

# Overmark

An Unofficial Newsletter Produced By Pupils For Pupils.

£ **FANCY BEING PAID** £  
£ **JUST TO COME TO** £  
£ **SCHOOL?** £

Sound cool? Well that's exactly what's happening in schools in Manchester. It's all part of the battle against truancy, over 50,000 of us bunk each day. The idea is that all pupils are put into a draw, and at the end of the week six pupils are drawn out, and each given a cash prize. However, if one of the pupils drawn is a truant then nobody gets any prize that week.

The scheme is called Be There Bonus; and on the surface seems like a brilliant idea—rewarding pupils for coming to school. But the fact remains that many pupils bunk school for a reason—and even a monetary reward may not be enough to tempt them back. The idea is that peer-pressure will encourage those who skive not to, however without wanting to sound stereotypical those who skive most are those who don't really care about what other people think or those who are experiencing bullying and are too scared to come to school.

So should we introduce a similar scheme here? Being a grammar school we do have less of a problem than other local schools. However on the other hand if it is introduced in other local schools it wouldn't be fair for it not to be introduced here.

The government has proposed many schemes similar to this over the years; including the idea of paying students to attend sixth form (bit ironic now seeing as they're only going to take it away in University fees.) So should we be paid for attending school all the time? The government want more of us to attend higher education—maybe this would be a good incentive. What do you think? Would paying us be a good incentive for attending school or a pointless waste of government resources—I know what I think.

So will the scheme be effective? The proof will be in the metaphorical pudding and we will keep you up to date with how the scheme affects truancy levels and if there is any move to introduce it here. Keep up to date using our website; [www.overmark.vze.com](http://www.overmark.vze.com).

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**H**ello again, and welcome to another issue of the pupils' (and teachers'!) favourite newspaper, Overmark. In this latest issue we will be investigating more hot topics from around the school.

We would once more like to point out that we *were not* stopped by the school, contrary to what was published in 'Inside Mark', but we are now monitored by the school, mainly to check we don't print anything which is *too* slanderous or factually incorrect. This monitoring does not apply to our website, so if we are ever in a situation where we are told not to print something it will be online instead!

While we're on the subject of 'Inside Mark', here at Overmark we *don't* think the fields are cursed! In fact it is hardly surprising that many of the accidents within the school happen on the fields as it is the activities which take place that are the cause of accidents, rather than a "conspiracy" or "cursed soil". We found that almost as many accidents have occurred in the last year around the school as have on the fields. We also asked other schools, and they experience similar proportions of accidents. So, cursed fields? We think not!

We would also like to say a big thank you to all of those who took part in our online poll, we decided not to show the results online as we now have a new policy of deleting multiple votes from the same computers; this means certain people (cough ... teachers ... cough) can't skew our statistics as they tried to last time. The results of our survey are included later in the paper. We would also like to thank those who have been e-mailing and texting us, we will be putting some of their comments online soon! You can e-mail us on [overmarked@yahoo.com](mailto:overmarked@yahoo.com) and text on 07952273911.

We would also like to take the opportunity to plug our new sponsors SAPS, a free web service who provide free websites to pupils at RMGS. See their advert for more details.

Don't forget you can see all these stories, old stories and more online! [www.overmark.vze.com](http://www.overmark.vze.com)



## Also In This Issue

- **UNIFORM:** What do YOU think should happen to uniform at RMGS?
- **SCIENCE COLLEGE STATUS:** We got it, but what does it actually mean?
- **MOBILE PHONES:** So many of us have them anyway should they remain banned?
- As well as **Words of Wisdom, News in Brief** and more!

## Investigating: MOBILE PHONES



According to our student planners mobile phones are not allowed in school for lower and middle school students. However we ask why is this rule in place? As far as we can see there are three possible reasons for not allowing mobile phones:

1. Insurance—If mobile phones and other expensive items are lost the school cannot take responsibility and would have to face complaints from parents and pupils. They would also not like to get involved in any disputes which could arise after the loss or theft of phones. However our response to this is that if 6th Form students can bring in phones, why not the rest of us?
2. Health—There had been concerns that the exposure to microwaves emitted from phones may cause brain damage. However our response to this is that the latest research concludes that the risk is virtually zero for pupils of our age and is only really a risk at all for young children and babies.
3. Disruption—Some say that by allowing us to have phones in lessons would cause disruptions from ringtones etc. We have two suggestions here; firstly don't allow pupils to answer or use their phones during lessons and secondly make 'silent' or 'vibrate' modes compulsory to minimise disruption.

There is also the significant issue that mobile phones are a benefit to our personal safety whilst we are travelling to and from school. They are also our only real way of communicating out of school from school as the public telephone booth has been empty for some time. Phones would give us a way of communicating with our parents—for instance to arrange an alternative way of travelling home from school.

