

RIVERMEAD INCLUSIVE TRUST

PARENTS AND CARERS SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2022



inspiring the journey for
independence together

Welcome from the Team

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust Team are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in our community. keeping our young people safe. We work with pupils, parents, carers and community partners to support them with the ever-increasing range of new and unique challenges that we all face in today's world.



Check out our safeguarding pages on the school websites.

Rivermead : [Safeguarding | Rivermead School](#)

Hoo St Werburgh and Marlborough Centre [Safeguarding - Hoo St Werburgh Primary School & Marlborough Centre \(hoo-st-werburgh.medway.sch.uk\)](#)

Walderslade [Walderslade Primary School - Safeguarding \(walderslade-pri.medway.sch.uk\)](#)

SAFEGUARDING IN THE NEWS

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) - UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be confusing for young people, and that's why children and young people find that all of a sudden they are being abused in some way in their relationship.

Many just don't know what is a healthy relationship, and what's unhealthy, especially when they enjoy getting attention. But because they don't have much experience in relationships and are still working out what their emotions mean, they don't recognise when they are uncomfortable, and what makes a good relationship and what doesn't.

They don't realise that a healthy relationship is one where they can say how they feel, and shouldn't be controlled. They don't understand that it's never OK to be exploited or abused, and that they need to listen to themselves and make sense of how they feel.

You can help them to understand more about relationships: for further support with this visit <http://knowaboutcse.co.uk/youngpeople/>

CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION (CCE) - GANGS AND COUNTY LINES

County Lines is a type of drug trafficking, where the drugs are moved from major cities to smaller towns and rural areas. Anyone can be unknowingly recruited or forced into becoming a runner. This means that they transport drugs and cash to different areas of the country, reducing the risk for the criminals. County lines drug tracking is often interlinked in other crimes such as sexual exploitation, violence, money laundering and human trafficking. Criminal gangs find a base in a particular area, this is known as 'cuckooing'. They will sometimes use force or coercion to take over the home of a vulnerable person. They will then groom young people into selling drugs. Once involved in the gang it is very difficult for them to escape.

Drug gangs are grooming young people in Kent and Medway.

<https://eyes-open.co.uk/area/kent/>

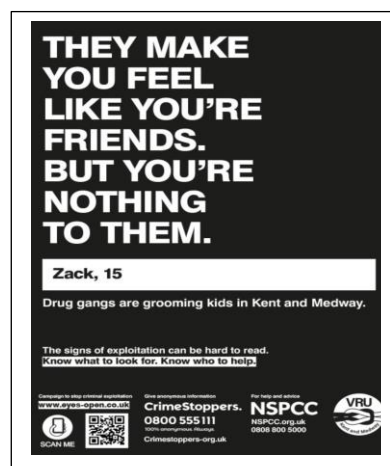
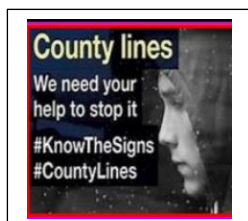
<https://www.kent.police.uk/parents-and-carers-guide-to-gangs.pdf>

Worth a watch:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000w0sg/panorama-drugs-cops-and-lockdown>

Kent Police have produced several videos regarding "What is County Lines?" which are live now on YouTube.

- [County Lines Business Model](#)
- [County Lines Consumer](#)
- [County Lines Legal Perspective](#)
- [County Lines Spotting the Signs](#)
- [County Lines Cuckooing 5](#)
- [County Lines Breaking the Cycle](#)
- [County Lines Lived Experience](#)
- [County Lines Short Stories - Chris's Story](#)



If you have concerns about a young person being exploited contact Kent Police.

MONEY MULING AND CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

There has been an increase in young people being targeted to use their bank accounts and take part in the moving of money through various accounts.

Young people can 'rent' their debit cards/accounts and be paid substantial amounts of money to do this. Known as 'money mules' this practice has been increasing and is very difficult to monitor and control via the banks.

