

# ADO RIVER VALLEY HANDBOOK

Company Operations

ADO SERVICES C.I.C.

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Next Review In September 2024



2023-2024

## **ADO RIVER VALLEY HANDBOOK – FOR ALL TO READ AND ADHERE TO.**

**ADO River Valley is run by ADO Services C.I.C. (ADO), a Not For Profit Community Interest Company.**

*This handbook is designed to provide important guidelines to key areas for stakeholders to follow and forms part of your acceptance to all the main ADO River Valley Terms and Conditions, and Operational Procedures.*

*For any young people that join our school, we request that they, their families and any professionals associated with them adhere to our procedures and way of working.*

*ADO River Valley reserves the right to take necessary action should we feel our Handbook, and internal Code of Conduct are not being followed by stakeholders. We must emphasise that caregivers, and young people must be on board with our processes to promote a successful placement at our school. ADO River Valley staff will ensure that they have it in writing that families have read, understood and agree to the contents of the handbook.*

### **1. Operating Hours and Site Access**

The ADO River Valley hours of operation are from **9.00am** to **3.30pm**.

Site access for vehicles is via the main gate entrance on Keats Road, where there is drop off and pick up parking spaces. The car park is accessible from **8.30am** for students. We request that vehicles are not parked on Keats Road and our car park is utilised. Do not block any of our residential neighbour's driveways.

The main reception area opens at **8.30am** to ensure prompt access for students. However, please note that due to our thorough risk assessment procedures in the morning, we are unable to welcome students into the school learning spaces until **9am**. To access the main reception, leave the car park on foot by walking out of the small green pedestrian gate, before walking past the goat enclosure and then through the green visitor reception door.

Staff members will then sign in and escort students into their respective main learning zones.

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If the student transport (taxi), parent or carer arrives onsite early, it is recommended staying in the vehicle in the car park for safety until the main reception opens. Students are not able to play around or wait alone in the car park in line with Health and Safety procedures.

**Please note: Vehicle owners park in the car park at their own risk. We cannot be held responsible for injuries or vehicle damage in the car park zone. For Post16 students, please park on neighbouring roads.**

ADO River Valley site is on a residential street, therefore it is not advised that students wait in the street or that transport takes up street parking for residents. Please respect our local residents and support the community by using our facilities and not blocking driveways.

We have two bike storage areas on site which we encourage students to use.

If a student has not arrived on site by **9:15am** and ADO River Valley has not been advised accordingly by telephone or email, the ADO River Valley office will generate a SMS which contacts the parent-carer and supporting professionals to advise they have not yet arrived. If ADO River Valley has been advised of absence by the parent-carer, we will forward the relevant information to the supporting professionals for their attendance records (upon request from individual Local Authorities).

For more information and further guidance on attendance, please refer to our **Attendance Policy**.

## **2. The School Assessments and Timetable**

### **2.1 The Assessment Process**

The first step at our school starts with the assessment. The assessment stage is an important part of joining our school so that we can fully assess the diverse needs of the individual, prior to them starting with us. This is a standalone trial, to fully assess the individual with their caregiver or professional. The assessment stage is a fact-finding time, not only for us but also for the individual too. We are very alternative, and it may be that we are not what you envisaged! With that in mind, the assessment is a stand-alone fee. After the assessment we will provide our feedback and recommendations to the network.

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Individuals who would like to join our school will be required to attend a two-day practical assessment (maximum of two caregivers attend for first two hours of day one). The rest of day one will be supported by our staff, providing exposure into different subjects we deliver. For day two, this is when individuals are fully immersed into the school day with our students.

**Please note, all phones and devices are to be locked away upon arrival, for the full duration (as per our policies and procedures). More information can be found on this in section 7.3.**

## **2.2 The Student Timetable**

The school day begins at **9.00am**. Students will have 15 minutes from **9.00-9.15am** AM registration where they will put their belongings away and prepare themselves for the day.

Students then have one lesson from **9.15-10am** with a morning snack break and assembly from **10-10.20am**. This is then followed by a further two lessons.

The students break for lunch at **11.50am** for 30 minutes, with the afternoon register being taken from **12.20pm**.

