

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Stakes Hill Road
Waterlooville
Hampshire
PO7 7BW

☎ 023 9225 9214

☎ 023 9223 0317

🌐 www.oaklandscatholicschool.org

✉ oaklands@oaklandscatholicschool.org



Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)
Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: ME/MQ/SM

5 January 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

On behalf of the Governing Body of Oaklands Catholic School & Sixth Form College, I would like to thank the overwhelming majority of parents and carers for your unwavering support to the school through the many practical ways you help during the year and for the encouragement and motivation you give to your children at home. This partnership, between home and school, is unquestionably critical to success. Before Christmas I was overwhelmed with the number of gifts including food, toiletries and toys, donated by parents and carers for the school to distribute to families within our school community who are struggling at this difficult time.

As a Governing Body we challenge the school to ensure that student behaviour reaches, and then surpasses, the minimum standards we set and you expect. I am genuinely very pleased to report that the vast majority of students behave extremely well and adhere to what I consider to be very reasonable expectations. Mr Quinn regularly meets with students to congratulate them. I know many families have received letters of commendation. Most parents are justifiably very proud of the way their children behave and I am heartened by the many positive comments received from parents, carers, members of the public and visitors to the school regarding the excellent behaviour of the majority of students. Such positive behaviour is a fundamental part of the school's ethos as it impacts on the daily life of everyone in the school community.

A number of educational professional associations have started to report an upward trend in the number of parents not supporting the values of their children's schools, challenging schools unreasonably, or having unrealistic expectations of what is possible in a school setting. During a recent discussion with Mr Quinn he has confirmed that this national picture is being mirrored in the way a small, but growing number of parents interact with school.

In a mainstream secondary setting most students are responsible for their own behaviour and the choices they make, so you can probably understand my disappointment when Mr Quinn shared his concerns regarding the increasing number of challenges being made by a minority of parents when it has become necessary, and appropriate to take action against their children for poor and often totally unacceptable behaviour. Trying to pass off unacceptable or reckless behaviour as a 'norm' for teenagers, or trying to dilute it as 'group behaviour' is unjustifiable. In the worst instances, school staff have been directly accused of fabricating issues when this clearly not the case.

Just as I did, as parents and carers you signed a Home School Agreement when your child started at Oaklands, an agreement that assumed you would work with the school to uphold the policies and procedures that we have in place. This includes, where necessary, disciplining students if they contravene the school's Behaviour Policy.

As Governors, we are resolute that breaches of the Behaviour Policy will not be tolerated. Students who are rude and/or defiant in school will be dealt with swiftly and appropriately. Students will spend time in our Inclusions Room completing work; free time will be removed and sanctions will be set by the subject member of staff. When sanctions are imposed, I look to all parents and carers to support the school. But as I have indicated, there is a growth in the number of parents who want to 'negotiate' with the school over the imposition of sanctions on their child and then lobby for a lessening of the established thresholds for those standards. This simply does not align with the tenets of the Home School Agreement, nor does it promote a fair and equitable application of these policies.

Added to this, we have also seen several challenges to the teaching staff's authority to impose detention. This position is unequivocal. Detention is entirely permissible and parental consent is not required. Detention can take place during school hours (at a teacher's discretion) and in some circumstances outside school hours. This said, the school will always try and work with parents and provide 24 hours' notice when an after school detention is imposed.

Sadly, not only have the appropriate actions of the school been challenged by a small group of parents and carers; but there has also been a number of incidences of unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour from some parents and carers including demanding our staff on Reception to arrange an immediate face to face meeting with a member of staff; or repeatedly emailing and/or telephoning seeking immediate responses to questions they've posed within a very short time frame without considering that the teaching staff member is still engaged in a full day's teaching commitment. These requests place unreasonable demands on the efficient running of the school. Staff are of course always happy to meet with parents but we do ask that an appointment is made in advance.

In the final analysis, if students and parents cannot align themselves with the values and the ethos of our school then we be required to consider their continued membership of the Oaklands community.

In closing, I would like to repeat my genuine thanks to the overwhelming majority of parents and carers for your support to the school. I would like to gently remind everyone that in choosing Oaklands you also agreed to support the Governors and the school staff in maintaining the high standards that have been set and which I assume met with your acceptance in seeking your children's education at Oaklands ahead of other schools.

I know some will find the tone of this letter quite strong; but it is important that everyone acknowledges the seriousness with which we take our joint responsibilities to uphold high standards and that we will not compromise on these standards, for it is these that sets us apart from other schools and serve Oaklands extremely well as our reputation and our results attest.

With my thanks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Evans', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Marc Evans
Chair of Governors