

Overmark

An Unofficial Newsletter Produced By Pupils For Pupils.

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Who Are We And What Do We Want?

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this newsletter, we hope you will enjoy it. We have decided to produce this newsletter for you so you can know what's *really* going on at Rainham Mark Grammar School.

This newsletter is about YOU; we want to know what you really think about the school; and what you really think about controversial issues such as uniform, punishment and reward systems. We want to give you the full story, both sides of the argument. Not just what the school wants you to think and believe. We aim to be unbiased so that you can make your own minds up.

Your opinion is very important to us; and we intend to survey your opinion on issues like the controversial red-card uniform system. We want to know what you think, and to do this we have provided a website with online voting systems so you can tell us what you think easily.

In order to do all this we intend to produce this newsletter monthly and we hope this will be frequent enough to keep you up to date; if not there is always our website which will be updated to keep you informed about news as it happens. The website should be up and working by Friday 12th December, probably before if all goes to plan. The site can be found at www.overmark.vze.com

But who are 'we'? Well 'we' have decided that it is probably best that you don't know who 'we' are. It is not that we don't want to get into trouble; after all the UN Declaration of Human Rights gives us the freedom to express our opinion in public. We don't want to be hassled by pupils or teachers about what we put in our newsletter. We don't want fame or fortune; just to keep you informed. If you would like to get in touch with us; either to find more information on stories; or to suggest ideas to us you can contact us at overmarked@yahoo.com. Alternatively you can text us on our dedicated mobile phone number; 07952 273911 Texts charged at normal rate except from Virgin Mobile which costs only 3p per text.

Well from all of us at Overmark we hope that you enjoy this newsletter, and find it informative, useful, readable but most of all enjoyable. We also wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

HILARITY FOR CHARITY

At this festive season it is customary to give to those less fortunate than us, and once again RMGS seems to be getting in on the action with Charity Week, taking over the school from the 15th to the 19th of December. In 2002 we managed to raise over £4000 to donate to our chosen charities, for which we received praise in local newspapers. This year's charities are Cancer Research UK and The Cambodia Trust, but will we raise a similar amount for them this year?

Many of the regular events will still be taking place, such as the teacher vs. pupil pillow-fight, and the Generation Game, where teachers, including Mr Windle, Mrs Jinks and Mr Bowen, undertake pointless and slightly degrading tasks in a departmental grudge-match. The Rock 'n' Roll Show is back again too, and is forecast to be one of the best yet. According to Overmark's sources, the only familiar feature of Charity Week that will not take place this year is Kiss-o-grams, a decision that has caused friction between students and senior members of staff.

Despite this, Charity Week still promises to be a great success, and, with your help and generosity, can really make a difference in the world this Christmastime.

There is a table of events later in this newsletter as well as a note regarding arrangements on the last day.



Also In This Issue

- **OFSTED:** How are they affecting our lessons and are they getting the full picture?
- **RED CARDS:** Are they a fair system and does the system work?
- **CHARITY WEEK:** What's going on this charity week.
- **KISS-O-GRAMS:** Why are there no kiss-o-grams this year? An **exclusive report**.

Investigating**OFSTED**

As you are all no doubt aware, we are greeted with the gracious presence of the Ofsted inspectors for one whole week - aren't we lucky!! They are everywhere; in lessons, around school and any other place they can think of. It's inevitable, however far you run, they WILL find you. Seriously now though, these inspectors do have a job to do, and to do it they have to inspect what they see of the school.

The question is are they getting the full picture of what RMGS is really like or is the wool being pulled over their eyes? For a couple of weeks now, staff have been frantically redecorating classrooms with pretty posters, students work and some have even splashed out with new sets of blinds. Of course these posters aren't new to most of us as they also magically appear on the walls just before Open Day. How can the inspectors make an honest judgement of the school when they have no idea about how the school is run?

A few teachers (mentioning no names!) have become desperate enough to resort to telling pupils to raise their left hands if they don't know the answer and their right hands if they do know the answer, making them all appear intelligent, whilst allowing the teacher to decipher who has the correct answer. How ridiculous is that!

