

Parent Bulletin

7th November 2025

Over recent weeks, all members of the senior leadership teams have undertaken emergency critical incident training that has now become part of our annual training schedule within the Vanguard Learning Trust. The training was led by Robin Hamilton who is the CEO of Aldbury International. Robin is a former police Superintendent who, amongst other responsibilities, oversaw an Operations & Major Incident Centre. As a designated critical incident & firearms commander he gained an in-depth knowledge of and expertise in managing crises.

I am sure that many parents and carers will have heard of Martyn's Law ([click here](#)), which came into force on 3rd April 2025 which requires various organisations that manage publicly accessible premises and events to implement security measures and preparedness plans for potential terrorist attacks. The new law formed the basis of this year's training. The specific requirements are tiered based on the venue's capacity. Schools with more than 200 students and staff are required to develop effective procedures to keep staff and students safe in an emergency. Most notable is the requirement to have 'place of safety' (also known as lockdown) procedures in place.

As with our fire evacuation procedures, we want all students to know how we will keep them safe in the unlikely event of an incident and have, over time, been working on simple procedures that we plan to rehearse on a regular basis in the future.

We regularly run drills to see how well our systems notify staff and students in an incident, as well as seeing how our staff understand their role in making children in their class safe and secure. I must stress that this does not involve the type of activities that some parents may have read or heard about in countries such as the United States, such as children hiding under desks, etc.

I would ask all parents and carers to read the full guidance for standard tier premises under Martyn's Law ([click here](#)), which explains our obligations and why the Government feels these measures are important in light of recent tragic national events. I would like to again stress that the likelihood of a significant event occurring on site such as a school, particularly in a location such as Vyners is extremely low. However, I am sure that parents and carers will understand why this law has been put in place. I would also add that there are potentially lots of different scenarios whereby we might take the decision to keep children and adults onsite within a secure boundary and this may occur beyond the end of the school day. In such circumstances, I would ask parents to remain calm, refrain from attempting to contact the school (as this blocks phone lines, etc.) and await further information from the school. These behaviours will help staff and the school to more effectively manage any emergency situation.

On a related matter, I would like to thank Mrs Bashford-Hynes, Assistant Headteacher and Mr Alhadeff, PHSE coordinator for their work in coordinating the *Your Life, You Choose* workshops that took place for all students on Wednesday of this week. Whilst I am aware that the content of the workshops will have been quite worrying for some of our students, the value of these workshops with regard to young people, the choices that they make and their understanding of issues within the local context is incredibly valuable. Whilst it is important to discuss issues such as knife crime with young people, I believe that it is equally important that they are reassured that whilst incredibly distressing, issues related to youth crime do not impact most young people and

that serious youth crime in Hillingdon has continued to decline over the past decade. Further information for parents about keeping children safe within the community can be found via the school website ([click here](#)).

Over this current two week window, I am leading year group assemblies that are focusing on where we are as a school with regards to rewards and consequences and how we wish to progress in the future. One topic that remains prevalent is the use of mobile phones in schools. During the first half term, there were 59 consequences given for mobile phone use within school, which is approximately 1.5 per day. I am sure that parents and carers are aware that the DfE published guidance to schools regarding the expectations related to mobile phones and possible strategies that schools might use ([click here](#)).

As a reminder, Vyners currently operates a *never used, seen, never heard* policy, which means that students are expected to turn off their phones and not use them at any time on the school site throughout the day. A number of schools have been experimenting with other strategies and we will be reviewing these throughout the academic year with the aim of strengthening our approach by September 2026 at the very latest. Finally, I would like to remind parents and carers that on occasions where a student has been issued with a consequence for mobile phone use for a second time during a term that a parent or carer will be required to collect the phone after confiscation. We very much appreciate parental support on this issue.

Gary Mullings, Headteacher

Dr van der Spoel Visit for Year 11 Students

Dr van der Spoel from GLIA Learning will be visiting our school on Monday to deliver a special series of sessions for Year 11 students. Dr van der Spoel is a highly respected educator and presenter who specialises in helping students understand how the brain learns best. His engaging and interactive sessions focus on improving study habits, motivation, and memory – all particularly valuable as our Year 11 students prepare for their GCSE exams.

The session aims to give students practical strategies for effective revision, stress management, and building confidence in their learning. It promises to be both informative and inspiring, helping our students make the most of their preparation in the months ahead. We're very much looking forward to welcoming Dr van der Spoel and are confident that this session will provide real benefits for all our Year 11s.

Mr Millard-Healy, Deputy Headteacher

Senior Citizens' Christmas Party

The annual Senior Citizens Christmas Party will be on Thursday 4th December. We would be interested to know if any parents / carers in the community run a business and would be interested in sponsoring our event. Perhaps you run a catering business and could supply cake or mince pies for our guests? It is a lovely annual event that the guests really look forward to attending.

