



25th October 2018

Silent Transitions initiative

Dear Parents and Carers

Following a productive and helpful meeting with a group of parents this afternoon, we are writing to you to address some key concerns and questions that have been raised, and to clarify our next steps.

We understand that there have been a range of interpretations of the initial letter that was sent out to parents, and we are sorry that it was not as clear as it should have been. We also understand the disquiet of some parents due to a lack of consultation before putting this in place, and we apologise for this.

We are realists, and understand that it will take some time for this policy to be implemented across the school. To help students with this, we plan to introduce clearly identified silent zones gradually, corridor by corridor, so that students can get used to the new expectations over several weeks. We'll be working with students to put in place some great rewards for classes that meet our expectations most quickly. During this transition phase, the emphasis will be on support rather than sanctions.

A student forum will be put in place to gauge the views of the student body, and will invite the views of parents as the term progresses.

We believe that a calm, purposeful learning environment is the right of every learner in our school and we are committed to that. With 1500 students moving in and around the site to lessons, the volume of noise generated can be unhelpful. Following careful consideration and research, we believe that walking in silence for the short time it takes to travel from one lesson to the next is the most effective way to resolve that.

Why not just ask students to be quieter? Students need clear and precise expectations. The idea of silence is understood by all whereas asking students to be 'less noisy' or 'talk quietly' is open to individual interpretation and simply doesn't work. Having walked the school site ourselves many times, we know that the average travel time between lessons is just over one minute. Students will therefore be silent for a **maximum of five minutes** during the course of an average day which we believe is absolutely within the capability of the majority of our students. For those who may find this more challenging, support will be provided as it is currently by our professional staff.

As also mentioned previously, there are already periods of time when silence is required and indeed during exams, it is compulsory. For students taking mocks and public exams, there is nothing more distracting and potentially stressful than trying to concentrate against a backdrop of noise created as students travel across the site. Similarly, when students are in lessons whilst others are moving through the building, learning time is lost as the volume of chatter can be a significant distraction.

Schools are social places but first and foremost they are places to learn and every decision we make as the Co-Heads of Ninestiles is underpinned by that.

The links below may be of interest to you as they show the very real educational benefits that this change can make.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/23/school-banned-talking-corridors-sees-10-per-cent-increase-results/>

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/school-bans-pupils-talking-corridors-13290609>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/dec/30/no-excuses-inside-britains-strictest-school>

We hope that this has addressed any concerns more fully. Please do get in touch if you would like to discuss this further; we're happy to talk.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Stephens and Alex Hughes