From **12.20-1.05pm** is the first afternoon lesson, followed by the next lesson from **1.05-1.50pm**.

From **1:50-2:00pm** there is an informal break before the final lesson at **2:00-2:45pm**.

**2:45pm-3:00pm** During mindfulness time is when learner groups are supported by our staff and have the opportunity to engage in therapeutic activities that focus on the present moment which helps to help calm and reground them prior to going home.

**3:00-3:30pm** is extracurricular club time. **3:30pm** is home time. Students can be collected by their transport or parent-carers once they have collected all their belongings and have exited the site safely.

However, please note, that standard procedure for any secondary student is to leave site independently and if this is not possible due to individual risk factors and student presentation then it is the responsibility of relevant professionals-caregivers to notify ADO River Valley of this and provide a written reason for this request to refuse independent student exits from school.

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## 2.3 Curriculum and Interventions

We feel confident that education and therapy should be treated with equal importance. With this in mind, students have access to a variety of therapeutic interventions throughout the week. Students are provided with specialist lessons in line with our ethos, which may include (but not subject to) the following:

- Animal Science
- General Science
- Equine Studies
- Adventure Sport
- PSHE
- British Values
- Creative Education
- Functional Skills (Mathematics/English/ICT)
- Business Studies
- Health and Social Care
- Countryside and Environment / Land Based Studies
- Bushcraft / Forest Studies
- *Mindfulness & Relaxation (daily intervention)*
- *Zones of Regulation (weekly refreshers)*
- *1:1 Therapeutic Intervention- Equine (weekly)*
- *Group Art Therapy (weekly)*
- *Group Adventure Assisted Activities (weekly)*

Dependent on the individual student and their functioning levels, they will have access to recognised courses which could lead to relevant qualifications such as BTECS, and Functional Skills. Relevant pathways will be discussed with students and caregivers-professionals at the point of the assessment and throughout 'Individual Learner Plan' meetings. Termly careers guidance will also be organised as a 1:1, with wider focused conversations on careers within the PSHE curriculum.

All of our lessons are predominantly led outside and are adapted to be appropriate to the year groups and key stages that the student is working at.

There is exposure to acceptable levels of risk through outdoor education in the security of supervised groups, which will support students to learn about risk and how to keep themselves safe.

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## 2.4 Collection

*(Local Authorities Only)* If transport is late for pickup, ADO River Valley reserves the right to apply an additional charge for the resource time of a member of staff to wait with the student/s if they are known to be too vulnerable to wait in the reception area unattended. This will be noted and passed onto to the financial department in line with normal invoicing periods.

Students can either wait in the customer reception area, walk to their waiting transport in the car park or travel home independently (unless this is not permitted, dependent on individual students). This is to support appropriate age group responsibilities, independence and transitioning into society. More information in section 5.

## 3. Student External Trips

Students will occasionally leave the site, with the supervision of staff members, for pre-planned external trips. This could include, but is not limited to, local open recreational spaces, parks, woodlands, dog walking in nearby residential areas, supermarkets and local high streets.

As the external trips and outings benefit the students' education and experiences, all students will be allowed to access these trips as relevant. If a parent-carer does **NOT** want their young person to partake in nearby external visits, they must send a written letter to the ADO River Valley office and confirm via telephone. Due to staffing ratios required to support groups, if it is deemed that a student is not permitted to attend the external trips, the student may require a reduced timetable that day as there may not be the additional staff available to remain on site with them. This can be discussed directly with the parent-carer.

If a student displays challenging or unsafe behaviours or is of a high risk from absconding from the staff, a risk assessment will be completed for them and it may be deemed unsuitable for the student to attend the external visits until they are able to understand the risks involved, keep themselves and others safe, while also comply with guidelines.

Permission slips and further discussions with caregivers will be required for wider trips such as fitness centres, outdoor water sport centres, climbing centres, equine yards and stables and more.

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## 4. Homework

ADO River Valley will not typically set weekly homework for a student, unless the student is either, absent for multiple days, on a reduced timetable, has experienced extraordinary circumstances, the family have requested homework or the staff team feel it would hugely benefit towards their curriculum work, or to work towards qualifications, such as AQA, BTEC or Functional Skills.

