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<p>This morning, a group of Year 9 and 10 students presented their vision for a Student Council Steering Group to the Senior Leadership Team, and they were outstanding. Their ideas were ambitious, their thinking was sharp, and their delivery was confident and compelling. They've outlined a plan to run their own council with real autonomy and purpose, and honestly, if this week's presentation is anything to go by, I have every faith they'll deliver something brilliant. The timeline for next half term is tight, but these students are more than ready for the challenge. I think you're going to be really impressed with what they achieve.</p> <p>I also want to update you on toilet facilities, which have been raised through our feedback channels and which we're taking seriously. We're currently in discussions with the local authority about plans to upgrade and enhance facilities across the school, including new toilet blocks. The project is now at tender stage, which means we're moving from planning to action. Our students deserve facilities that are genuinely top quality, and we're committed to making that happen. We'll keep you updated as things progress. This is a priority for us. Please also note the 'Your Feedback, Our Action' item which returns this week with updates on matters raised with us recently by parents and how we are responding.</p> <p>While you're reading through this week's newsletter, I'd encourage you to take a look at the piece about our approach to supporting students with EAL. Inclusion sits at the very heart of what we do at Fortismere, and our talk partner strategies and scaffolding approaches are a brilliant example of how good inclusive practice lifts everyone. These approaches don't just support our EAL learners. They benefit all students, particularly those who need additional support with processing, confidence, or literacy. It's the kind of thoughtful, evidence-based teaching that supports our excellent outcomes at Fortismere.</p> <p>As we head into half term, I want to congratulate all our students on their hard work this term. A special mention to our Year 11 and Year 13 students who are in the midst of their GCSE and A Level exams - you've shown such maturity and resilience, and it's been wonderful to see so many positive faces coming out of the exam hall. Have a lovely half term, everyone!</p>	<p>Headteacher's Message</p>	
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	<p>25.05 - 29.05</p>	<p>Half Term Holiday</p>
	<p>01.06</p>	<p>School starts 8.35am P1</p>
	<p>17.06</p>	<p>A Level Art & Photography Exhibition 6pm in NW</p>
	<p>Feedback at Fortismere here</p>	
	<p>Y12 student Danielle MacDougall has written a powerful poem for the Newsletter this week.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>They tell her, be strong - but not too strong, or your voice will echo too loudly in rooms that prefer whispers...</i></p> <p>Read the full poem published on the last page of the Newsletter</p>	

School Leadership Messages

Your Feedback, Our Action

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share feedback with us this half term, whether through parent surgeries, our feedback form, or discussion groups.

Your voice matters enormously to us, and hearing directly from you helps us understand what's working well and where we need to focus our attention.

We're open to all feedback: the positive comments help us understand what you'd like to see more of, and the issues or suggestions you raise help us respond effectively and make meaningful improvements.

Please keep sharing your views with us. This dialogue is invaluable in helping us serve our students and families better.

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YOUR FEEDBACK, OUR ACTION

Summer Term 2026

CAN WE HAVE AN UPDATE ON PLANS FOR THE TOILETS?

At the moment we are into a tendering process with the Local Authority with plans to refurbish toilets and add new ones across the site. We'll send updates on a timeline when we have them..

BOOKING PARENTS EVENING APPOINTMENTS CAN BE CHALLENGING

We are reviewing the arrangements for Parents Evening in light of this feedback and will make adaptations in the next academic year to improve the experience of parents

THE AWARDING OF POSITIVE POINTS IS NOT ALWAYS CONSISTENT

We will look at the consistency in awarding of positive points through data monitoring to ensure all students have equal opportunities to be positively rewarded. We will follow this up with staff after half term and it will be a feature of our September training.

Use the link to the Feedback at Fortismere form on the weekly newsletter to share your ideas with us.

Year 11 Notices

A Great Start to Exam Season

I want to congratulate all Year 11 students for making a great start to their exams. Students have shown exemplary maturity and commitment during this busy time. It has been wonderful to see so many happy faces coming out of exams, proving that all the hard work put into school and home revision is paying off. Keep it up! As we go into the half-term break, I hope students will take time to rest in between their revision sessions and use this time to recharge their batteries ready and focused for the next set of exams.

Prom Tickets on ParentMail

A reminder that payment is currently open on Parentmail to purchase tickets for the Year 11 Prom at The Engine Rooms (East Finchley). We are really looking forward to seeing all of our Year 11s for an evening of fun to celebrate their years at Fortismere and to wish them best of luck in their future!