It is still financially tough for many families - lockdown, shops closed, people off work and jobs being cut again; this could be a very difficult period for a number of young people. Additionally, with the release of expensive items - new Playstation 5, new Xbox and new iPhones, there is additional pressure on families to provide. This is a 'risky' time and could see an increase in young people actively seeking opportunities to make money.

There are accounts on Snapchat and Instagram that actively seek to exploit this - offering 'free PS5' and other 'deals' if people are willing to 'go cunch' (county lines) or rent their bank accounts. I

In addition, more and more young people are reportedly purchasing weapons through social media or online. For both of these reasons it is a good idea to monitor bank statements and shopping apps such as Ebay, Amazon, Wish

"Tell-tale signs that someone might be involved could be them suddenly having extra cash, buying expensive new clothes or top-of-the-range mobile phones and gadgets with very little explanation as to how they got the money. They may also become more secretive, withdrawn or appear stressed.

"You and your child can learn more and get advice by visiting <https://www.moneymules.co.uk/> together.

If you are worried that someone close to you might be caught up in money muling, you can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



Virginity Tests

Within the UK, there has been an increase in the use of "virginity tests". A virginity test is a method of checking if a girl or woman is a virgin. This usually involves checking for an intact hymen in the mistaken belief that a torn hymen means a woman has had sex.

Virginity tests are sometimes used in Muslim and other conservative communities because their customs say women must be virgins when marrying their husbands. However, there is no scientific way to prove a girl or woman's virginity. Taking the test can cause a girl or woman anguish and severe mental distress. Tragically, failing one can result in violence, sexual assault, banishment from the community, and, worse still, murder. This is not something that just goes on in other countries. This is very much a British problem.

In the 1970s it was reportedly carried out by immigration officials on women arriving from the Indian sub-continent to marry their British Asian fiancés. Virginity tests are carried out in the UK in private clinics.

Although the extent of the practice in the UK is unknown, a BBC Newsbeat investigation in 2020 identified at least 21 clinics offering such tests.

ONLINE SAFETY

The online world offers amazing opportunities but also brings elements of potential risk. It's important we all consider how we can help keep young people safer online. Helping young people to stay safe is everyone's responsibility.



For resources, videos and articles visit
[Home Learning Hub - Safer Schools \(oursaferschools.co.uk\)](https://oursaferschools.co.uk)

POPPY PLAYTIME

On-line safety experts, Inege Safeguarding Group, have been alerted to a video game that has been described as an 'introduction to horror'. Videos, versions of the game and associated material are becoming increasingly popular on YouTube, Roblox and other platforms. Poppy Playtime features frightening images and themes that are paired with child-friendly items. This could be especially upsetting to children who have not yet developed the resilience to deal with disturbing content.

WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR Content like this can scare children and affect their behaviour, especially if they're younger or have never been introduced to horror before. Being introduced to content with gory or scary themes before they have built resilience can result in a negative reaction.

Below are some warning signs to be aware of:

- Finding it hard to focus or concentrate
- Appearing withdrawn
- Changes in appetite •
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Appearing suddenly angry, irritable, or teary
- Constant worry or anxiety, appearing fidgety or unable to relax
- Sudden appearance of new fears that weren't present before



For more in-depth information and concerns explained click link below Poppy Playtime: Online Safety Review –
<https://inege.com/2021/12/03/poppy-playtime-online-safety-review>

SAFER INTERNET DAY 2022

Safer Internet Day is celebrated globally in February each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology for children and young people, and to inspire a national conversation about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically, and creatively. Safer Internet Day 2022 is on 8th February and will be celebrated with the theme 'All fun and games? Exploring respect and relationships online'. Coordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, Safer Internet Day is celebrated in over a hundred countries coordinated by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network, with the support of the European Commission, and national Safer Internet Centres across Europe.

