

4th October 2024

Dear students and parents

I am writing to provide an update to all our community about the incidents reported in the park yesterday. As you know we issued an urgent warning to avoid walking through the park and we also spoke in person with students as they were leaving campus during the day. A number of incidents took place involving a group of people disguised with face masks or balaclavas, one reported to be carrying a knife. On several occasions some of our students were stopped, threatened and in more than one case had their phone stolen. Although shaken by the incidents, we are hugely relieved that no students were seriously harmed. We understand that members of the public may also have been targeted and it is reported that they intervened in one incident to help our students.

Horsham has a reputation for being friendly and safe and it is a shock that this is now the second time since the beginning of term that a group are targeting the park for criminal activity. Of course we should all be vigilant wherever we are out and about, but with over 2,500 young people at Collyer's it is a huge concern that parts of the park feel unsafe and need to be avoided. For all of our staff the safety of our students is paramount.

We are grateful to the Police yesterday for their very quick response and attending onsite to speak with students affected. Following the incidents we have received further advice as follows:

- Stay in public spaces
- Remain in groups if possible
- Avoid having your phone obviously out
- Make a note of your phone's IMEI number – to be able to lock the phone if it is stolen

The Police have confirmed that they will be putting enhanced patrols into the areas of concern and have asked that any information that could be relevant be passed to them. At Collyer's we will be putting extra emphasis on safety advice in tutorial next week. I also need to request that all of our community avoid walking through the areas around the skate park, the underpass next to the station and any less public areas of the park that are hidden from general view.

Finally, I will be writing today to John Milne (MP for Horsham), Chief Inspector Sarah Leadbeater (Police District Commander for Adur, Worthing and Horsham) and Nigel Emery (Chair of Horsham District Council) to ask for an urgent meeting to discuss our concerns and understand what steps can be taken to better assure safety not just for our community within Collyer's but also the broader local area.

Thank you as always for your support.

Kind regards

Dan Lodge
Principal