Any set homework will be discussed with the student (and parent-carer if relevant) and a clear due date and method of submission will be explained.

## 5. Transport

ADO River Valley does not organise transport to or from the setting. This must be arranged privately or through the supporting professionals. The ADO River Valley business office must be advised of the transportation plans so we know who to expect and can contact them in case of an emergency collection. If an emergency collection is required, the guardian of that student will need to provide a password which is shared with the ADO River Valley Office, and the person collecting.

Transport must be on site for a prompt **3:30pm** collection. Once a student has left the site premises via the main reception gate, ADO River Valley holds no responsibility for them. ADO River Valley will not hold a student back past collection time unless we are instructed to do so in writing from the guardian (based on their vulnerability factors). We will continue to keep our waiting area open which students can sit in, independently and await collection. They can ring the bell through to us if they have any concerns whilst waiting.

## 6. Subsistence

All students attending our provision must bring a healthy packed lunch and refillable water bottle. We also recommend they are provided with healthy snacks for break times. We operate a healthy eating policy and like to ensure that student lunches are within our healthy eating policy guidelines. By healthy we are referring to a well-balanced offering which consists of lean protein, fibre-rich sources of carbohydrate and vegetables, as well as healthy fats.

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We will contact parent and carers to support alternative ideas for lunches should this arise. We ask families to be mindful of environmental factors, and therefore limit single use items such as plastic. There are many drinking water stations around the site to refill water bottles.

If any of our families are having difficulties with affording healthy foods for their student/ families, we urge them to get in touch with us so we can support them and guide them.

We will offer regular cooking and eating opportunities for our students, over the campfire and in our outdoor kitchen. This will be at the school's cost and within its budget. Having this as an option will ensure that students have the option to be independent, and expressive through making healthy meal choices.

## 7. Student Requirements

All students have lessons outdoors, it is fundamental to what we do. Therefore, they must be prepared to attend dressed in suitable named clothing and footwear for the occasion.

For all seasons, please ensure the student attends in base layers including trousers or leggings. Skirts, shorts and dresses are **not** suitable for the Outdoor Education site as they provide little protection against weather and when in the woodland areas.

Sensible outdoor shoes are required, for example outdoor walking boots or wellies for wet or winter weather. CROCS, flip-flops or open toe sandals are **not** permitted as these are not suitable for our outdoor activities and do not provide foot support on uneven ground. In winter months, we recommend suitable outdoor boots. If a student would rather wellies, then these should be worn with good quality thermal socks as this footwear can prove cold if worn for the full day.

We request that students attend with an appropriate bag, such as a backpack to store their belongings. There will be water available for bottle refills. Hand washing stations are supplied throughout our learning areas and hot water stations are also situated in multiple zones, in addition to a functioning hot shower that can be used in specific circumstances.

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If a student turns up wearing inappropriate clothing either not conducive to the weather or the activities, they will taking part in, ADO River Valley Staff have the right to request them to wear spare additional or replacement clothing that we have. If the child or young person refuses to wear these items and we feel this puts them at risk from injury or illness, ADO River Valley reserves the right to request that the young person is collected as they cannot take part in the activity. The child or young person can of course return later in the day if they are then dressed appropriately. ADO River Valley students must attend with a full change of spare clothes to avoid any avoidable sensory overloads which could lead to distress or emotional dysregulation from any potential accidents that may arise. We ask that caregivers support students with ensuring their clothes are not see through.

Students will have use of a locker for their bags during the school day.

### **7.1 Cold and Wet Weather**

On cold days, please ensure the students have suitable thermal base layers of clothing to retain their heat and keep them comfortable. We recommend bringing spare clothing in the event these may be required. All students must have a named hat or cap suitable to the seasons. Gloves are required and waterproof gloves are highly recommended. A raincoat with a hood is a necessity for every day in attendance. Our model and ethos is to teach outdoors unless we absolutely cannot and with this in mind please see some helpful links for clothing. Waterproofs are also good because they also act as a wind break, not only for when it is raining. Once a person gets wet it is very hard for them to warm up again. Waterproofs are not expensive and can be found on Decathlon too.