[Educational resources - UK Safer Internet Centre](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/educational-resources)



CRYPTOCURRENCY

Cryptocurrency is software enabling the exchange and storage of digital 'coins' representing financial value. To monitor who owns which coins, platforms save an online record of every transaction, called a 'ledger' or 'blockchain'. This is secured by cryptography: a set of methods for protecting sensitive information. Bitcoin, released in 2009, was the first cryptocurrency. As cryptocurrency becomes a more established part of digital life, young people are bound to come across it and show an interest - so it's vital that trusted adults understand it's risks and how it can be explored and used safely. In the guide you will find useful tips together with potential risks.

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/hub/view/guide/cryptocurrency>

EAL SUPPORT FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Please see below for useful websites to support your children, together with a link for leaflets in other languages that will assist you in keeping your children safe on-line.

Parents: Supporting Young People Online (Childnet)

Leaflets available in other languages here [Parents: Supporting Young People Online \(Leaflets\) | Childnet](#)

• Arabic • Bengali • English • Farsi • French • Hindi • Polish • Punjabi • Somali • Spanish • Turkish • Urdu • Vietnamese • Welsh



ONLINE GROOMING

IWF safety campaign aims to help parents have conversations with their children about keeping their 'door' closed to child sexual abusers.

The campaign includes a booklet for parents, explaining the risks, explaining why children are vulnerable, and suggests practical steps that parents can take.

TALK to your child about online sexual abuse. Start the conversation - and listen to their concerns.

AGREE ground rules about the way you use technology.

LEARN about the platforms and apps your child loves.

KNOW how to use tools, apps and settings that can help to keep your child safe online.

<https://talk.iwf.org.uk/>



ONLINE GAMING

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play. For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect your child, watch this short video: In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/in-game-chat/>



FOCUS ON SELF HARM

Self-harm can feel like a way for children and teenagers to cope with difficult feelings or to release tension. The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with.

Some difficult experiences or emotions can make self-harm more likely in children:

- experiencing depression, anxiety or eating problems
- having low self-esteem or feeling like they're not good enough
- being bullied or feeling alone
- experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect
- grieving or having problems with family relationships
- feeling angry, numb or like they don't have control over their lives



Data from 2017 showed one in five girls and one in 10 boys aged between 17 and 19 have self-harmed or attempted suicide, and among 11 to 16-year-olds, 7% of girls and more than 3% of boys are affected - with those with mental disorders more likely to have self-harmed.

In 2021 5% of all NSPCC counselling sessions related to self-harm. The impact of the pandemic is not yet clear, but there are already signs that well-being and mental health has been affected.

If your child is self-harming, or you're concerned they might be, it can be incredibly worrying and upsetting for you as their parent/carer. The important thing to remember is that you and your child are not alone - lots of young people go through this and come out the other side with different ways of coping with their feelings.

All of the Trust settings have a designated lead responsible for Mental Health and Well-being as well as trained Mental Health First Aiders. If your child is self-harming and you need advice please contact the school.

It is important to trust your instincts if you're worried something's wrong.