Y11 Celebration Assembly - Monday 22nd June at 3pm

We are pleased to share details of the upcoming Year 11 celebration assembly. All students are invited to follow the proud Fortismere tradition and dress up for this fun celebration. We look forward to seeing everyone there in their wonderful costumes!

- Date: Monday 22nd June
- Location: South Wing Hall (in school)
- Arrival Time: 2:40pm-2:55pm (for a prompt 3:00pm start)
- Dress Code: Fancy dress costumes!

Year 10 Notices

Mock Exam Results Day - Wednesday 3rd June

Thank you for your continued support over the recent two-week mock exams period. Our Year 10 students have been very well behaved during their mocks and conducted themselves with great maturity. They largely followed the strict JCQ examination rules and have made fantastic progress in terms of their overall maturity and focus. Well done to all of them! Please note the details below for when Y10 students will receive their results

- Date: Wednesday 3rd June
- Location: North Wing Hall
- Time: Results will be shared with students at the end of the day, just before they go home

Year 9 Notice

Year 9 Big Picture Assessments - Revision Guide

Year 9 students will be sitting their 'Big Picture' assessments between 15th-26th June 2026, marking the end of their Key Stage 3 studies. We've prepared a comprehensive revision guide to support students in developing effective study habits that will serve them well into their GCSEs.

The guide includes subject-specific revision tips, active learning techniques, and practical advice on managing wellbeing during assessment periods. Teachers will spend time in lessons helping students to revise and prepare, and students can find a reminder of topics on CosX.

Please encourage your child to use this guide to create a revision plan and establish good study routines. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

You can [access the Guide on the website here](#)

Ms Boot

Heads of Years

HOY Changes During Next Half-Term

Over the next half term and in preparation for moving into new year groups from September, some years will see changes to their Head of Year.

Y7: Ms Brough will be taking over from Ms Fox at the end of June for the transition into Year 8

Y9: Due to Ms Boot's maternity leave, Ms Jones will be taking over from mid June

Y10: Ms Cuenca is taking over from Ms Jackson at the start of next half term

Y11: Any current Y11 students and parents should continue to contact Ms Cuenca until the end of term

Ms Williams will be staying with her group and Ms Fox will be preparing for Year 6 transition.

Co-Curricular News

Fortismere Chess Team Shine at National Championships

Congratulations to our incredible school chess team for their great performance in the English Schools Chess U19 Championship! Fortismere placed **8th out of 14 elite schools** in Repechage F, the penultimate stage of this prestigious national tournament. This is a really special achievement because:

- **The Ultimate Underdogs:** Fortismere was the **only** non-selective state comprehensive school to reach this advanced round.
- **Elite Competition:** Our students faced off against top-tier opposition, including current national champions Hampton School and several former titleholders.
- **A Young Team:** While this is an Under-19 tournament, four of our six players are in Key Stage 3 and two are in Key Stage 4.
- **Historic Prestige:** Founded in 1957, this is the UK's most prestigious school team chess competition, historically known as *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* Championship.

Remember the **Chess Club meets at lunchtimes in Room S05** with Mr Renner so encourage your child to come along - all levels of players welcome.

A round of applause for the team please: **Stanley Badacsonyi** (Captain); **Amirali Nematollahi**; **Theo Mears**; **Sam Murphy**; **Alberto Chernin**; **Oliver Rozmus** We are proud of you all
Mr Renner

Annual Georgia Morris Photography Prize

Georgia Morris was a Year 7 student at Fortismere who loved photography and was passionate about capturing nature and wildlife. After her brave fight against cancer in 2016, her family created this annual prize in her memory to inspire young photographers at Fortismere.

Years 7, 8 and 9 students are invited to enter this year's competition with the theme "Nature and Wildlife" and to capture animals, plants, landscapes or anything from the natural world that inspires them.

1st prize: £150 Amazon vouchers; 2nd prize: £100 Amazon vouchers; 3rd prize: £50 Amazon vouchers

The deadline for entries is 30th June. Email entries to Mr Holden gholden@fortismere.org.uk

Read the full article and see some of Georgia's photos on the [Art & Photography Extra-Curricular page here](#)

Careers & Work Related Learning Notices

Future Skills Questionnaire

As part of our careers education programme, we are asking all students in Years 7, 8 & 9 to complete the **Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ)**. This quick 15-minute online tool allows students to reflect on their individual strengths, essential life skills, and ideas for the future.

Why is this important?

