

Sunday 24 September, 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are having a good weekend with your family.

Many of you will be aware that on Friday one of our teachers was seriously assaulted by a student. This unprovoked and horrible incidence of violence has come as a deep shock to our community and is now a police matter. There were numerous witnesses to this incident, which was also captured on CCTV. The seriousness of what happened means that we have already taken strong action – the decision has been taken to permanently exclude the student responsible for the attack. We will not accept behaviour of this sort and I am sure you will agree that all members of staff have the right to work without physical or verbal abuse, and that all students must be safe at school.

I want to be absolutely clear that I will always give my team 100% support should they receive abuse of any sort; and that I will similarly always support well-behaved students who treat others with respect and come to school to learn.

I would also like to stress that Friday's incident is extremely rare. The school's swift and strong response is precisely because this kind of behaviour is so unusual.

However, this is also an important moment to set out to all parents and students the very clear expectations that we have around behaviour. Whilst the vast majority of our students behave impeccably and follow the rules set by the academy, it is with regret that recently we have seen a small number who are consistently removing themselves from lessons, who are causing disruption to other students' learning, and who are not following the instructions of staff.

Tomorrow, I will therefore be reminding all students that behaviour that does not meet the TPA way will not be accepted, and that action will be taken if this behaviour happens. Therefore, should your child be out of any lesson and fail to follow reasonable instructions from senior staff, they will receive a suspension that will be a permanent mark on their record. Other sanctions may also be considered. If there is a suspension, the child's parents/carers will be invited to a reintegration meeting to discuss the poor behaviour and we will together agree joint responsibility on a behaviour support plan so that there is an improvement.

I do not want to have to write letters such as this but, to repeat, I will not accept not only the very rare incidents such as Friday's but also the non-attendance of lessons, disobedience and rudeness to staff, and simply not following rules and instructions. I have the full support of our governing body and of the academy trust which leads the school in this matter, and hope I can also count on your support.

I trust that all parents and students will join me in wishing our member of staff a quick return to full health, and in looking forward to welcoming her back to school when she has recovered.

Yours faithfully,



Natalie Sheppard

Principal, The Portsmouth Academy
Regional Director (South), The Thinking Schools Academy Trust