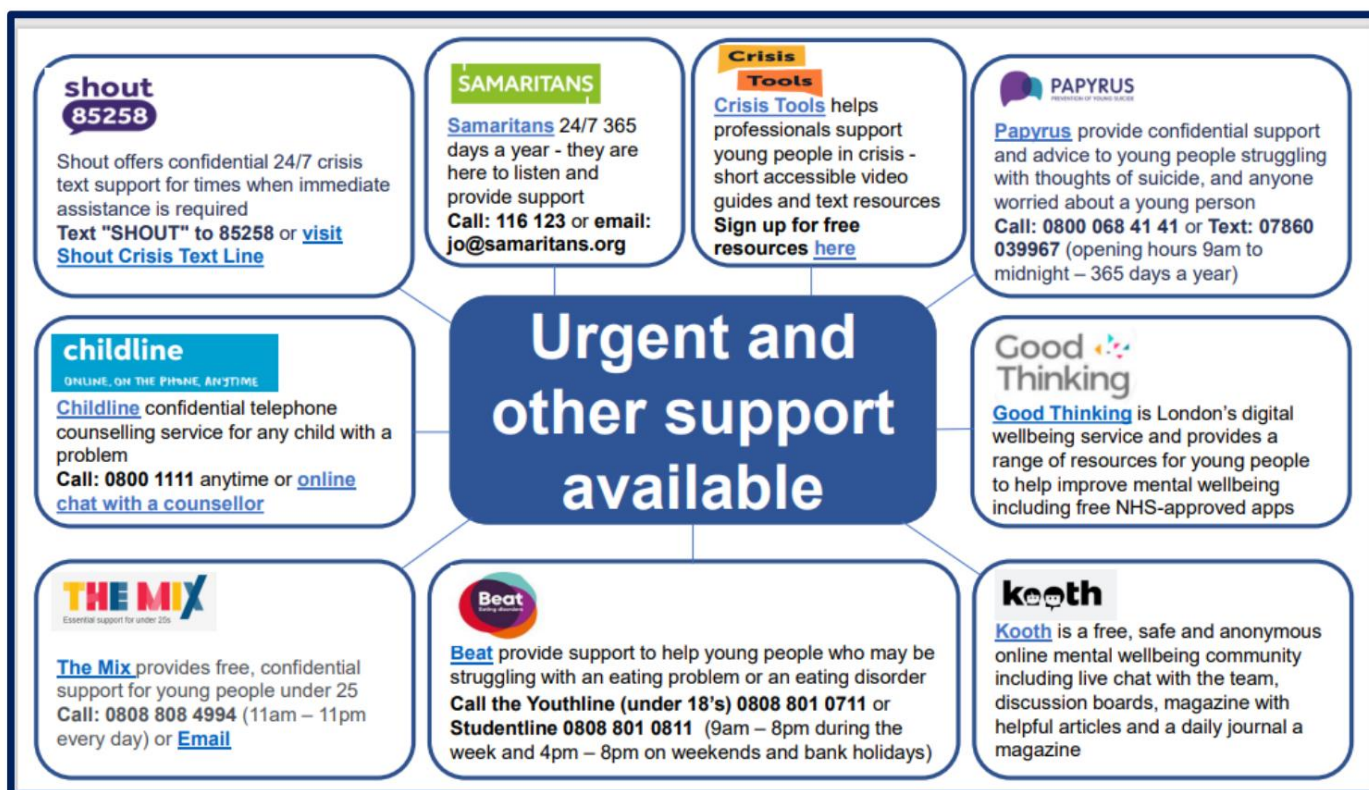
Signs to look out for can include:

- covering up, for example by wearing long sleeves a lot of the time, especially in summer
- finding tissues with blood in their room
- becoming withdrawn and spending a lot of time alone in their room
- avoiding friends and family and being at home
- feeling down, low self-esteem or blaming themselves for things
- outbursts of anger, or risky behaviour like drinking or taking drugs.

The Young Minds guide for parents can be found at

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/self-harm/>

At Rivermead School, Triple R and Post 16 we have members of staff trained in Alumina who hold face2face sessions for learners. Alumina also run a free, online 7-week course for young people age 14-19 years struggling with self-harm. www.selfharm.co.uk



PARENT SMART: PLACE2BE

The children's mental health charity, Place2Be, has launched a new website aimed at helping parents with typical situations they may experience with children.

Advice can be found on over forty topics including:

- Understanding sibling rivalry
- My child is lying, what does it mean, what should I do?
- My child has trouble going to sleep
- My child says, 'I hate you!'
- Cultural identity: who am I?
- Mealtimes are turning into nightmare times.



The Parenting Smart website can be found here:

<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>

MEDWAY SMALL STEPS

Small Steps is a new service providing support and advice for families whose children are either pre or post diagnosis of Autism and/or ADHD. The Service offers information workshops, specialised parenting groups, and can provide parents with a Project Worker or a Volunteer Befriender who will offer home visits and 1:1 support within the family home.

