

Never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up. Jesse Jackson



Barley Lane School

Hard work, humility, kindness

Proud to be a part of the and in partnership with



26th November 2015

Dear parents and carers and professional colleagues,

I try not to write to you too much preferring you to contact me with your questions, concerns and priorities and that is unchanged (07848 028 341 mmaccourt@barleylane.devon.sch.uk) and what is important to you is important to me.

The matter of radicalisation is about as high profile as something can be and we live in difficult and dangerous times there is no softening that uncomfortable truth.

I want to revisit and make clear for you the school's position on personal development and have attached an extract from our own documents in school.

As a team we have always believed in and been committed to the notion that what we do and the example we offer are our most powerful tools in encouraging and embedding healthy values and behaviours in the children and young people.

Telling children and talking at them for me at least as a teacher, head-teacher and a dad and occasional inept football coach have proven pretty useless over the years but explaining and showing and living out the things we want for our children much more useful.

You may be aware teacher colleague Bill Yates retired in July; a wonderful man a former soldier turned teacher whose hard work and kindness and humility have become our motto both out of respect and affection for him but equally because they are qualities that make a good person, a good father, son, brother, friend, neighbour, colleague; a good citizen.

The matter of "kindness" is most pressing and from it a closely related word the young people find more complex but one critical to ensuring our children are never drawn to or seduced by extremism and that is empathy.

To see other people as we see those we love and care for and want for them too safety, warmth, friendship and justice is to stop the corrosive harm of disrespecting and hurting other people in its tracks. People who are empathetic and kind cannot do harm to others. They cannot be racist or homophobic or misogynistic because they respect others because they see and feel our common humanity.

So I calculatedly and knowingly share we will not be focussing on the politics or the religion or even the awful new stories that will no doubt continue to flash up on our TV screens; instead each day we will work hard to offer the children empathy and kindness and discipline them with compassion and fairness and encourage empathy and kindness in them by noticing it and celebrating and rewarding it.

Thank you for your on-going kindness and empathy in what is sometimes difficult work to do as well as I would like...

Yours sincerely,

Michael MacCourt

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Extract from our SEN policy

Personal development in our school: we believe that British values most powerfully and pertinently those of hard-work, self-reliance and compassion for others imbue our ethos and culture and have identified them in **bold print...**

Positive change and the tangible improvement in school in behaviour have been achieved not through lecturing or telling the young people. It has not been about lessons that teach you how to behave and be good to others it has been about us modelling those positive behaviours.

What we have done and must continue to do to secure and promote a positive climate for learning is treat the children as we would like our own children to be treated.

If we want **courtesy** we must give it, if we want **fairness** we must always offer it, if we seek **hard work** we must in turn **work hard**, if we want our young people to improve and develop and make informed and good choices we must face that pain and challenge also of being better at our work.

Change us to change them: we must make our own difficult choices too including addressing our frailties and weaknesses as people and professionals and we know how powerful this is and that it works for example staff with the **humility** to say sorry to a child will inevitably encourage that child to learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

So in every lesson, every mealtime, every walk to the local shop, every encounter with others we can and must promote **reason, kindness and courtesy** and they will be absorbed and learned and applied by the children and young people: it is in **reason, kindness and courtesy** that happiness and economic wellbeing are rooted.

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