We are also looking for prizes to give out as part of the ever popular bingo session. If you have unopened boxes of chocolates or biscuits at home (in date please!) that you would like to donate, please bring them to school reception. If you are able to help support this event in any way, please contact Ms Derby in the main school office (office@vynersschool.org.uk)

Ms Derby, Office Manager

Years 10 and 11 Design and Technology Trip

Twenty Vyners GCSE Design & Technology students from Years 10 and 11 had the opportunity to attend a visit to 3M with Brunel University on Thursday 16th October 2025. 3M have partnered with Brunel in an effort to raise awareness for careers in STEM with a focus on Design and Technology.

3M are a science-based technology company who are known for developing products such as the post-it note all the way through to working with the automotive and aerospace engineering industries. They are a customer led research and development company who develop new materials for both everyday use and for the unexpected.

Our students took part in three workshops over the course of the day, Network with 3M, a Hoop Glider workshop and the Innovation Centre. During the networking workshops, the students got the opportunity to meet five employees from 3M and learn more about their careers and what life is like working at the company. Students asked questions and advice about their own futures but also explored their curiosity and quizzed the professionals about what they do with the 15% of their time that they can spend exploring and developing their own projects.

Students put their flying skills to the test in the hoop glider competition. Five groups of four went head to head to make a hoop glider and test who could fly it the furthest. The groups then had to use their design and problem solving skills to modify the basic design to see if they could beat their own previous distance as well as the best distance. Well done to team "Pink Scissors" for the win!

The students then got the opportunity to explore and test some 3M's material and product innovations in their Innovation Centre. The students were able to test out vibration damping foil, used on vehicles and manufacturing equipment to reduce noise pollution and test their strength to help understand the reverse engineering of the Command Strip to create VHB Tape which is now strong enough to be used in place of rivets to hold aircraft parts together.

A huge thank you to 3M and Brunel University and all the teams that made this an awakening experience for the students and staff and a thank you to the Parents and Carers that allowed their children to go on the trip and finally a thank you to all those that gave up their time to help plan the trip, especially Ms Derby, Miss Williams and Mrs Atkinson.



Mr Babra, Subject Leader, Design and Technology

Year 11 Geography Trip

Before the Half Term break, our Year 11 Geography students undertook their final compulsory fieldwork element of the GCSE Course to Epping Forest. Here students investigated the changing characteristics of a river as it flows downstream. Both the Geography Department and the staff at FCS Epping Forest were very impressed with how our students conducted themselves during this fieldwork. Students will be expected to refer back to this fieldwork in their Summer Examinations, as well as the up and coming December Mocks.

Mr Heath, Subject Leader, Geography

Years 10 and 11 Rhineland Trip

From 23rd to 27th October, Year 10 and 11 students studying German had the opportunity to travel to the Rhineland. Read on to hear what two of those students thought of the trip...

Aber Hallo! The German trip was fantastic! From the long coach road and laughing with our friends to Phantasialand, where some of us conquered our fears, to the gorgeous Cologne Cathedral and the Lindt chocolate factory, every moment was a memory to hold on to. We all had so much fun meeting new people, laughing and making jokes with our friends from the early hours of the morning to the later hours of the night, learning new facts about Cologne and more of the language and finally getting to explore such a beautiful country. Phantasialand was definitely our favourite part as rides are exhilarating to us and we had so much fun screaming at the top of our lungs. The Rhine river was absolutely gorgeous and taking a tour around the old Marksburg castle was so interesting and unique. We all had so much fun and will definitely never forget it!

Vaneesha and Jayna, Year 11 Students



Maximise Potential

On Thursday 6th November, Year 13 students participated in the “Maximise Your Potential” Workshop, an engaging and insightful session designed to help them develop essential skills for personal growth, academic success, and future readiness. Led by Jeremy Dry, the workshop encouraged students to reflect on their individual strengths, explore strategies for effective goal-setting, and cultivate a proactive mindset towards learning and achievement.

A key focus of the session was the concept of a growth mindset—the understanding that abilities can be developed through dedication, resilience, and continuous effort. Through interactive discussions students were challenged to step outside their comfort zones, manage their time effectively, and take ownership of their learning journeys.

The workshop also addressed the importance of self-awareness and motivation, offering students practical tools to balance academic demands with personal wellbeing. Many participants commented on how the experience inspired them to re-evaluate their approach to challenges and to pursue their aspirations with renewed focus and confidence.

“It was better than I expected, it wasn’t like any other talk - it was enlightening and motivational as it covered not just exams but also how to achieve what we want to,”

Weronika, Year 13 Student

“Motivational, engaging and inspiring to push me to do better for the year ahead,”

Taran, Year 13 Student

“Gave useful strategies, the talk was engaging and inspirational, which motivated me to make plans for the future - study and more,”

Grace, Year 13 Student

The “Maximise Your Potential” Workshop was a valuable reminder that success is built not only on talent, but on perseverance, self-discipline, and a positive attitude. Students left the session feeling inspired and better equipped to make the most of their potential - both at school and beyond.