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/medway-small-steps-service/>

SAFEGUARDING AND THE LAW

The law on smacking children

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales (currently)

- It is illegal for a parent or carer to smack their own child unless it amounts to “reasonable punishment” – which is assessed by taking into account the child’s age and the force of the smack. It is clear that “reasonable punishment” would not include any smacking that left a child with:
swelling
bruises
cuts or grazes
reddening of the skin
abrasions
scratches
a black eye
- It is illegal for teachers, nursery workers and workers in other education settings to hit children in their care – ever.
- It is illegal for a privately employed babysitter or nanny to smack a child in their care, unless the parent has given specific permission

What is the guidance of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)?

It can be tempting to think a smack sorts out incidents like disobedience and biting.

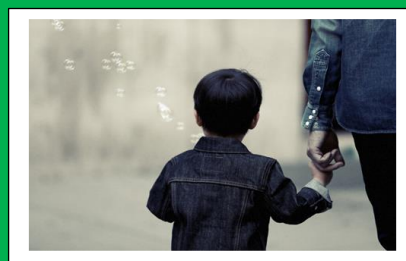
However, it does nothing to teach your child how you want him or her to behave. Instead it:

- gives a bad example of how to handle strong emotions;
- may lead children to hit or bully others;
- may encourage children to lie or hide feelings to avoid smacking;
- can make defiant behaviour worse, so discipline gets even harder;
- leads to a resentful and angry child, and damages family relationships if it continues for a long time.

All parents have behaved in ways they regret at times (shouting or smacking). If this happens, say you are sorry, make up and try again. This teaches your child a valuable lesson.

How to discipline without smacking

- Give love and warmth as much as possible
- Have clear simple rules and limits
- Be a good role model
- Praise good behaviour so it will increase
- Ignore behaviour you don’t want repeated
- Criticise behaviours, not your child
- Reward good behaviour with hugs and kisses
- Distract young children or use humour
- Allow children some control; joint decisions, choices
- If a consequence is necessary, the removal of privileges, ‘time out’ or natural consequences are considered more appropriate.



SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT SERVICES

SCHOOL AGE (VICTIM) ROBBERY TOOLKIT

The Met Police are running a campaign to reduce street robberies involving school aged children by raising awareness of Fearless, the youth brand of the independent charity Crimestoppers, which enables young people to give information about crime 100% anonymously. Mobile phone use, including use of earphones on the go, can make young people more at risk of street robbery. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the risk of street robbery and increase understanding by equipping young people with crime prevention advice. Fearless, part of independent charity Crimestoppers, provides young people access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality. They provide a safe place to give information about crime 100% anonymously. The toolkit contains leaflets, and posters to raise awareness. Download the toolkit here:

[Robbery+Partners+Toolkit.pdf](#)

MEDWAY CHILDRENS SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

<https://www.medwayscp.org.uk/mscb/>

If you have concerns that a child or young person living in Medway is suffering from harm please phone 01634 334 466

BEREAVEMENT: CHUMS

CHUMS offer specialist bereavement support to children and young people from 3½ up until their 26th birthday in Kent and Medway.

Specialist support is needed when a child or young person is experiencing complex grief or traumatic bereavement. This might mean that it is extra hard for them to manage the death and so it is having an enduring negative impact on everyday life. This might be because of the way the person died or because various other factors are disrupting their ability to grieve. Children and young people who need specialist support are likely to be experiencing difficulties with anxiety, low mood, overwhelming emotions or post traumatic symptoms related to their bereavement.



<http://chums.uk.com/kent-bereavement-service/>

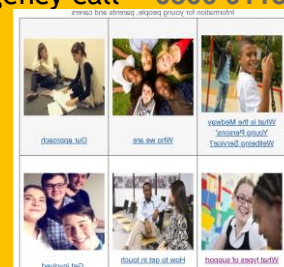
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

<https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>

The Medway Young Persons' Wellbeing Service provides emotional wellbeing and mental health advice and support for young people and their families across Medway.

