

Tuesday 27th February 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: LETTER 2 OF 5 – BEHAVIOUR

Yesterday's letter focused on attendance and today the attention is on students' behaviour at Colmers. When we talk about behaviour we tend to refer to poor behaviours that are 'low-level' or those that are more serious and may lead to exclusions. The Ofsted report stated:

"In lessons, pupils' behaviour is generally positive. They do what their teachers ask, work with purpose and try their best. On rare occasions, pupils disrupt lessons. A small number of pupils have not responded to leaders' high expectations. Leaders are working closely with these pupils to help them to improve their behaviour. In some cases this is effective, but some pupils are harder to support." (Ofsted, January 2018)

"Around the school site, in halls and corridors, pupils are calm, mature and respectful of one another. Inspectors' observations and the school's own records show that this is typical. Pupils and staff say that the changes that leaders made to the social-time arrangements are having a positive impact on the space pupils have, and so on their behaviour too." (Ofsted, January 2018)

We felt this was a very fair description and judgment and captured the fact that the vast majority of your children behave really well every single day and only very occasionally demonstrate some immaturity or lack of consideration. I suspect that is the case at home as well because we know that good children make the odd mistake.

During both Ofsted inspection days you may recall that the weather was horrendous. Howling winds, lashing rain storms, very cold outside and perhaps a touch stuffy once all those steaming children emerged from the January weather. In other words, just about the most unfavorable conditions to welcome an inspection team into a school!

But your children were... wonderful. The inspectors saw your children in action around the playground, in the dining room, queuing up, using the corridors and of course in lessons. I got the impression that the four inspectors quickly discovered why my colleagues and I have a great deal of affection for your children and whilst there are the occasional flaws and mistakes, we have the honour of educating a really lovely bunch of young people.

There was no doubt that our new detention system was a hot topic of conversation between the students and the inspectors. It will not surprise the adults that schools are expected to maintain very high standards of discipline and so some students' complaints of the new system being very strict was also off-set by the widespread acknowledgement that it was clear, fair and consistently applied. There are many things that young people dislike, but inconsistency amongst adults is one of the things they loathe most.

The good news...

Colmers is a very calm and orderly place – this is something that every visitor and inspection team comments on and allows us to compare ourselves to other schools very favourably. The vast majority of lessons are not interrupted by low level misbehaviour and it is very rare for a lesson to be hindered by the serious misbehaviour of a student. For the vast majority of students an internal isolation or fixed term exclusion is a very effective deterrent and encourages almost all students to behave well and respect others. Physical / face-to-face bullying is rare, as is racist, homophobic and other types of discriminatory or prejudicial behaviours. The vast majority of students know that we will do everything we can to deal with harassment and bullying and the use of the SHARP system has greatly added to the willingness of our students to 'tell' and ensure misbehaving students are appropriately sanctioned.

HEADTEACHER
Mr Barry Doherty

www.colmers.bham.sch.uk

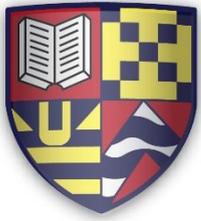
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The bad news...

There is a *very* small number of students for whom detentions and fixed term exclusions mean little or nothing because there is no evidence that they change their attitudes or behaviours. Additionally, on-line harassment and bullying (often hidden behind fake identities or hacked accounts) accounts for the greatest threat to our oldest students' wellbeing outside of school hours and gates.

So, how do we improve matters?

My teacher colleagues will know that I keep talking about us having to design lessons that are worth behaving for in the first place. It is our fundamental belief that teachers must design good learning opportunities and prepare all students for their assessments and examinations. But, you can take a horse to water but it doesn't mean the horse will always drink it... Nevertheless, we will continue to refine our curriculum, lessons, resources, assessments and guidance to students' so that we never let them down.

Ofsted recognised the very high standard of teaching at Colmers and I can assure families that whilst we can all have the odd poor lesson, the quality of teaching at Colmers has never been higher and I am surrounded by the most committed, hardworking and positive teachers in the business. But in the end, every child can choose to use or abuse the opportunities we provide and whilst almost every student at Colmers embraces those opportunities there are some who do not. Whether they do not because they cannot behave or will not behave is a complex matter and lies at the heart of how we work closely with these students and, increasingly, their families.

What must we do?

Students: Get the small things right on a much more regular basis (e.g. completing homework and avoiding minor low level disruption of your own and others' learning) whilst becoming even more intolerant of other students' ruining their lessons or life chances. And in terms of the most poorly behaved students – continue to find ways for them to understand why they behave as they do and try to better understand the impact of the things they say or do on their own future and that of other young people they share our school with each day.

Families: Obviously, continue to praise, praise, praise every day and in every way. But also to challenge them when your children make mistakes – seeking solutions and not excuses. And to those parents and carers of very poorly behaved students, continuing to work with us and never against us in search of a more settled and successful education for the sake of your child, your family and of course others' children in their classes.

Colmers: We have to stop being a little timid with parents and carers and instead insist on some ground rules in every home that will protect their child and other children from harm. These include ensuring that their children are not permanently connected to the internet or mobile services, younger students are prevented from accessing social media, enforcing sensible bedtimes that promote health and wellbeing, blocking access to inappropriate websites or insisting on parents and carers with poorly behaved children to do much more to support both their child and the school.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Doherty, Headteacher

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