[Men's trekking fleece tights - MT100 QUECHUA - Decathlon](#)  
[WOMEN'S HIKING FLEECE TIGHTS MH100 QUECHUA - Decathlon](#)  
[Decathlon | Sports Shoes, Sports Gear & Sports Equipment](#)

You may notice that lots of the staff tend to wear Jack Wolfskin [Outdoor Apparel, Footwear & Equipment – JACK WOLFSKIN \(jack-wolfskin.co.uk\)](#) we appreciate it is not cheap however we rely heavily on the outlet at Ashford and second hand on Vinted.

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## 7.2 Hot Weather

Please ensure students attend with a suitable high factor sun cream (minimum factor 30), which they can apply themselves when needed. This is **NOT** optional and is a compulsory element of the kit required for students who join ADO River Valley. We are unable to apply other sun creams to a student, and therefore if they do not have their own, caregivers will be requested to travel to school to deliver this- we are happy for sun creams to live in lockers. If the weather is very warm, please be aware that we do forest sessions, and it may be advisable to bring insect repellent. Over-knee length shorts as minimum or leggings-cargo trousers with t-shirts must still be worn as this will provide some protection against sunburn or scratches in our forest and woodland areas. Skirts and dresses are not suitable attire for our activities and forest sessions.

## 7.3 Mobile Phone Access

All students are discouraged from bringing any mobile device to ADO River Valley, however if this cannot be avoided, and students have their phones then they will need to be handed over at our gate to staff at the start of the day and given back at the end. We trust our students to follow these rules, we will not conduct bag searches unless we have reason to believe that there is a phone which is impacting the school day.

Students will be unable to access their own mobile device in the duration of their time with us. If a student has a phone visible and refuses to hand it in to ADO River Valley, then they will be refused entry. We feel strongly about the unhealthy impacts of technology on our younger generation, and we will do all that we can to reduce the usage, even if the students think we are being unkind as we know they will look back in the future and recognise why we did it.

Of course, if a caregiver needs to be in contact with their young person during the day this can be arranged via ADO River Valley on site mobiles. If this applies to you, please email your specific requests to

[learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk](mailto:learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk)

## 7.4 Student Stationery

We are requesting that all students attend school with their own stationery. Whilst we will continue to have stationery on site, we feel it is important that the students take accountability for their own stationery, and this way they can be in control of the usage of what stationery works for them. With this in mind,

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we request that each student attends school with their own pencil case. Full stationery breakdown can be found in the checklist later in the handbook. *Please ensure that this is still organised for students who may not yet be writing with us and organise to hand over to staff discreetly to avoid any distress from the student. Also, pencil cases can live in student lockers, if it limits any concerns for a student if they had to take them home.*

## 8. Student Medication

Staff members are only allowed to administer drugs if they have been prescribed by a doctor and staff members have written permission from the parent-carer stating frequency and dosage.

If the student has any allergies including hay-fever or fur allergies, we strongly recommend you provide a named GP prescription bottle of antihistamine or equivalent in order that we can support the student as required. If an allergy flare up is impacting the student's enjoyment and participation and we do not have any medication to administer, we will call the relevant contact to advise them and arrange collection.

Members of the core ADO River Valley team are first aid qualified and trained and have medical kits nearby.

Staff will administer first aid to a student as needed. If parents-carers opt for their child-young person not to receive medical attention, they must send a signed letter to the ADO River Valley Office and confirm with them over the phone.

## 9. Photography

If a parent-carer does **NOT** want their child-young person to have their images taken at ADO River Valley, they must send a written letter to the ADO River Valley office and confirm via telephone at point of when they are enrolled or at the time of decision change (if they are already on roll).

As part of ADO River Valley's growth and development, photos may be used within the website, social media platforms, paper promotions, display boards etc. The photos are to help illustrate our school and ensure it remains

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sustainable. ADO River Valley will never link a student's name to their photo, without further confirmation from parents-carers. ADO River Valley will never sell images or share them to third parties. For students completing qualifications such as AQA, Functional Skills or BTECs, ADO River Valley staff may need to photograph them completing practical work as part of the course evidence requirements. Photo permission is not required for this as evidence is a compulsory part of completing a course.

