



MANOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

a DCSF designated Specialist Performing Arts College

Principal Mr B Slade BA (Hons) Ed, NPQH

www.manorcc.org.uk

20th September 2007

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you are aware I have now been in post for three hectic but extremely enjoyable weeks. I have tried to be visible and to talk with the students as often as possible. However, during the first few weeks of any new Headship it is necessary to hold meetings with lots of students, teachers, support staff, officers from the Local Authority and members of the community. Although it has been an exhausting process, I have learnt a great deal about Manor – especially its strengths and weaknesses. It has been very rewarding and informative.

However, I didn't want you to think I had forgotten about one of the most important ingredients of any successful school, namely you, the parents and carers! Without your continued support and enthusiasm Manor would not survive, let alone move forward and make further improvements.

I have mentioned a number of exciting new developments such as our new specialist college status in the performing arts (which has already provided the funding for our new 'thin client' computer system which, in turn, will hugely benefit all students, staff, parents and governors); our planned expansion and possible new school buildings over the next five years; looking at a more exciting and diverse curriculum, becoming an extended school where parents and members of the community will have greater access to the school and its improving resources, and, of course, various initiatives to raise standards in the lower school and at GCSE. **All of these things will happen.** However, the words of a current year 10 student still ringing clearly in my ears: "Sir, I know you want to improve our school and I think we need to but don't change everything overnight or people won't cope". Extremely wise words which I will try my best to remember!

Therefore, I have decided to start at the beginning and revisit the cornerstones of an effective school: **attendance, positive behaviour, uniform and good quality lessons.** In the interests of transparency, I would like to raise a few issues here.

Attendance

Much work has been done to try to improve the level of attendance. 100% is obviously our ultimate goal but 95% is the challenging target that the government has set us. At present we don't meet this for three main reasons:

- 1) A very small percentage of students with persistently poor attendance. We are already looking to improve this situation working with the Authority, Education Welfare Officer, etc.
- 2) A large number of students who take occasional days off e.g. one session per fortnight. This all adds up very quickly. Please encourage your son/daughter/caree to attend school unless they are too unwell to attend.
- 3) Students taking holidays in school time.

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On the latter issue, I need to inform all parents/carers that it is Cambridgeshire Local Authority policy that no student is to take holidays in school time. Therefore I am obliged to record any such holidays as "unauthorised absence" (except in exceptional circumstances which, unfortunately, do not include the price of holidays in school holiday time.) I must implement this policy with immediate effect. Students who are absent due to holidays will, from now on, have a negative impact on the school's attendance figures which can, amongst other things, trigger additional OFSTED inspections.

Student behaviour

I would like to reinforce the fact that 99% of students at Manor are a pleasure to teach and a credit to you as parents or carers. I have never been made to feel so welcome in a school and I have said this to students, staff and the various people I have met.

However, I have encountered a very small minority of students who behave in an unacceptable manner. These students have each been given fixed term exclusions. When they are reintegrated they have to meet me with their parents/carers and targets for improvement are set. I wanted to reassure you that I will not tolerate students acting in an aggressive manner, students who persistently disrupt lessons or openly defy staff. We want to be an inclusive school but there are some cases where I have to make a stand for the good of the 99%. I would ask parents to support me in this regard. However, I don't believe exclusions are the way forward so I am working with colleagues to look at our internal exclusion provision.

Uniform

I believe students should be able to express their individuality to a certain extent. I am not proposing any major changes to the current uniform despite several rumours. Neither am I proposing to ban certain hairstyles or colours as many Heads/Principals do. However, I would like to tighten up on a few issues as follows:

1. Footwear – I will be requiring all students to wear black shoes or completely black trainers from September 2008. Therefore, when you are replacing your son/daughter/caree's trainers later in the year, please could you purchase one of the above as opposed to a white or coloured trainer. *Most schools do not allow trainers at all so I think this is a very fair compromise. It also helps to improve the image of Manor Community College.*
2. Caps, coats and other non uniform attire are not, under any circumstances, to be worn in classrooms. *It is fine for students to wear these items outside or as they travel to and from school.*

Your views count

I will be asking for your views as parents on a range of issues throughout the year and, it goes without saying that you can contact me or my colleagues at anytime on (01223) 508742.

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Parent Governors

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if anyone would like to join the governing body of Manor Community College, we would be very keen to hear from you. We now have a lively, enthusiastic and committed governing body who want to help to drive the school forward. I want us to be one of the best schools in Cambridge over the next five years. Please contact my PA, Lucy Crebo, if you would like to find out more about this exciting and worthwhile opportunity.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this.

Regards,

Ben Slade
Principal

cc. Governors, Staff