

Simply good manners!

I really do enjoy the start of the new school year. It is that time when everybody, including the teachers, is relaxed and refreshed after the long summer break. I like to spend the first mornings of the new term standing at the main entrance on Bonham Road welcoming boys (and our few girls) back to school. It is a joy to see in the faces your pleasure at being back at school particularly reconnecting with classmates and catching up on all the news. Naturally, the Form 1 boys last week were a little nervous but clearly not as anxious as some of the mothers and fathers who delivered them to the front door. In fact, one or two mothers ventured onto the campus and stood along the balcony outside the Hall just to make sure that their son had found his way successfully to the Form 1 Classroom.

I was pleased to see how courteous you all were when confronted by me standing in the Lobby. Without exception you said hello or good morning or nodded. I was also pleased to see the high standard of dress and hair that complied by-and-large with our requirements. This was an encouraging start to a new school year.

It was also interesting to observe how hesitant you were when things looked different to last term. I will use the Lower Playground as an example. Over the summer it had changed colour, from green to blue, and appeared to have an even more bewildering pattern of lines and markings to accommodate even more types of game. At the first recess of the school year, small groups of boys stood around looking at the new surface, thinking about what they should do next. The football goals were in place and the 'playground closed' sign was nowhere to be seen. After a few minutes the first small group of boys stepped onto the Lower Playground although clearly concerned that the blue paint was still wet! It was at this point that one of them ran off to find a plastic football. When he returned, it was 'game on' and I can still picture the sheer delight from one of the boys when he realised that he had scored the first goal of the season.

Your excitement at being back amongst friends extended to the conversations that by 8.15am last Thursday were in full flow. There was a great deal of chat about 'who had done what' or 'who had been where' over the summer break. This was perfectly normal amongst friends who had not seen each other for a few weeks. I imagine that the conversations were

friendly, using polite Cantonese, and that everyone was interested in what their friends had to say.

Your behaviour over the first two days of the new school year was impeccable. I hope that you maintain this polite and friendly behaviour every day. It is simply good manners.

I would expect you to continue to show the same degree of courtesy that you showed me when we met last week. However, I ask that you treat all members of staff in the same fashion. As you walk past a teacher in the corridor say hello or good morning or simply nod. The same should apply if you pass a teacher outside the school along Bonham Road or at the bus stop on Pokfulam Road. It is good manners to acknowledge your teachers and fitting of a boy who attends St. Paul's College. It is also good manners that you stand when the Principal or any member of staff enters a classroom. It is a simple action that displays the respect you have for those who work at this College.

I mentioned the excited conversations with classmates you all engaged in last week. If you recall a conversation you had you will remember that only one person spoke at a time whilst the others in the group listened. It would have been impossible to have continued with that conversation if everybody had been talking at once. The same must apply in the classroom. Only one person should be talking at any particular time. When a teacher is talking to the class, everybody needs to be silent and paying attention. If a teacher invites one boy to answer a question or talk about a topic then all his classmates need to be silent and paying attention. This is such a simple rule yet one that when followed would dramatically improve the teaching and learning atmosphere in each and every class. It is also displaying good manners.

SPC boys have a reputation for being polite and friendly. This reputation, established over many generations, is well-deserved. However, it is a reputation that needs to be worked at if it is to be maintained. What you must do each day that you come to school is remember these simple good manners. Firstly, to acknowledge members of staff when you pass on and off campus. Secondly, to remain silent in class when your teacher is speaking. As St. Paul's College boys, I know that you will strive to do the right thing.

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