## 10. Behaviour

Considering that the students and young people being referred to ADO River Valley often present with a series of complexities, displaying behaviours can be part of their presentation at times.

ADO River Valley staff are fully trained in methods and techniques, including therapeutic interventions, on how to manage behaviours.

We follow a strict behaviour policy and in the incidence of challenging behaviour we will talk to the student about the situation, offer alternatives, work towards making sense of these behaviours, in order to support them in the future. We will offer transparency to all students about when their peers are having difficult days to encourage further acceptance.

Full details can be viewed in our **Behaviour Modification Policy** in the ADO River Valley Library on our website, [www.adorivervalley.co.uk](http://www.adorivervalley.co.uk)

Robust systems are in place to recognise behaviours, including PRIDE Points/ Leaves and Nettles. More information on this is in the Code of Conduct section.

## 11. Safeguarding

The Poets Corner site is designed to maximize safeguarding for its students, visitors, staff or partners. There are specific zones that denote the safety of the age groups and other site visitors.

ADO River Valley takes the safeguarding of children and young people very seriously, as such all staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures and any instances are reported directly and promptly to the safeguarding officer on the premises. Our staff are all Enhanced DBS checked and we always have qualified First Aiders on site.

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Our setting is committed to working alongside our students, the community, and the young people themselves to ensure the children's safety at all times.

Any safeguarding concerns must be reported via the ADO River Valley Office and a call back will be rearranged with one of ADO's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL). There is an escalation process in place internally. Reporting to other members of the ADO River Valley team is strictly prohibited for confidential boundaries.

**Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Katie Palmer (Headteacher)**  
**Our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer, and Online Safety Lead (OSL) is Robert Jarvis (Head of Outdoor Learning)**

*Students are very welcome to ask to speak to Kate and Rob at any time if they have a concern regarding safeguarding.*

Please refer to our **Safeguarding Policy** for further information.

## 12. ADO River Valley Policies and Procedures

Full un-edited copies of all the relevant policies and procedures for the ADO River Valley Education team and all associated services, including the ADO River Valley can be found on the main ADO River Valley website within the ADO Library [www.adorivervalley.co.uk](http://www.adorivervalley.co.uk)

Whilst we are an ecological company, we do appreciate that some stakeholders may wish to review our policies by print, and therefore we are happy to print upon request.

In addition, we also allow a tablet loan to stakeholders to sit in our waiting area and review our policies if they do not have use of a device themselves.

## 13. Details on Qualifications:

We aim for all of our students to reach their full potential; we provide baseline assessments within the first two weeks of students starting with us and ascertain a wealth of information from the assessment process. Once the assessments are complete, our educators will review. Within the first two weeks our students also have an Individual Learner Plan meeting, whereby they discuss their interests with regards to the curriculum and qualifications that are available to them.

We have a wide variety of vocational qualifications available to students, irrespective of academic levels. The idea is that we provide stepping stones to

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achieve higher levelled qualifications throughout the years that students are with us.

If students or family members feel unhappy with the equality and access to assessments then they have every right to appeal by reviewing our **Malpractice, Appeals and Complaints Policy**.

We pride ourselves on supporting young people in every way possible, in many cases this is to ensure that students can achieve the same as one another. If they do need support in one or more given areas, we will ensure that reasonable adjustments and access arrangements are in place.

## 14. School Checklist

- Labelled Required Medication (including allergy medication if needed)
  - Packed Lunch
  - Snacks
  - Refillable Drink Bottle
  - Suitable Outdoor Clothing
  - Waterproof jacket/coat with hood and trousers
  - Warm Layers of Clothing
  - Cold Protection – Hat, Scarf, Gloves, Extra Socks
  - Heat Protection – Hat-Cap and Sun Cream (minimum factor 30)
  - Comfortable Waterproofed Trainers or Outdoor Boots (*Note: Footwear Can Get Very Muddy!*)
  - Wellies or Waterproof Outdoor Boots
  - Pencil Case
  - Pencils
  - Pens (for handwriting)
  - Ruler
  - Rubber
  - Colouring Pencils
  - Colouring Pens
  - Sharpener
  - Highlighters (optional)
  - Glue Stick (optional)
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## 15. Code of Conduct