Of course it has to be said that having Ofsted around does have advantages; I'm sure I'm not the only one who has noticed a significant improvement in the quality of some teachers!

It has to be said though that not all teachers are pan-

icking; after all why should they panic if they are all doing their jobs properly in the first place?

Oh, one more point. Isn't it a coincidence that just before Ofsted arrive new signs appear around the school - how strange, it is as if Ofsted were royalty!

This whole Ofsted lark is just so false, that we at Overmark, don't see the point in it. If Ofsted really want a true view of the school they should show up WITHOUT WARNING to inspect the school. Now that really would panic the staff, but at least Ofsted would get a crystal clear view of the school. Some (mostly teachers it has to be said) argue that Ofsted learn to see through the changes and can still get a true view of the school; we are not saying that they don't do this; rather that their job could be made a lot easier by scrapping the warning.

We want to hear your views; do you think Ofsted should just show up without any warning? Or do you think the system of checking up on schools needs a complete overhaul? Please let us know either by texting or e-mailing us.

"And of course we couldn't possible do normal lessons next week, what with Ofsted being here".

(Anon Teacher)

"It's about putting on a performance; showing off what we do best."

(Anon Teacher)

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Kiss-o-grams

They've done Men In Black, they've done the Pink Ladies and they've done Wild Wild West but have the kiss-o-grams now come to the end of the road?

Every year, for at least the last 7 years, the sixth form have put on their cheap lippie and set out to embarrass pupils by leaving tell-tale lip marks all over them, but why are they stopping now?



Our sources indicate that the school has banned the kiss-o-grams and prevented this year's 6th form from running the popular event.

Our sources indicate that after an incident involving a lower-school pupil a parent pointed out to the school that it claims to be a non-contact school, and by promoting the kissing the school was being hypocritical. Details of this incident are sketchy and we don't want to shame people involved; however we ask why this enterprise which raises hundreds of pounds a year has to be stopped?

We can appreciate that to some pupils the kiss-o-grams can be quite scary, but they have to be taken in the right spirit, they are after all just a laugh.

So what do you think? Should they be brought back? Do you know of another reason why they may have been stopped? Please let us know.

WANTED!

We here at Overmark are looking for a sports reporter. The role will involve providing regular reports on Inter-form and Inter-School matches in all sports; as well as information about PE in general at the school. You must also be prepared to remain anonymous.

If you are interested please contact us by e-mail.





A Score For The Music Department?



Christmas time is fast approaching, and so too is RMGS's Christmas Concert! It's a nervous time for all taking part, especially as this is Miss Dyer's first chance to organise one. There were worries that this year's will lack the great musical quality of previous concerts, however most have now been dismissed; following the excellent standard of what has been rehearsed this week (as most of us using the C & D floors heard). There is however still concern about the gap between rehearsals and performance night, no doubt due to Ofsted's presence, it may be too wide.

The concert's line up includes Big Band, Recorder Ensemble and carols in which the audience will be asked to sing as well! There will also be a String Ensemble and the ever-popular Mrs Jinks. It promises to be an immensely enjoyable evening, full of festive cheer and good music—both Jazz and traditional, so

much so that tickets had been completely sold out within a week of going on sale. This, although demonstrating the anticipation with which the event comes, is disappointing for those who wished to buy tickets closer to the event.

Sadly; although he has only been a member of RMGS' staff since September, Mr Machin is leaving for the dizzying heights of Rainham School For Girls, an action that is rumoured to have caused a divide between music students and Mr Decker, who is greatly unhappy at the short time Mr Machin has been working here. Despite this, Mr Machin has been praised for his efforts to improve the school's music department's environment. He has started String Ensemble, Vocal Group and has been keenly aiding students worried about looming music exams. He will be sorely missed, and Overmark wishes him the best of luck at Rainham Girls.



Charity Week Timetable

	Hall	Library	Gym	Drama	Other
Mon	(1 PM) Ready Steady Cook	(1 PM) The Weakest Link			
Tue	(1 PM) Ready Steady Cook		(12.45 PM) Pillow Fight		
Wed	(1 PM) Band Concert	The Big Read		(1 PM) The Generation Game *	
Thur	(All Day) Rock 'N Roll Rehearsals	(1 PM) I'm The Answer			Loud Tie Day (50p)

We have provided this simple timetable for you showing you what is going on this charity week. For more information about events contact the relevant teachers.