So bearing all this in mind should we be banned from bringing phones to school? Our research shows that approximately half of middle school pupils and a quarter of lower school pupils often have phones on them anyway—so is there a point in the rule if its clearly not being obeyed? Overmark fully supports an overturning of this rule and we suggest you campaign in form council meetings (do they even go on anymore?) and similar events.

## WANT A FREE WEBSITE?

SAPS is a new web service tailor made for school pupils at RMGS. We aim to go online soon; but want to get an idea of how many people are interested before we finalise anything. SAPS will provide a free standard service, then a more flexible, customised paying service.

If you are interested please contact us ASAP, you can get more information by e-mailing us on [saps\\_owner@yahoo.com](mailto:saps_owner@yahoo.com) or viewing our advert on the Overmark website; [www.overmark.vze.com](http://www.overmark.vze.com)

## Awards, Awards and Yet More Awards

Our beloved Rainham Mark Grammar School has, as well as receiving a shining Ofsted report, been awarded two prestigious statuses. But what do they actually mean, and what effect will they have on us, the student body?

*"It's all bureaucracy, if we need money it should be there, we shouldn't have to apply for an award" (anon pupil)*

### 1. Sports Mark Status

This new feather in the school's cap is, it seems, rather like that of a pigeon's in that it is not especially difficult to obtain as although the school has somewhat pitiful sports facilities, it has still been given to us. According to Mr Moore "quite a lot" was done to improve the PE facilities but apart from increased storage space we have seen very little physical change. Although it makes us "a centre of sporting excellence" in the region it is necessary for us to point out that many local schools have two or more "Marks". We will, however, receive some extra funding, which will hopefully be used to correct the insufficient resources in the PE department and contribute towards funding for a new sports hall.

### 2. Science College

As you have undoubtedly been aware, the school has now been awarded this far more valuable status which, we are told, will give us much more money to use in advancing all areas of the curriculum and will allow us to set up a new "equipment library" to enable less fortunate primary schools to use sophisticated equipment for, for free – how charitable are we? Overmark, however would like to ask whether the scheme, in which the school must raise in excess of £50,000 to become eligible, is entirely based upon our high standards or our ability to hold PTFA jumble-sales?

### So, a New Name?

As you may be aware, Upbury Manor School is, in light of its receipt of Arts College status, now known as Upbury Arts College and that the Sir Joseph Williamson Mathematical School has a Maths Mark. Does this mean that we will soon be called RMSC? We raised this idea in our last issue, and since then Mr Moore has said to us that there is "definitely no plans to change the school's name."

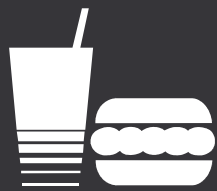
Our aim is to be as flexible as possible, so there is no specific list of things we will offer for free, but a standard service could include:

- 5 MB of webspace
- 1 E-Mail account (potentially with web access)
- FTP Upload access
- Detailed and personal help and support
- SMS mailing of e-mail

Our servers will have FrontPage Server Extensions installed which means you can make 'clever' sites very easily.

For advanced users there is the possibility of Linux support, PHP compatibility and scripting features.

Saps is an enterprise run by pupils of RMGS, for more information see the Overmark website.



## HEALTHY EATING BITES BACK?

Well as you probably know no black fizzy drinks are now sold in the refectory; if this is really a move towards healthier living why is it that they still sell Fanta and Sprite which contain more sugar than diet Coke. In fact why sell Ribena? We've looked and a bottle of Ribena contains 70g of sugar (that's about 14%) whereas diet Coke contains only a trace of sugar (that's less than 0.5g).

If its caffeine and E-Numbers they're concerned about, colourings such as those in Ribena—and especially in yellow or orange Ribena or Fanta, are just as bad, if not worse than those in Coke, and there is Caffeine-Free Coke available.

But let's not pretend that Coke is healthy, and we do support a move to sell water at the vending machines; but at 80p a bottle is it worth it? We also disapprove of the hypocrisy of banning Coke whilst continuing to sell other, even more unhealthy drinks.

On the other hand; experts predict more of us will die from heart disease and other dietary conditions than ever before. With the rise of junk food, our generations is already experiencing the highest rate yet of child obesity. As a nation something has to be done ... but is selling Ribena really the answer?

We see the same kind of hypocrisy with the food as well. Not only do the vending machines still sell crisps and chocolates, but in the canteen they still sell chips and burgers at break although you cannot buy chips every lunchtime. So are the motives for selling healthy food really that transparent? By remaining 'Healthy Eating' the school will get a cash bonus under a Government initiative—so in a roundabout way they are doing it for us, but if the motives are wrong is our health really going to benefit?

## CRISIS FOR THE ICT DEPARTMENT?

We can reveal that both Mr Blair and Mr Ratcliffe have left their positions as the ICT technicians. Both technicians left for separate reasons but we ask where will this leave the department now? We have concerns that as there is now no technician and with no replacement available in the short term what will happen to the computer system?

