

5 March 2010

Dear Parent/Carer

I know that some of you are aware of a report in the "Maidenhead Advertiser" which refers to two incidents in Maidenhead town centre which occurred after school on Friday 26 February and Monday 1 March 2010. These two incidents involved students from this school and from Altwood Church of England School.

I am fully aware that the reporting of these incidents has caused some concern for parents, particularly of those pupils and students who come to school by train. I would like to make a statement of the facts and I hope this will provide you with some reassurance.

It is my view that the reporting by the "Maidenhead Advertiser" is a misrepresentation of the events that actually occurred. The reporters from this newspaper had posted information on the newspaper's website within minutes of them being present in the area around the station. I consider that they failed to ascertain the facts and subsequently failed to present the facts in a balanced and fair manner. This is very regrettable and fits with this newspaper's seeming intention to sensationalise rather than report accurately.

In our investigations we have been working with members of staff from Altwood School and members of both the British Transport Police and the Thames Valley Police. Our liaison has been to try and work in unison, share information and gather facts. The numbers of boys involved in the two actual incidents is tiny. It is false to suggest that large numbers of pupils and students from either school were involved. Most pupils and students pass through the station on a daily basis in a calm and well-behaved manner. I use the station on a daily basis, as do a large number of members of staff, and we work closely with First Great Western staff. It is also not established that pupils and students who were in the area were just from our two schools or indeed of school age at all.

I know that many pupils and students here feel that the newspaper has again treated them and the two schools unfairly. I have asked the newspaper to remove some statements placed on their website purporting to come from pupils and students from this school. I understand the resentment young people feel when adults behave unfairly and show such disrespect for younger people.

Desborough School is a strong and caring community and we have continued to work calmly and in a dignified manner throughout this. I know this school community is based on a spirit of fairness and mutual respect and that pupils and students would wish to disown the small minority who behave in an unworthy manner outside school. All the pupils in Years 9 and 10 were spoken to earlier in the week about the incidents and the need to behave properly on the way to and from school. We have also worked hard to re-assure pupils that they are safe as they travel to and from school.

Senior members of staff from both schools have had presence around the station and town centre this week. All pupils and students have conducted themselves extremely well and I felt privileged to be the head teacher of the Desborough pupils and students.

I would suggest that you re-emphasise to your sons and daughters that, even if they are provoked, they must not engage in any form of anti-social behaviour. They need to report any situations that occur where they feel pressurised or uncomfortable and maintain their usual high standards of behaviour. I am sure you will feel reassured that the school will punish anti-social behaviour, if it occurs, severely. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in our drive to maintain the standards we strive for in our school community.

As you know I do not write in this vein very often. I felt the circumstances to be exceptional and know some concerned parents and carers have contacted the school. The unfortunate approach of the local newspaper has made me feel I needed to correct the false impression they have striven to create. I hope this letter has been helpful and re-assuring. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you would like to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely

A J Linnell
Headteacher