ADO River Valley should be a welcoming and safe place for young people and staff. Therefore, our staff have agreed to the following code of conduct:

### **We, the ADO River Valley staff will do our best to:**

- To introduce young people to how the school works, providing them with a welcoming experience
- To respect and showcase young people's skills and support individual needs
- To provide a safe environment for young people to be actively involved

### **We, the ADO River Valley team expect young people to adhere to our PRIDE Acronym:**

- Polite
- Responsible
- In Control
- Do Your Best
- Earn and Give

#### **Be Polite.**

We will:

- Greet staff
- Thank someone who does something for us
- Hold open the door
- Use kind, helpful and thoughtful language
- Welcome visitors to the school

#### **Be Responsible.**

We will:

- Focus in lesson, attending lessons on time
- Complete the work set
- Bring/clean/tidy our equipment for ...
- Help with ...

#### **Stay In Control.**

We will:

- Keep a positive attitude to learning
  - Walk away from conflict
  - Use reflection time wisely
  - Get help rather than join in any dispute
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- Practise mindfulness each day

### **Do Our Best.**

We will:

- Attend school
- Join in events and competitions
- Create our best work
- Complete tasks to the best of our ability
- Participate in mindful activities

### **Earn and Give.**

We will:

- Act as an ambassador for the school
- Take an active role in events
- Do an act of kindness every day

### Some examples of situations we would not accept at our school:

- Deliberately not co-operating with staff
- Aggressive or violent behaviour, including verbal or physical bullying or harassment towards staff, peers or animals
- Disrespectful, racist, sexist, or insensitive comments
- Offensive language
- Dropping litter, throwing things, or spitting
- Using a personal phone or device on site
- Sharing contact details with other young people whilst at school
- Viewing or sharing inappropriate material
- Taking or sharing videos or photos
- Visibly displaying inappropriate romantic affection to another peer at school
- Possession or use of alcohol, drugs, or solvents
- Carrying weapons is strictly prohibited, it would be confiscated, and police would be contacted

Please note, that whilst this may appear harsh or strict, it is for the interests of each and every student. Of course, we want to encourage healthy friendships on site, however we are unable to encourage this outside of school due to staff not being present to help navigate the friendship and ensure safety and boundaries at all times.

Romantic relationships are something we accept may happen at our school between peers, however we reserve the right to enforce that relationships are

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of an appropriate age (over 16) and that there are strong boundaries set out at school. When a romantic relationship is occurring between two peers, we request that the information is not shared amongst the other students. We ask for consent to be at the forefront of student's minds. Caregivers have a duty to safeguard relationships of all kinds, outside of the school setting.

## 16. Important Contact Information

ADO River Valley is located at:

Poets Corner Centre  
19A Keats Road  
Welling  
DA16 3NB

The ADO River Valley business office is located at:

ADO Services CIC,  
Main Office  
126 Upper Wickham Lane  
Welling  
Kent  
DA16 3DP

**ADO Contact Number – 020 8850 6778**

**Email – [learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk](mailto:learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk)**

**Office Hours – 8.30am until 5pm – Monday to Friday (Closed Weekends and School Holidays)**

## 17. Key Staff

- **Katie Palmer – Headteacher, Site Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Quality Assurance, Therapist,**
  - **Victoria McHolland-Pilcher – Proprietor, Director of Education, Therapist**
  - **Robert Jarvis-Head of Outdoor Learning, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Online Safety Lead (OSL)**
  - **Amy Kadiu- Deputy Headteacher, SENCO Advisor, Maths and English Teacher**
  - **Joe Greenwood- Land Support Supervisor, Health and Safety-Risk Assessment of Setting**
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- Charlotte Fenna- **Science Educator, Animal Care Lead, Equality and Diversity Ambassador**
- Emma Bronsdon- **Sport and Creative Educator, Hedgehog and Wildlife Ambassador**
- Michelle Brodie- **Learning Support Assistant, PSHE Assistant Educator, Wellbeing Support**
- Tom Phillips- **Trainee Educator**
- Ella McHolland-Pilcher- **Equine Therapy Trainee, Equine Care Lead**
- Eva Kadiu- **Equine Educator Trainee**

