



Dear Parent/Carer,

Uniform & behaviour

It was great to see the students return to school yesterday with a special mention for the new Year 7s who have joined us and our new Year 12s starting Sixth Form. Hardly any students returned in the wrong uniform and we were able to deal with those cases fairly quickly. You may have been wondering the reasoning behind students returning in normal uniform rather than PE kit (as they were in the summer term) and, in the spirit of wanting to have a constructive working relationship with our parents & carers, I will elaborate on this after I give you a bit of context behind this decision.

First, I appreciate that we'll have a warm end to the week. This mini-heatwave is due to peak on Saturday with temperatures about 10 degrees lower by Monday. I mentioned in my last letter that I think we need to have a review of our uniform and I will start work on this with our staff, school council and governors this term ready for when the good weather returns (we hope) next summer.

Students did wear PE kit in the summer term and unfortunately this coincided with a general slip in standards of behaviour. This can commonly happen where uniform codes are relaxed and this is why we decided that starting off a brand new academic year in relaxed uniform would send out entirely the wrong message. In fact, our emphasis this year will be on tightening up our expectations around behaviour in order that we lose as little learning time as possible due to low level disruption (eg. arriving late to lesson, talking over others, shouting and/or swearing in corridors etc).

There was a report published by the Department for Education in June which found that, post-lockdown, schools up and down the country were finding the poor behaviour of a minority of students was causing an increasing amount of learning time to be lost. It averaged out at 6.5 weeks over the course of the year which I'm sure you'll agree is a staggering amount – those few minutes here and there to deal with disruptive behaviour really do add up.

The picture here at Diss High is generally good but, from my conversations with staff and students about how last year went at times, it is clear to me that our behaviour expectations could do with a 're-set'. We are introducing a more structured form of verbal warnings so that, if there is disruption or a refusal to follow reasonable instructions, then the relevant student will be given an opportunity to reflect on and change their behaviour without it needing to escalate any further. Yesterday nearly every student who needed to receive such a verbal warning then went on to make the right decision. Where a student *does* continue to make the wrong decision, there will be consequences that we will stick to. Not because any adult working here wants to make anyone's life difficult, but purely because all learning time is precious, and we cannot have the progress of any of our students being damaged by the poor behaviour choices of others. Clear boundaries that apply to every student equally make things less confusing and lead to students feeling safer and learning better all round.

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Diss High School

Headteacher: Mr S Stopps

Given that it's much harder to introduce new expectations after the first day back, I hope you can see why having students in a relaxed uniform would have sent out mixed messages, particularly given how it led to deteriorating standards in the summer term. However, as I said at the start of this letter, we will review uniform this term with a view to having a slightly different choice when the summer of 2024 comes around.

Yours Faithfully,

Sam Stopps

Headteacher

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