Look out also for events such as raffles, cake stalls at break time and funky clothes stalls. There are also lots of sponsored events to look out for.

On Friday there is a Tag Day and the Rock and Roll Show. These both cost a pound so make sure that in

the next 2 weeks you give the money to your prefect or form tutor. Make sure you remember your money else you will have to go to the 'quiet study room' rather than watch the show!

On the last day, Upper School, (years 10-13) watch the show first then go home at 12:00 while Lower School (years 7-9), watch the second showing and go home at 12:45 PM.

*: Please note that the Generation Game is on Wednesday; not Tuesday as published previously in Mr Decker's letter.

RED CARDS

Are They Fair?

We want to cover lots of controversial issues in this newsletter; and our first 'big issue' is uniform. Many students would argue that uniform rules here are too strict; and we don't disagree, we intend to look into the issue of the Red Card uniform punishment system. We want to know whether you think it is a fair system and whether you think the system is actually working and improving the appearance of the school body.

The red card uniform system works by teachers spotting you; and writing your name down on their card. At the end of the week all the cards are collected in and the number of offences for each pupil is counted; if a pupil has their name down too many times they are punished. Punishment is usually detention or 'School Community Service' (i.e. litter duty).

The idea was described by Mr Moore as being like a speed camera; in that you were not asked to correct your uniform, you were just punished. It is interesting to note though that recent statistics out show that speed cameras have had virtually no effect on the number of traffic accidents or fatalities in road accidents over the last ten years or so. We wanted to see if the red card system has had any effect on the way you dress at school.

We also question whether or not the uniform system is fair. In this issue we do not intend to question the idea of the uniform itself; that will be covered in the next issue, due out in January. The system is like a speed camera in the sense that you don't necessarily know that you've been caught until you are punished; we ask is this actually fair? We believe that punishment should come after warning and this is not true in the red card system. It has also been pointed out that the system is very much open to abuse by teachers. There have been unconfirmed stories of pupils being victimised by teachers for reasons other than the quality of their uniform.

We want to know how many times you have been punished for incorrect uniform through the system

and how you wear your uniform. To do this we ask you to fill in our online survey. It will only take 30 seconds or so. All you have to do is tell us how you wear your uniform, and if you get punished for wearing it incorrectly. We will release the results in the next edition of this newsletter. To take part visit our website:

We are also interested in seeing if year group or gender makes a difference to how likely you are to be punished for uniform; this comes after reports of teachers being more lenient to older students or to members of one sex.

In addition we also want to gauge how many teachers actually use the system. Without mentioning any names I think we can safely say that some teachers just ignore the system while others follow the rules to the letter. This in itself compromises the fairness of the system, if some teachers use the system while others don't some pupils are more likely to be punished than others; and this is grossly unfair.

Lastly we ask is the system is a deterrent? We want to know if you are actually bothered about getting your name on a red card! To share your view with us please complete our survey or e-mail us. You can also text our dedicated

mobile number, 07952 273911

Texts charged at normal rate except from virgin mobile, which cost only 3p per text.

Do They Work?

In The Next Issue; Due Out January 12th

- **UNIFORM:** Should we wear a uniform and if so what? Plus the results of our survey.
- **TEACHERS:** We begin a survey to find your favourite teachers.
- **And Much Much More!** For more information see our website; if you have any comments please contact us through our website.

This unofficial newsletter is produced for pupils by pupils, it does not necessarily reflect the views of the Rainham Mark Grammar School management. The website is also built and maintained by pupils. The makers of this newsletter wish to remain anonymous. The mobile phone line is managed by Virgin Mobile; and the phone is privately owned by a member of the team who produce Overmark. When texting please be considerate and use appropriate language; texts are charged at the standard network rate, which means texts from another Virgin phone only cost 3p. Please note that we will not store your number or pass it on to any other person or organisation. Please also note that we will NOT answer any calls to the phone.