



Saturday 9th November 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is unusual for me to write to you on a Saturday, however, I became aware of an online news article regarding Emmbrook students yesterday evening and felt it important that I make a prompt response.

The story centres around CCTV footage of a young male deliberately smashing the window of Emmbrook Food and Wine (a nearby business). The incident takes place late in the evening (after school hours) and is perpetrated by a hooded individual (not in school uniform). This is a criminal act and Mr Bhambra has worked with the shopkeeper to support police action. The shopkeeper named an Emmbrook student as the suspect, based on a disagreement that had happened earlier in the day. This individual is accounted for at the time of the incident and therefore no further action can be taken given the evidence presently available. I would like to state categorically that if there was any way that we could support further action then we would.

The article goes on to make further allegations about the general conduct of some students in the area around the shop. As a result, my senior leaders and I will increase our presence in the vicinity. I believe Mr Bhambra's comments to the journalist indicate the genuine cooperation that we have given and it is disappointing to see such an article published.

Next week, Mr Bhambra and I will be conducting assemblies for all year groups to reinforce our expectations and to remind students that point 23 of the Department for Education's [Behaviour and Discipline in Schools: Guidance for Headteachers and Staff](#) document clearly defines my powers to sanction students for their conduct outside of school. We will ensure that these assemblies have the appropriate tone and message; the vast majority of our 900 students are a credit to this school and I think it will benefit everyone to hear the consistent message – the tiny minority of students who do not meet my expectations will be sanctioned appropriately.

I appreciate your support in this matter. Please reinforce my message with your child(ren). I will visit the shop before school Monday morning to discuss this face-to-face. Given the feeling that is conveyed in the article, I will be suggesting that Emmbrook students do not use this shop for the time being, until feelings have died down. I would therefore urge you to discuss with your child(ren) avoiding this area completely over the coming weeks – there are alternative shops in the area and our canteen offers a variety of snacks and drinks, including a service after school.

We are not a school that takes matters like this lightly. We regularly work with the local community; in the last few weeks I have met with leaders from both the Emmbrook and Joel Park residents' associations to discuss how we further strengthen these ties. Last year our students won a town-wide competition through an anti-vandalism and litter project and have been sharing their work with other local schools. This term the mayor visited us to present three of our students with community awards for their litter picking – this is what I expect of our students and I will not allow a few individuals to tarnish our good name.



It is my genuine hope that through your personal dealings with Mr Bhambra and myself you will have a strong sense of our commitment to resolve issues quickly and decisively – I will therefore leave it for you to judge the veracity of this particular article with regards to our support of the local community.

Sincerely, if you ever have concerns then I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to contact us directly. I was incredibly grateful to an Emmbrook parent who contacted me this week regarding the inappropriate conduct of one of our students while cycling to school. With their assistance we were able to identify the individual and have appropriately sanctioned, supported by that individual's parents, to resolve the matter. I cannot act on comments written on social media because I do not see them. I am grateful to parents who, I am told, have urged others on Facebook to contact us directly when they have seen concerns discussed. My email address is nmcsweeney@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk and I guarantee you a personal, prompt response with clear action to resolve matters brought to my attention.

Best wishes,

Nick McSweeney
Headteacher