- **Tailored Support:** It helps us understand what careers information and industries students want to learn about.
- **Better School Planning:** We use the feedback to shape future school careers events, trips, and workshops.
- **Personal Growth:** It gets students thinking about their skills ahead of key choices, like selecting their GCSE options.

How you can help: A link to the questionnaire has been sent directly to your child's school Gmail account (the link is from the Careers & Enterprise Company). Please talk to your child about the questionnaire and encourage them to complete it as soon as possible and **by the deadline of 8th June**.

The questionnaire is a fantastic way for us to hear our students' voices and to support their ambitions. Thank you for your support with this. If you have any queries about the FSQ please contact The Careers Team careers@fortismere.org.uk

Year 10 Business Trip to Madame Tussauds

A group of Year 10 students took part in a Business trip to Madame Tussauds this week. As well as meeting the wax figures, students explored real-world business topics and functions, helping them to learn about the roles and skills required to operate a major tourism brand like Madame Tussauds.



Saoirse, Sophia and Lucy who were part of the group said - *the trip was a very good experience and we learnt a lot. We had fun seeing the wax figures and taking photos with them! We would like to do it again.*

Science Department

Inspiring Scientists of the Week....

Jabir Ibn Hayyan (جابر بن حيان)

Jabir Ibn Hayyan, often called the “Father of Arab Chemistry”, was thought to be living in the eighth century during the early years of the ‘Golden Age of Arabic Science’ and greatly influenced Arabic and European science for centuries. He developed many laboratory techniques still used in chemistry today, describing processes such as distillation, crystallisation, filtration and evaporation as well designing advanced scientific equipment including the alembic still.



Over 600 works, collectively called the *Jabirian Corpus*, have been attributed to him. Approximately 200 of these still survive today and cover a vast breadth of topics including astronomy, alchemy, zoology, botany and medicine, but also astrology and magic.

Modern scholars often regard “Jabir” as a pseudonym for an anonymous group of alchemists, similar to some modern views on the implausibility of a single authorship of Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In fact some Islamic scholars in the 10th century were already doubting the existence of an individual ‘Jabir’ despite repeated references to “my master Ja’far al-Sadiq”, a known Arabic scholar.

Whatever the truth, his/their emphasis on experimentation and careful observation helped move science away from superstition toward evidence-based investigation. His/their categorisation of elements laid the earliest groundwork for the modern distinction between metals and non-metals:

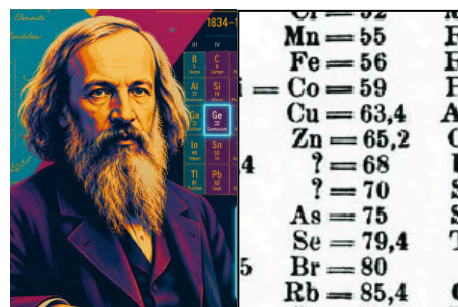
1. Spirits (“Arwah” - أرواح): Highly volatile substances that vaporise or completely sublime when heated eg. mercury, arsenic.
2. Metals (“Ajsad” - الأجساد): Malleable, ‘lustrous’ and do not evaporate with heat eg. gold, lead, copper.
3. Stones/Minerals (“Ahjar” - أحجار): Non-malleable and non-fusible substances that can be broken down into powders eg. salts.

This is arguably the start of a thread of observations-based knowledge leading to Mendeleev’s Periodic Table Of Elements.

Further reading/viewing on the history of Arabic science: *Pathfinders: The Golden Age of Arabic Science* by Jim al-Khalili (Penguin Books); *History of Science Museum* website, University of Oxford (<https://www.hsm.ox.ac.uk/science-islamic-world>).

Dmitri Mendeleev

Dmitri Mendeleev was a Russian chemist famous for creating the modern periodic table. Born in 1834, he organised the known chemical elements according to their properties and atomic masses, recognising repeating patterns between them. Mendeleev boldly left gaps in his table for elements that had not yet been discovered and accurately predicted their properties. When these elements, and in particular Germanium, were found several years later his ideas were proven correct and they gained worldwide recognition. His periodic table transformed chemistry by helping scientists understand relationships between elements and predict chemical behaviour.



Mendeleev’s pursuit of structural order echoes the classification work of Jabir ibn Hayyan with shared similar principles: Chemical and physical properties dictate order; Predictive power of patterns in reactivity.

