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Dear Parents and Carers

What does great teaching and tutoring look like at CNS?

In the past 10 to 15 years, the teaching profession has been swamped by innumerable initiatives; most of which have been untested and of dubious value. Take, for example, the trend to try and plan lessons that accommodated the [eight learning styles](#) set out by the theorist Howard Gardner. It was a fad for a while and whilst many teachers used to exhaust themselves writing eight plans for each lesson, Mr Gardner himself was deeply frustrated that his multiple intelligence theory had been grossly simplified and misunderstood by the teaching profession. Unfortunately, Mr Gardner's theories were just one of many that cluttered the demands placed on busy teachers in the last couple of decades.

Common Purpose

As you might imagine, there is a vast array of very highly effective teaching and learning strategies undertaken by my colleagues – as has been the case for many years! However, one of the things that is new and emerging is our thinking around the core purpose and activities of both teachers and tutors. We all know that every tutor and every teacher is different and whilst those differences are the basis of what makes life rich and enjoyable, we must also be united by common expectations.

The very best schools are able to sift through the chaff and focus on the things that make the biggest difference to education in a school: great teaching, great learning, great assessment, great tutoring, great pastoral care and so on. This is why we are exploring and defining the most important features of teaching, tutoring and leadership at CNS so that we are all focusing on the things that work and the things that make the biggest difference for your children.

What are the values that define our school?

But that work does not stop with the adults; it also involves your children. Do they (the students) and do we (the adults) agree on the core features of a great character? We aren't just preparing children for exams, we are preparing them for happy and fulfilling lives.

Christian faith schools, for instance, tend to draw on '[Gospel Values](#)' when setting out the virtues they seek in their students. Furthermore, all schools in the United Kingdom are expected to promote '[British Values](#)': democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance. And so, what about CNS? What does it mean and what should it mean to be a student at CNS? What, if anything, do we wish to emphasise as the core values that we seek in all our young people?



In January the school's updated school badge will be unveiled. Meanwhile there will be a revival of our four houses: Evenlode, Glyme, Stour and Windrush. Our intention is to attach one of four core values or virtues to each of those houses – seeking to capture the spirit of what it means to be a student at this school.

The Chippy Way?

In the future we shall look at ways in which these four virtues will be at the heart of how we talk about personal development, how we reward students and how we help them reflect when they make poor decisions. It is of no value to tell a child they are 'naughty' or 'bad' and instead we have to focus on the person they could be and not getting frustrated by the one they are not at that moment in time. In my time so far at CNS, I have met students who do not truly understand why their poor behaviour was considered wrong. I have also encountered parents who do not share a common value about what is and what is not acceptable in our school. I see my role and our role here to work hard to close those gaps and establish a clearer sense of what is and what is not 'The Chippy Way.'



Student Conference

In December, we shall be inviting 25-35 students across Years 7 to 13 to a conference. We will be jointly exploring what it currently means to be a student here and what we want that to look like in the years ahead. We will seek their advice on how to redesign our recognition and rewards programme, how we should refine our behaviour policies and how we might promote the four virtues attached to each of our four houses.

This invitation will be open to all students. If your son or daughter wants to join me and Ms Hancock in defining the school for the 2020s, then encourage them to speak to their tutor, Head of Year or me personally to 'sign up'.

Gift Box Appeal

This week we shall be launching our Christmas appeal and call upon as many students as possible to give a little to make a big difference in someone's life this Christmas. Tutor bases will display the poster opposite which sets out the kinds of things we suggest goes into the gift box.

Severe Weather Reminders

It's that time of year when schools tend to remind families of procedures if severe weather were to affect the opening or closing of the school. Decisions are based on both a risk assessment of the site and whether or not the various bus services are affected. We know that families need as much notice as possible of closures and therefore we shall continue to provide immediate communication via *In Touch* and our website, in addition to the traditional announcements on Fox FM and BBC Radio Oxford.



Yours sincerely

Barry Doherty,
Headteacher