Vyners School
Striving for Excellence

23rd June 2026

Dear Parents / Carers

Subject: Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

I am writing in response to a number of parents / carers who have been in touch regarding Oak Processionary Moth on the school site.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) is an invasive species which was introduced accidentally to the UK in 2005. Whilst most of the UK is still free of this species, it is unfortunately now well established in London with a buffer zone that has been created in neighbouring areas.

As you may be aware, the caterpillar hairs are an irritant and can bring those exposed out in a rash. Anyone with an existing respiratory issue may also suffer if they breathe the hairs in. The caterpillars are resident primarily on oak trees in the months of May and June, after which they turn into moths and disappear. Unfortunately, before they die, the moths lay eggs ready for the following year.

As we have a large number of mature oak trees on site, the school has suffered with OPM for the last few years. We have taken the following steps to try and minimise the risk to students and staff:

- Students are educated on OPM, how to spot them, and how to protect themselves.
- The school has fenced off higher risk areas surrounded by oak trees. Unfortunately, with a significant number of oak trees on site, many of which are close to school buildings or overhanging key areas like the main drive, it is not possible to isolate all areas where OPM may be present.
- The school annually sprays all its oak trees in an attempt to kill the larvae before they turn into caterpillars. Spraying this year took place in late May. Whilst there are fewer nests on site as a result, the treatment is unlikely to be 100% successful in eradicating all larvae.

The school has previously spent significant amounts of money having OPM nests removed. Unfortunately, the school site is surrounded by other oak trees which are the responsibility of the London Borough of Hillingdon. The Council has a policy of not treating or removing nests, as the problem is now so widespread in the borough and costs are prohibitive. Regretfully, we have had to discontinue our own programme of nest removal as cleared trees on the school site were being reinfected by OPM from council trees in as little as 24 hours.

Vyners School
Warren Road, Ickenham,
Middlesex, UB10 8AB
Tel **01895 234342**

office@vynersschool.org.uk
www.vynersschool.org.uk

Mr Gary Mullings MEd
Headteacher

Going forward, the school is investigating whether it might be possible to remove some of the oak trees closest to the school site. The oak trees are all subject to a tree protection order, so Council permission will be needed for trees to be removed.

The following steps are recommended if your child comes up in a rash:

- The affected area should be washed in warm soapy water. Students wishing to do this during the school day should report to student services, where antibacterial soap is available.
- All clothes should be put on a hot wash to try and dislodge the irritant hairs.
- Hydrocortisone cream or antihistamines can be helpful in reducing the itch. We are happy to hold either of these items in school for student use.

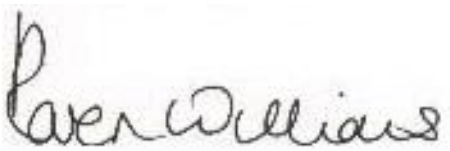
OPM is unfortunately an issue across the whole of the borough and students will therefore be exposed in multiple locations. The school will continue to take all reasonable steps to try and minimise the impact of this invasive species.

OPM is a London wide issue and that children and families should take care when moving in any area with significant numbers of oak trees. Additional information regarding OPM can be found via the Forestry Research website (click here).

We would like to stress that this situation has been well managed over recent years with very few cases of students interacting with OPM caterpillars. The number of individuals reporting a rash this year, both in our school community and outside it, is therefore very unusual. The rash that individuals are presenting with is very different in appearance from that previously seen where there have been known cases of OPM exposure. Currently we have no evidence to suggest a conclusion that these rashes are linked to OPM.

Parents are advised that children should not be missing school for a rash unless it has been definitively diagnosed as contagious eg, chicken pox, impetigo or hand food and mouth. Students should instead be sent into school with appropriate medication.

Yours sincerely



Karen Williams
Business Manager

Vyners School
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Middlesex, UB10 8AB
Tel **01895 234342**

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Mr Gary Mullings MEd
Headteacher

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Vanguard Learning Trust
Registered in England and Wales Number 07796938
Registered address - Field End Junior School, Field End Road, Eastcote, Middlesex, HA4 9PQ