Further reading/viewing on Mendeleev and the periodic table: *Periodic Tales: The Curious Lives of the Elements* by Hugh Aldersey-Williams; *Investigating the Periodic Table with Experiments* (YouTube) <https://tinyurl.com/4uyumzfr>

And a reminder that students can enter the scientist who inspires you most competition by writing a short piece explaining how their chosen scientist’s discoveries, creativity, or perseverance inspire them. Winning entries will be displayed in the Science Department, with prizes for the most inspiring responses. Submissions via this Google Form (School accounts only): <https://forms.gle/cDTwpxHgHSVAYkAJ6>

Drama Department Notices

Y10 GCSE Drama: Creative Writing Workshop with ATG Inspire

This week, our Year 10 cohort were fortunate to take part in inspiring writing workshops delivered by two practitioners from ATG Inspire. The sessions followed the recent performance of *Romeo and Juliet* that students had attended last week, giving them the opportunity to explore the play's key themes of conflict, relationships, loyalty, and fate through creative writing and practical exploration.

Students worked collaboratively to develop ideas for their upcoming Devising performance, experimenting with a range of writing techniques including structuring scenes, developing dialogue, and creating dramatic tension. They also took part in practical scene work to help bring their ideas into action and deepen their understanding of character and storytelling. The students really enjoyed the workshops and are excited to add the valuable skills learned to their Devising!



Fortismere Drama Summer Showcase...Auditions Notice

Open call for actors, comedians, musicians, singers, dancers, rappers, magicians, gymnasts etc!

Summer Showcase auditions are taking place after half-term in North Wing Hall

- Thurs 11th June - 1.05pm
- Mon 15th June - 3.10pm
- Mon 22nd June - 3.10pm

Use the QR code to sign up or visit: <https://forms.gle/Y7eSeQ37Hj1qqcpv7> Students must sign in to their School Google account to fill in the form.



Almeida Theatre Young Company 14-18: Applications Open

Almeida 14-18 Young Company applications are now open!

Who is it for? 14-18 year old aspiring theatre-makers looking to gain experience in acting, working with text, developing new theatre, and performing on stage at the Almeida.

The 14-18 Young Company is free to join and is designed for young people living in Islington, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, or Tower Hamlets.

Applications close at 10am on Monday 22nd June. [Click here for more info and to apply](#)



Young Creatives & Technicians 2026 - Free 5 Day Theatre Course 10-14th August 2026

Explore a week in theatre with the Donmar Warehouse & Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Gain hands-on experience with industry experts and take the next step towards a career in Set and Costume Design, Lighting, Sound, and Stage Management & Stage Technology. Discover how artists apply artistic and technical skills in real productions, explore pathways into work including apprenticeships, Higher Education and early career employment opportunities. You'll build a portfolio of work, meet top industry professionals, and watch a performance at the Donmar.

The programme is open to applications from all young people aged 16–19 in London, and anyone is welcome to apply. A proportion of places on this project are reserved for young people who have historically had less access to training and creative opportunities, and those who are local to the Donmar & Royal Central.

[Click for more details](#) and apply [HERE](#) by 9am on Monday 13th July 2026.

Y13 A-Level Exams

Well done to all the Y13s who took their final A-Level written Drama exam yesterday and all the best for results day!

Sport & PE Notices

"North London Forever" Fortismere Celebrate Arsenal - Premier League Champions!



There were lots of happy Fortismere students and staff earlier this week as Arsenal clinched their first premier league title in 22 years! We're now wishing them luck and hoping for a double when they play in the Champions League Final on Saturday 30th May!

Martial Arts Course Starting After Half-Term

On Monday this week, James from JM Wing Chun Martial Arts came into school and provided a free taster session for Fortismere students. The students had great fun and learnt some simple self defence moves. James is delivering a 6-week after school course at Fortismere(Sports Hall) starting on Monday 8th June. The cost is £6 per session. For more information please contact James by email info@jmwingchun.com or on 07949995715



PE & Sports Extra Curricular Timetable

There is a new new Extra Curricular Sports Timetable when we come back after half-term

	Lunch Time	After School 3.15-4.15 pm
Monday	Football - Astro MV/GK Basketball - Outdoor Courts Badminton/Pickleball Yrs 7/8 - Sports Hall-NDF	Martial Arts - Sports Hall - Outside Coach Volleyball - Sports Hall Rounders - School Field - MV
Tuesday	Football - Astro MV/GK Badminton/Pickleball Yrs 9-11 Sports Hall-NDF Running Club - LB Basketball - Outdoor Courts -MH	Badminton all years (Sports Hall) - LB Netball Y7/8 - (Netball Courts) - KW Tennis - Outdoor Courts - MH Cricket all years - school field - GK
Wednesday	Football - Astro GK Basketball - MH Badminton/Pickleball - Yrs 7/8 Sports Hall-MV	Staff CPD Y7 Basketball (Sports Hall) - Outside Coach
Thursday	Football - Astro MV Badminton - Yrs 9-11 Sports Hall-GK Basketball -MH	Pickle Ball - (Sports Hall) -MV
Friday	Basketball - MH Badminton/Pickleball GK	

Middlesex Athletics Team

Congratulations to Francesco Barra and Etta Harding who have both qualified to represent Haringey at the Middlesex Athletics Championships which takes place on Sunday 21st June. Good luck!

