

How we choose to treat children...

We treat our students with the belief that everyone can get better... we believe that every child can achieve incredible things and that it is our responsibility to enable their potential, and ensure that they do.

We believe in 'No Barriers': we do not allow disadvantage or other challenges to be a barrier, and we treat these barriers as hurdles that can be overcome with help. We believe in 'Students First': we make decisions based on what's best for our students, now and in the future. We believe 'It's about Learning'. Our ultimate goal is for all students to increase their life chances by living PRIDE.

Our students are successful because they feel that they 'belong' to our community; through this belonging comes the confidence to learn. Though we operate in a challenging context, we have never met a child or a parent that does not want to succeed, although we meet some that don't know how. We are clear that the street stops at the gate. In our school there is a relentless focus on high standards and there are no excuses or barriers to learning and achievement. We have sky high expectations of our students in everything they do and believe they can be the best, but we set a tone and ethos through dialogue and principles, not through the application of a detailed list of rules. We are 'warm - strict'. In this way we build belonging.

'Strict' doesn't mean punitive or harsh, just that it is very clear where the boundaries are, and that these are consistently applied and reinforced. The 'warm' is about all of this being done to reassure pupils, and is clearly about "purpose not power". All our staff take the time to explain the **why** as well as the what and the how. This patient and relentless approach allows time for students' metacognition of **why** our expectations matter, and **why** they make a difference to their character, learning and progress. In this way we build belonging.

Warm and strict are two sides of the same coin. We sweat the small stuff, because we think it matters. This means both clearly communicating expectations and clearly communicating recognition through consistent praise and rewards. Our staff operate through relationships and dialogue. Being **warm**, through authentic care, kind words, body language & tone is especially important whilst we are being **strict** with our students by not wavering on a decision. This shows our students that we have high expectations for them but also unconditional positive regard, and that we value them as individuals and we want what is best for them. We don't undermine this by lowering our expectations for any student. Throughout this process we recognise that the journey looks different for different students and therefore we use our professional judgement and seek at all times to treat students with equity and equality. In this way we build belonging.

In every interaction we take due care to know our students and the issues and challenges they come with. Many of our students have been exposed to multiple adverse childhood experiences, vulnerability can come through disadvantage, discrimination or disability. We are aware that sometimes the place our students start from is a long way from where we are. We challenge inequality at every opportunity and support as early as possible. We do not accept that inappropriate casual language or behaviour is 'part of growing up'.

We always seek to preserve the dignity of our students. We don't shout, it rarely makes things better, and we speak to the student as if the parent was standing next to them. Our staff are therefore role models for our students in everything they do, we model the behaviours, dress and expectations we want our students to copy... *"Our students won't remember everything we taught them, but they will remember forever the way we made them feel"*¹

In these ways we build belonging.

*"We have come to the frightening conclusion that we are the decisive element in a child's learning experience. It is our personal approach that creates the climate, it is our daily mood that makes the weather. We possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. We can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. We can humiliate, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is our response that decides whether a situation will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized."*²

¹ Based on a Jim Henson quote

² Based on a Hiam Ginott quote