## 18. Frequently Asked Questions

### 1- What Can I Do When My Child/ Young Person Might Be Having A Particularly Difficult Day?

In this section we are referring to a student's Social and Emotional Mental Health/ SEMH and what caregivers can do on the days when they are having a particularly difficult time. What does a particularly hard day look like in the first place? It is important to say at this point that we strongly believe that caregivers know their children best, so we trust your judgment and that you know a lot better than any of us how a 'particularly hard' day looks like for the student. However, from our experience we know that sometimes for students who have had long histories of SEMH difficulties, finding the motivation to get up in the morning and prepare for school can be a huge challenge which can put pressure on the whole family, especially when sleep difficulties contribute a big part of the student's presentation and they always feel tired and exhausted when they wake up. We appreciate that it is difficult to distinguish between a particularly hard day from one where the presentation is typically difficult.

Considering that for all of us the events from the previous day as well as the kind of sleep we've had overnight can linger and affect the way we feel the following morning, it is important to bear the following in mind: In the same way we would think about physical illness and someone's ability to go to work or in our case to school on that particular day, it is also important to weigh up whether the way that the day in school will progress for the student if it feels like 'a ticking time bomb' or almost

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like a self-fulfilling prophecy in the sense that they will not be able to cope, hold that in mind and make the decision which feels right for your CYP. We would never tell you what to do as parents/caregivers, although at the same time, we want to assure you that we take SEMH struggles as seriously as physical health, and we would understand if you decided to not send your CYP to school on a day which you consider particularly difficult for their emotional wellbeing, and which could impact the way they conduct themselves at school. Therefore, the same way you can contact us and speak to us or leave a message regarding your CYP's absence due to physical illness, you can do the same to report that your CYP won't be able to attend on that day due to SEMH difficulties. It is important to note that home learning could be organised for days such as this where your CYP's SEMH needs could cause them to struggle within school. Finally, it is also important to note that in cases where this becomes a typical occurrence and your CYP's attendance suffers, we will meet with you and discuss about how to best support your CYP at that time. We are part of your team!

## **2- How Can I Support my Child/ Young Person to Manage Exchanging or Not Exchanging Contact Details With Other Students Attending ADO River Valley?**

In this section we are referring to the very common phenomenon of Children/ Young People (CYP) attending our school, exchanging contact details with one another and communicating through this means outside of school. As a school, we neither condone nor support this as we totally appreciate that this is a family decision. However, we want to share with you the possible benefits as well as risks which can arise so that you are as informed as possible.

In particular, what we know is that the majority, if not all, of the CYP who attend our school have had long histories of struggles in their previous schools they were attending and on most occasions, they have had to experience a lot of transitions and change of school environments before they arrived with us. This has inevitably meant that belonging to a group, which is one of our innate needs, is something that they have had to fight hard for, therefore their need to belong might be intensified

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or it might work the opposite way, in cases they prefer to not risk worrying about friendships and fitting in. Socialising and feeling that we belong are positive predictors for people's mental health, however, as a school we do not hold responsibility or have control over what is being posted and promoted outside of our setting, which could impact on a student's wellbeing in either a positive or a negative way. Having open and honest communication with your CYP regarding their social media use as well as some parental involvement is encouraged in order to support CYP to develop digital literacy, for example: 1) to set and stick to goals for social media use (i.e. content creation, connection with peers), 2) to curate content and control settings, and 3) to be aware of scams, possible predators, as well as time-drains. You might find it helpful reading the following webpage, which includes useful information and relevant guidance for parents:

[Teaching Kids to Be Smart About Social Media \(for Parents\) - Nemours KidsHealth](#)

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**Thank you for taking the time to read our handbook. We hope it has been of benefit to you. The final step (along with shopping for stationery and outdoor clothing) is to email [learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk](mailto:learning@rivervalleystudent.co.uk) to confirm you (the young person) and your caregivers have read, understood and adhere to the handbook.**