<https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-medway-young-persons-wellbeing/>

In an emergency call 0800 0113474



www.rivermeadinclusivetrust.co.uk

AND FINALLY

10 Top Tips for Respect Online: INSPIRING CHILDREN TO BUILD A BETTER DIGITAL WORLD

Our ability to communicate with anyone in the world, at any time, via the Internet has grown at breakneck speed. For teachers and parents, it can feel impossible to keep up. Worrying about our young people is understandable, and not unjustified: In 2020, for example, one in five 10- to 15-year-olds experienced bullying online. Our tips highlight ways that adults can support young people's positive online behaviours: by adopting and following 'netiquette', we can show them how to avoid getting into difficulty as they learn to negotiate the continually evolving digital landscape.

WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Just like etiquette is a set of rules which guides and governs our interactions with others in everyday life, netiquette – etiquette on the net – is the framework which helps inform how we communicate with people online. The rules of engagement often aren't the same as a face-to-face meeting, so it's important that we can accurately 'read' situations in the digital world and know how to act appropriately.

- 1 ACCEPT DIFFERENT RULES**

A lot of our interaction with others is helped by non-verbal signals like body language and facial expressions. Online, of course, many of these clues are missing. Talk to your child about why this makes misunderstandings more likely to occur in the digital world and why keeping in mind that online communication is a very different process can help to prevent difficulties from arising.
- 2 PRESS 'PAUSE'**

It's so easy to do things quickly online that most people (adults included) habitually send or respond to messages without considering the consequences. Pushing 'the pause button' buys a young person some time while they ponder the golden rule: "Would I still say this if the other person was right front of me?" You could practise this with your child on some made-up tricky situations.
- 3 THE INTERNET IS ADDICTIVE**

Apps and sites use sophisticated algorithms and clever marketing to keep us engaged, while notifications to our devices are designed to draw us back in. It's no wonder that people continually return to the digital world, sometimes spending long periods of time there. You and your child could trial turning off notifications on certain apps and instead agree a time to check for updates manually.
- 4 BEWARE THE DARK SIDE**

Getting a hurtful or unhelpful comment on social media or in a group chat can make the recipient feel publicly shamed. That's painful for anyone – but especially for a young person whose status in a group is integral to their sense of identity. Encourage your child to think about the best and safest way to send a message: for example, doing it as a private message rather than a public post.
- 5 HARMFUL INTERACTIONS**

Unfortunately, it's very easy to send a hurtful message or to spread gossip and rumours online. We all know this happens regularly. Not having to deal with actually seeing the other person's distress usually doesn't help people to make a positive decision in the moment. It's important that trusted adults help children to visualise the potential consequences and have empathy for others.
- 6 APPRECIATE DIFFERENCES**

We're all built differently: some people are simply more emotionally sensitive than others. Young people can be particularly affected by negative online communication, such as group shaming. Even a single message (which might seem trivial at face value) can cause deep anguish. Trusted adults should be prepared to be patient and listen to any difficulties their child might have had online.
- 7 ACCENTUATED ANXIETY**

Young people's online lives create a lot of anxiety. Messages go into a 'black hole' until someone responds, there are more reasons to compare ourselves negatively, and social media can make us feel like we're missing out. Encourage activities such as sports and hobbies to balance this out, and remember that merely blocking out thoughts (by gaming, for instance) isn't the same as relaxation.
- 8 PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

A huge positive for the internet is how it helps people to feel connected and makes being kind and helpful easy to spread. When young people get involved in pro-social behaviours online, it creates a positive feedback loop which makes them feel good. Show your child examples of when you've done or said something positive online, and praise and encourage them when they do the same.
- 9 BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL**

One of the best things we can do as trusted adults is to role model positive online behaviour. Just letting your child see that you know when it's time to put your phone away and do something more productive can set a strong example. Some families set aside particular times of the week (such as mealtimes or a family walk) where digital devices aren't allowed and conversation takes precedence.
- 10 SHOW COMPASSION**

Mistakes can feel much bigger online, because they're so public. If a young person does or says something regrettable on the internet, it's important to support them to forgive themselves, learn any lessons and move forward positively. Even as adults, we can often stumble when learning how things work in the fast-moving digital world, so it's important to have compassion for ourselves, too.

The Safeguarding Teams from across the Rivermead Inclusive Trust Academies would like to wish you all a very Happy Half Term.