Mrs Coyle, Head of Sixth Form and Ms Hussain, Year 13 Leader

Cambridge University Talk

We welcomed Evie Hinchcliffe, outreach officer from Peterhouse College Cambridge University, to Vyners on October 22nd to deliver two sessions to groups of Year 9 pupils. In the sessions, pupils had the opportunity to learn about various aspects of being a University student including the application process, what they could study at University, student life and how to start super curricular activities that will help them stand out as applicants. The session was well received by the two groups involved. This will hopefully encourage pupils to take part in the free Critical Thinking programme, organised by St. John's College Oxford, which has been highlighted in the information sent out to Year 9 parents.

Mr Kelly, Oxbridge Coordinator

Flu Vaccinations Reminder

As previously advised in the Parent Bulletin and a separate message sent to parents / carers on 4th November, flu vaccinations for students in Years 7-11 are booked to take place in school on 11th November. Parents / carers are asked to read the information carefully and to complete the consent form [\[click here\]](#). Please also [\[click here\]](#) for information on a flu webinar recording. For information, there is a 'faith friendly' alternative which will be available on the day. Please note that students who are deemed to have the appropriate level of competence will be allowed by NHS staff to consent to the vaccination in their own right on the day. Vaccination is very straightforward and is strongly recommended in order to safeguard your child's health.

Miss Williams, Business Manager

Teaching & Learning Update

The Importance of Understanding our Working Memory

According to the Psychologist Dr Tracy Packiam Alloway, the average 30 year old can recall up to 5-6 numbers in their minds if they are asked to listen to a sequence of numbers and then repeat these backwards. Younger students can supposedly recall less; however, many students in assemblies this week were also able to recite a sequence of six digits backwards. When students are being asked to hold a short amount of information in mind for a short period of time they are most likely calling on their working memory. A feature of how the brain works is that we are capable of doing all sorts of things straight after we are shown how to do it but we're equally capable of completely forgetting this afterwards because we haven't made strong enough connections to this knowledge. We know from experience that we can never say we've learnt something without continuous practice; i.e. we won't commit something to our long term memory by simply taking part in a one-off event.



Working memory can best be likened to the mind's very own post-it note. It can hold around 5-7 pieces of information on average and requires focus, attention and effort to retain. However it tends to be processed and then discarded quickly. Examples in everyday life include following a few steps in a recipe without looking or keeping a running total of what you are spending in the supermarket in your head. For students in the classroom this could be following a series of instructions from the teacher or compiling an accurate sentence in a foreign language in the past tense. In the same way that we can't expect someone to know a recipe off by heart by following it just once, students won't know information just because they have seen or heard it once.

Therefore; we are encouraging students to use strategies to help them improve their working memory whilst also continuing to practise and rehearse knowledge to take the strain off their working memory. Students in all year groups have been asked to try out some simple, but effective, strategies to support their learning (see below) and we would encourage you to explore and discuss these strategies alongside your child at home. Thank you.

- Establish and stick to familiar routines
- Draw something to visualise the information e.g. use a chart/ table
- Organise your materials before starting an activity
- Plan your work
- Write instructions down
- Use checklists
- 'Chunk' information
- Avoid distractions (e.g. a quiet, organised space)
- Ask for help/ repetition of instructions
- Practise (to reduce the load on your working memory)

Miss Pape, Assistant Headteacher

Charity Park Run

Saturday 15th November - 9am for a 9.30am start

Miss Hawes and Miss Charlton are raising money for Great Ormond Street Hospital and St Barnabas Hospice. They are also running the London Marathon in April. Please come down and support us for 30 minutes to run/jog/walk with friends/family/pets. Our first event is 1.6km (1 mile) starting and ending in Swakeleys Park. Donations would be massively appreciated! There will be more events in the new year increasing distance but we would love to have your support.

Miss Hawes and Miss Charlton

VLT Support Staff Vacancies

Please [click here](#) for the list of support staff vacancies across the VLT sites.

Attendance Figures

Please find below attendance figures for w/c 20th October 2025

Year Group	Present Marks (%)
Year 7	94.53%
Year 8	95.58%
Year 9	88.05%
Year 10	92.21%
Year 11	91.06%
Year 12	94.93%
Year 13	90.97%

Please find below the top 3 tutorials for attendance for w/c 20th October 2025

Tutorial	Present Marks (%)
8C	99.35%
7G	98.39%
8H	98.13%

Autumn Term Key Dates

Friday 7 th November	Year 11 reports issued
Friday 14 th November	Year 10 reports issued
Friday 21 st November	FOV Quiz Night
Thursday 27 th November	Staff Conference (school closed to students)
Friday 28 th November	Staff Conference (school closed to students)
Monday 1 st December	Occasional Day (school closed)
Thursday 4 th December	Senior Citizens' Christmas Party
Monday 8 th December	Year 11 & 13 Trial exams start
Friday 12 th December	Year 9 reports issued
Wednesday 17 th December	Vyners Christmas Concert
Friday 19 th December	Year 7 reports issued
Friday 19th December	End of Autumn Term (12.20pm finish)

Please click [\[here\]](#) for the link to the Calendar page on our school website, which includes key dates for this academic year - this document will be updated regularly.