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Dear Parents and Carers

Dreams Come True – Amazing Joseph

The hit show “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat” has now come and gone - and what a hit it has been for the hundreds who took part or sat enthralled in the audiences. The cast and stars were magnificent and the overall production was simply magical. I cannot express my thanks and gratitude enough to my colleagues for bringing this production to the stage and therefore giving so many children a memory that will stay with them forever. In particular, a huge thank you to Mr Brown, Mr Franklin, Mrs du Crôs and Miss Johnston!



It's time to talk about behaviour ... Part 1 of 3

In my final three letters to you this term I wanted to explore the topic of behaviour and focus each week on separate strands: some basic principles, my observations of behaviours at CNS and how we may adapt our approaches in the years ahead.

Classroom behaviours

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, ‘good behaviour’ in lessons tended to be associated with silence and uniformity. For many good reasons the emphasis then shifted towards ‘behaviours for learning’ and acknowledged that learning and life were not necessarily conducted in silence or along neat rows!

Pair work, group work, active learning and even student-teacher co-design of the curriculum became vogue 10-15 years ago. In some ways this went too far and teachers were being encouraged to become classroom entertainers and secure student engagement through games, computers or inefficient group work. It was as though we were scared that knowledge was dull and that it needed to be artificially sweetened with different types of glamorous activity.

Today, the best schools seek a genuine blend: silence and independent work when it's needed **and** more active learning **when** it suits the task. During the course of any given day we hope your children experience a range of activities that suit the learning. Talking and silence. Active and still. Doing and thinking.

‘Good’ and ‘bad’ behaviour

Without getting too philosophical, some of our judgments on behaviour are fairly subjective; it is neither definitively ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ that a child talks during a teacher's explanation or is late for a lesson. These are subjective judgments our society and culture (quite rightly) deem



to be unacceptable. Schools are therefore required to set out what is and is not acceptable when our 1000+ community comes together in quite a tight space for six or seven hours each day.

Common values and beliefs?

This can lead to conflict with students or families when we disagree on the seriousness or triviality of a particular behaviour. A good example in all schools is swearing – a behaviour that is seen by some as completely trivial and by others as something much more serious.

Unable or unwilling to behave?

When thinking about misbehaviour, it's useful to think about it in terms of when children are *unwilling* to behave and when they are *unable* to behave. Concentrating in complete silence on complex tasks is easier for some than others and we have to be sensitive to those times when a child physically or emotionally struggles to remain 'well-behaved'. How we ought to be pulled up for misbehaviour when we have been unwilling as opposed to being unable goes to the core of what is both humane and effective.

When does behaviour matter most?

The other dimension is when our behaviour harms others (e.g. name calling) and when our behaviour only harms ourselves (e.g. not completing homework). We have to see those misbehaviours differently and acknowledge that the greater damage is caused when other children's education or well-being is damaged by others.

Sanctions ...

Finally, whilst there is an understandable and necessary need to link particular misbehaviours to particular sanctions, we have to allow for some sort of mitigation in schools to avoid us becoming insensitive. The most poorly behaved children in any school tend to feel, deep down, that their school does not really care and the impact of a sanction (for example a detention) merely serves to reinforce their negative mind-set, rather than improve their behaviour. We have to challenge that fear *and* set very clear boundaries.

... and rewards

Rewards are the key. We all respond very differently and whilst some of us enjoy certificates and standing in front of others in assembly, some of us find this terrible and we may even misbehave in order to avoid public praise. That is why we have to find the best ways for each student to be rewarded. For some, a discreet nod when handing back a super piece of work does more for their self-esteem and motivation than a trophy. But, many love a medal as well!


In summary, encouraging the right kinds of behaviours amongst young people is a complex and tough business. On the one hand we have to balance the needs of the individual who is learning how to be socially responsible and on the other the needs of the wider community who cannot be hampered by the behaviour of others - either in lessons or around the school.

Next week ... behaviours at CNS.

Gift box Appeal

Just a reminder about the gift box appeal. We are ordering more flat pack boxes and look forward to going the extra mile for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Yours sincerely



Barry Doherty,
Headteacher