Elkie For England U18 Athletics Squad

Fortismere student Elkie Baker recently travelled with an U18 England Athletics Team to Halle in Germany to take part in the 51st Hallesche Werfetage throwing festival. There were athletes from around the world and despite an injury, she recorded her second best ever throw of 41.67m! Elkie topped her qualifying group and progressed to the final where she set a new Pb of 42.81m - just 1.49m below UKA Euro 18 Championship Qualifying Standard. Congratulations Elkie!



Fortismere May Sports Representatives

Congratulations to Francisco (Y8) who is the Haringey Schools Swimming Champion in 50m Butterfly and Haringey Schools Athletics Champion in 1500m track. He will represent Middlesex on Sunday 21st June at the Middlesex Schools Athletics Championships.



Well done to Joacquin (Y7) who is the Haringey Schools Champion in both the 1500 metres and 800m metres track.

And **Bravo Evie (Y10)** for being the Haringey Schools Champion in Long Jump. She also won her 60m Hurdles and 100m race at the recent Haringey School Championships.

Music Department

Violin Masterclass with Bilal Alnemr - Wednesday 17th June 5.30pm

Last call for applications from violin students who would like to take part in the masterclass with Bilal Alnemr as the deadline is today. [Sign up here](#)

Book tickets here (free for students):

<https://www.fortismeremusiccentre.co.uk/events/masterclass>

FCSO
FORTISMERE COMMUNITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BILAL ALNEMR
Violinist

VIOLIN MASTERCLASS

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2026 AT 5.30 PM

STUDENT/EARLY BIRD £10 | STANDARD £10 | STUDENTS/FREE

BOOK ONLINE: www.fortismeremusiccentre.co.uk

Fortismere Community Symphony Orchestra - Saturday 20th June at 7pm

Free tickets for Fortismere students for this concert. Tickets are now on sale for this vibrant, rhythmic and cinematic programme.

[See here](#) for more information and tickets. Use the code FORTSTUDENT26 for free student tickets

FCSO
FORTISMERE COMMUNITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CHABRIER
España

KORNGOLD
Violin Concerto

BERNSTEIN
Symphonic Dances from West Side Story

MARQUEZ
Danzon No. 2

VIOLIN **BILAL ALNEMR**

CONDUCTORS **THOMAS GREGORY**
HOWARD WILLIAMS

SATURDAY 20 JUNE 2026 AT 7.00 PM

ST JAMES PRESWELL HALL, ST JAMES'S LANE, NO. 200

STANDARD £10 | EARLY BIRD £10 | STUDENTS/FREE

BOOK ONLINE: www.fortismeremusiccentre.co.uk

Friends of Fortismere

Silent Riot Raise The Roof at The Woodman and Raise Money For Fortismere

The atmosphere at The Woodman was electric as local legends Silent Riot took to the stage for a high-energy fundraising gig that Highgate won't soon forget.

We are thrilled to announce that thanks to the incredible turnout and generous donations, the event raised well over £1,000 for Friends of Fortismere and every penny is heading straight to the Fortismere Music Department, ensuring the next generation of local talent has the instruments and resources they need to keep playing.



The student band delivered a powerhouse set that had the pub packed from the front rail to the back garden. Noah commanded the room with incredible vocals. The triple-guitar threat of Leon, Flynn, and Adam provided a massive wall of sound. Luke on bass and Shay on drums kept the floor shaking with a rock-solid rhythm section. A massive shout-out to special guest Luca, who joined the boys on vocals for a show-stopping collaboration.

Messages of Thanks

To everyone who "paid a fiver like the old days" and packed out the venue: thank you. In an era of rising costs, seeing the community rally together to support school music is wonderful. If anyone would still like to donate, please [use this link](#)

FOF would also like to thank Silent Riot and their parents and supporters who did such an amazing job of organising and running this amazing evening. We've never seen the Woodman so packed!

