathways in place for people who need help and support. They may also want to consider the misuse of nitrous oxide, and responses to it, in the "reducing demand" strand of their Combating Drug Partnership's local plan.

What is Nitrous Oxide?

Nitrous oxide is an odourless and colourless gas inhaled from balloons, or – far more dangerously – directly from canisters, for its psychoactive effects.

Nitrous Oxide is also called: Balloons, Chargers, Hippie Crack, Laughing Gas, Nos, Noz and Whippits

Symptoms can include feeling relaxed, giggly, sound distortions and/or dizzy, anxious and paranoid.



Risks of taking Nitrous Oxide

It is extremely dangerous to inhale Nitrous Oxide directly from canisters. Never place a plastic bag over your head. If too much is inhaled there is a high risk of falling unconscious and/or suffocating from the lack of oxygen.

In addition to the already widely-reported risks of accidents while under the influence and of direct harm from the cold gas, there are increasing hospital reports of young people with serious nerve damage that may be lasting. This is probably associated with the increasing availability of larger canisters of gas and people using more of it, perhaps without really keeping track of just how much more they are using. Nitrous oxide inactivates vitamin B12 leading to nerve damage.

It can also cause headaches and stop people from thinking straight.

If Nitrous Oxide is used on a regular basis it can lead to the body stopping the production of white blood cells properly.

The Law

As a psychoactive drug, nitrous oxide is controlled under the Psychoactive Substances Act, meaning its possession is not an offence but supply is.

Parents and guardians need to be aware of the dangers of the illegal use of nitrous oxide and, though legal to possess, people should not make the assumption that nitrous oxide is safe to use. This may be especially true when people drive and inhale the gas.

The use of nitrous oxide can cause significant impairment and users should be under no illusion that it is safe to drive following consumption. Effects on the nervous system, including drowsiness, dizziness and confusion, mean that significant impairment can be caused and offences under the Road Traffic Act are likely to be committed.

The NPCC actively encourage officers and forces to consider use of all legislation and the full range of their powers in responding to matters involving nitrous oxide. As well as criminal offences such as supply and road traffic offences, nitrous oxide will often be associated with ASB and an ASB intervention such as a PSPO can be an effective means to tackle the problem.

Further information and resources

There is information for young people and their families and carers on FRANK at www.talktofrank.com FRANK also lists sources of help and advice, including local services.

A recent report on nitrous oxide from the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) may be of interest even though we have left the EU as it includes a UK case study: Recreational use of nitrous oxide — a growing concern for Europe | www.emcdda.europa.eu

There is also detailed independent advice from the Greater Manchester Local Drug Information Service and DrugWatch forum in their briefing for professionals: N20- briefing-for-professionals-v1.0-DrugWatch-version.pdf (michaellinnell.org.uk)