



Alde Valley Academy

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NEWSLETTER - 23RD JANUARY 2026

REFLECTION, TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

This week has been a challenging one for our whole school community, and I feel it is important to reflect honestly and openly with you as parents.

Last Thursday, a small piece of graffiti was discovered in the KS3 boys' toilets that included a threatening comment referring to coming to school on Wednesday 21 January. The graffiti was removed quickly, but a small number of students had already seen it. Unfortunately, rumours began to spread, and by the start of this week those rumours had grown into fears of a serious security threat.

As soon as the graffiti was discovered, we acted decisively. We liaised closely with Suffolk Police and worked alongside the Halesworth Community Policing Team to assess the situation and determine the most appropriate response. Both the police and the school were clear: there was no credible threat. Together, we agreed that a low-key police presence, alongside school staff and a few minor adjustments to the start of the school day, would be the most proportionate way to reassure students and parents and to answer any questions.

We communicated deliberately and carefully. Parents received emails on the morning of Tuesday 20 January and again later that day to reassure you that there was no risk to students or staff. The vast majority of parents trusted the school to do what it always does, safeguard the young people in our care, and I am grateful for that trust.

However, alongside this, misinformation began to circulate on social media. I was alerted to claims of armed police being deployed, of students hiding under desks, and of lockdown-style responses. None of this was true. A photograph was widely shared of students hiding under desks that was not taken at Alde Valley Academy; our classrooms do not have green carpets or the type of desks shown. An AI-generated image showing multiple police cars and officers at the front of the school was also circulated, despite being clearly fake, even showing outdated cladding on buildings that no longer exist.

What has troubled me most is not simply the spread of misinformation, but the impact it had. While staff were working hard to maintain a calm, normal school day (because there was no credible risk) several students became frightened purely because of what they were reading and hearing online. In those moments, the wellbeing of young people and staff seemed to be lost amid speculation and fear.

As Headteacher of Alde Valley Academy, I am ultimately responsible for the safety and wellbeing of every student and every member of staff. This responsibility is one I take incredibly seriously and would never compromise. I do not claim to be perfect, but I do believe we took sensible, proportionate and professional action, guided by expert advice from the police. We chose not to address this issue in assemblies because we were concerned that doing so would amplify anxiety and lend weight to a threat that did not exist. At the same time, we continued to communicate with parents and address concerns where we could.

This week has also been a learning point for me and, I hope, for us as a community. Trust is not automatic, it must be earned. Judging by the many positive messages, emails and rational voices on social media, I believe we are gradually earning that trust. For that, I am thankful.

To the small minority of parents who do not yet feel able to trust us, I ask you to pause and reflect on the power of your words and actions online. Social media comments can travel far beyond their original audience, and when they are inaccurate or speculative, they can unintentionally cause fear and distress to young people.

Throughout the week, the school received an extremely high volume of individual emails and telephone calls. While we understand the anxiety behind these, it is simply not feasible to respond individually at that scale. If our communications did not meet your needs, I am genuinely sorry, and I welcome constructive feedback.

As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening relationships with parents, we have been audited and accredited by Parentkind, an organisation that provides a blueprint for excellent collaboration with parents. We are actively working to improve two-way communication. Listening, learning and improving are essential to that process, and I am always keen to hear how we can do better.

At the same time, there must be a shared sense of proportion and common sense in moments like this. When situations arise that are complex and emotive, I ask, respectfully and sincerely, for your trust and support. Together, we can model calm, responsibility and care for the young people who look to us for reassurance.

Thank you to those who supported the school this week, who trusted our judgement, and who helped to keep our community steady when it mattered most.

HEATING UPDATE

At the start of term, we had a brief heating issue due to the age of our boilers and a delayed oil delivery, leaving the main block cooler than usual. The school remained safe and open. The Canteen and toilets continued to operate normally, and some students wore coats in classrooms. Some areas of older buildings can feel cooler even when heating is working.

I can reassure parents that health and safety guidance was followed. The boilers are now working and being closely monitored, with student and staff wellbeing our priority.