And we wanted to include a special nod to Mr. Watson and the School of Rock initiative. That is where it all started for these performers, and it highlights exactly why school-led music programmes are so vital. Initiatives like these provide the essential foundation for growing and supporting young talent, giving them the confidence and the stage to find their voice.

Parent Information Event

Parent & Carer Online Safety Webinar

Haringey Screentime and Online Safety Webinars for Parents

Evidence suggests that the increasing use of screens and smart devices is having harmful effects on children and young people. Haringey Council is offering a series of free online workshops to help parents and carers to understand the impact of screentime and support children and young people to use technology in a healthy, safe and positive way. Workshops are online and last an hour.

Dates: Tue 23/06 (7pm); Mon 29/06 (7pm); Thurs 09/07 (10am)

[Book free tickets – Haringey Screentime and Online Safety Webinars for Parents](#)

LINC Notice

EAL At Fortismere - Talk Partners and Scaffolding

At Fortismere, we celebrate our rich diversity, including our students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). Because language is central to learning, confidence, and wellbeing, we use specific strategies to help our EAL learners fully access the curriculum while valuing their home language. Ms Ingerslev, our EAL Coordinator outlines our approach below.

Many of the strategies we use also benefit all learners, particularly those with literacy difficulties, processing needs, or lower reading confidence. We use the following classroom approaches:

- **Modelling Through Talk:** We scaffold learning through listening, seeing, and doing. Staff model spoken English so students can learn language naturally in context.
- **Active Classroom Interaction:** Language is best learned through daily immersion with teachers and peers. We frequently use **10-minute "short bursts"** of focused discussion to keep language practice manageable and meaningful.
- **Talk Partners & Supportive Peers:** We pair EAL students with friendly peers inside and outside the classroom. This builds positive relationships and boosts confidence.
- **The Writing Process:** Students start by forming simple sentences, progressing to compound and complex structures as they grow. **Talk partners** give students vital time to process information, rehearse ideas verbally, and draft written responses without the anxiety of being put on the spot.

We celebrate our multilingualism as being bilingual or multilingual brings huge cognitive advantages, including sharper memory, problem-solving, and creativity. Over time, students transfer knowledge from their first language into English. We encourage families to keep developing both languages at home; multilingualism is a valuable skill that enriches our whole school community.

For more information about EAL provision at Fortismere, please contact Ms Ingerslev, our EAL Coordinator vingerslev@fortismere.org.uk

Reminder: Parent/Carer Information Event with Haringey SEND Power

Supporting your young person with SEND through puberty - led by Robyn Stewart. The event will run twice on **Tuesday 2nd June** as follows:

In-person: 10am-12pm Chestnuts Community Centre N15 and Online: 6.30pm-8pm

Book a place via EventBrite [here](#)

Safeguarding at Fortismere

Safeguarding Contacts

If you wish to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead about any safeguarding matters or concerns please contact Ms Sullivan on safeguarding@fortismere.org.uk

Alternatively you can make a safeguarding referral using *My Voice* [use this link](#) or the QR code. You can also contact your child's Head of Year or Pastoral Support Manager.



Enjoy this poem written by Y12 student Danielle MacDougall

They tell her,
be strong but not too strong,
or your voice will echo too loudly
in rooms that prefer whispers.

They tell her,
be gentle — but not too gentle,
or you'll dissolve into softness,
easy to overlook, easy to ignore.

Stand tall,
but don't take up space.
Speak up,
but don't sound demanding.
Care deeply,
but don't feel too much.

She learns to measure herself
in invisible scales,
weighing every word,
every laugh,
every piece of who she is
against rules that keep shifting.

Too bold becomes intimidating.
Too quiet becomes weak.
Too driven becomes cold.
Too kind becomes naive

And even her body
is not her own to define—
A man can be broad, heavy,
laughed off as "comfortable," "strong]

or carved from muscle,
praised for his discipline, his power.

But let her take up the same space
and it becomes something else—
too much, too soft,
something to fix, to shrink, to hide.

Let her build strength,
let her shape herself in muscle,
and suddenly she is "too hard,"
"too masculine,"
as if power was never meant
to belong to her.

And somewhere between
their definitions of "acceptable,"
she starts to wonder
if there is a version of her
that isn't already "too much"
or "not enough."

But maybe the truth is this:
she was never meant to fit
into something so small.
Maybe strength can be soft,
and softness can be powerful,
and a woman is not a balance to perfect
but a whole world to exist —
loud, quiet, fierce, gentle,
all at once,
In a world that doesn't accept it.