



# HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February, the Highdown community will be remembering Olly Stephens whose life was cut tragically short last month. The shock and disbelief continues to be felt. His friends are missing him and we can't begin to imagine how much his family must be. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. Many young people are struggling even more in this lock down and physical separation from friends makes the loss of Olly even more acute.

Many of us will be wearing items of red clothing on Friday. It was Olly's favourite colour and we will remember him in quiet celebration of his life and in mourning the life lost to us. I will be joined by staff representatives at our gates on Friday.

Many staff and students have accessed counselling arranged by the school with support from Reading Local Authority and other schools who have kindly given capacity from their teams to support our own amazing pastoral team. We know that many will need to continue to access these services in the weeks and months to come and we are alert and able to respond.

Highdown is a close and supportive community. We have received messages of total support for all we are doing from our families. Every one of these makes us stronger and more resolved to work for the good of our students and the wider community.

We shared the words of Amanda Gorman with our community recently as these resonated with how Highdown has responded and will go forward:

*Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:*

*That even as we grieved, we grew.*

*That even as we hurt, we hoped.*

*That even as we tired, we tried.*

*That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.*

*Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.*

Ms R E Cave  
Headteacher