The school has the problem that anybody who is any good with computers will work in a high paid business job rather than teach, and thus schools generally have problems with under-qualified teachers and technicians.

So for the moment the teachers shall muddle on; but we doubt it will be long before we start to experience problems with the network!

We want your  
help !!!

We want to bring you a special 'Words of Wisdom' in the next issue; and we need your help.

We want to compile a list of stupid and funny things teachers have said: intentionally or not!

To take part please send us the quote by e-mail or text. We do not want to know the teacher's name or department—this is not about shaming teachers.

Text, leave voicemail or e-mail as usual.

## Words Of Wisdom

*This month we bring you some more wonderful quotes from around the world, enjoy!*

- *If knowledge is power, and power corrupts... Then School is Evil!*
- *If practice makes perfect, and nobody is perfect... Then why practice?*
- *Speak the truth—but leave immediately afterwards.*
- *Borrow money from pessimists, they don't expect it back.*
- *If winners never quit, and quitters never win... Then why do we say quit while you're ahead?*
- *It is always best to remain silent and let one think you are a fool, than open your mouth and remove all doubt.*
- *I don't have a solution, but I admire the problem.*
- *Its always easier to complain than rule*
- *Come along to Scrabble Club, what have you got to lose ... my pride (graffiti in 6th Form Block)*

*There is more wisdom on our website including comments on war and conflict (useful for anyone doing Ethics or RS) as well as loads more.*

## NEWS IN BRIEF ...

### OVERMARK IN ACTION

We have now seen the arrival of the green bins, and we can reveal that it is as a direct result of Overmark that there is now a green bin in the Art Department. However, the green bins look very unstable and we seriously doubt they will actually last very long before breaking, collapsing or falling over!

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Well there are still no yellow buses (you may have forgotten but they were promised for January). Just so you know, this is what **yellow** actually looks like:



WOW! Now they just need some buses like it!

### EASTER HOLIDAYS

Sorry; but because of the Easter break we won't be back on paper until May when we have a special bumper issue planned, however look out for new stories on our website. [www.overmark.vze.com](http://www.overmark.vze.com)

### REVISION BLUES?

The time has come for revision again, years 10 through to 13 all have exams coming up in the next few months so here are some revision tips:

- ◆ Drink lots of fruit juice—it stimulates the brain
  - ◆ Don't be too inactive—going for a walk or even playing football before revision does help!
  - ◆ Reward yourself with chocolates, TV, games etc.
  - ◆ Don't work too hard! Working for more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour is not productive.
  - ◆ Don't work alone—working with friends or family will help you learn more.
  - ◆ Try (we appreciate its hard) to make it fun!
- Most importantly though ... relax and have fun. If you've got study leave use it for yourself as well as school!

### RANDOM DRUG TESTING?

Abbey School in Faversham is now the first school in Kent to perform random drugs testing. 12 other schools in Kent currently rely on random Police visits and sniffer dogs to check for possession of drugs. The difference with Abbey School is that the tests will be performed by teachers, randomly and will test mouth swabs or urine. This comes after statistics reveal that 40% of under 18s have taken illegal drugs. Pupils taking drugs will then be offered help—but those found to be dealing will be excluded. This is all in keeping with a current blitz on drugs in Kent.

Some have concerns though that the tests are an infringement of civil rights, if you are under 16 the choice to take part in the survey is not yours, but your parents. However *our* view is that if you have nothing to hide, there's no reason why the scheme couldn't be introduced here.

# UNIFORM

## What did you think?

We hosted a unique survey into what you thought should be done about uniform at RMGS; here are the results:

- Option 1: Abolish uniform completely: 32% of our vote.
- Option 2: Adopt a 'Casual Uniform': 36% of our vote.
- Option 3: Adopt a 'Primary School' uniform: 4% of our vote
- Option 4: Abolish the blazer: 20% of our vote.
- Option 5: Continue as we are: 4% of our vote.

So; conclusions; the vote is not as clear cut as it was on our last hot topic; red cards—however it does strongly indicate that most pupils are dissatisfied with our uniform as it is. The most popular choice was the casual uniform; an idea we suggested as a way of allowing individuality through a flexible uniform, whilst maintaining 'order' and respectability. We did also find flaws with this idea; mostly the idea that what is fashionable now is not necessarily going to be fashionable in a few years time—a prime example of this was the uniform at RMGS (then Gillingham Tech.) back in the 70s & 80s when girls wore a flowery blouse and cape! One solution to this problem would be having a uniform which changed regularly—maybe yearly. However this would be unpopular with the parents footing the clothes bill!

So what will become of this research? We hope the school management will consider it seriously and although they are *legally required* to enforce a uniform there would be nothing to stop them taking a ground-breaking move and giving us a pupil-friendly uniform.

The survey will remain online until the next issue and you can always vote by text, we will keep you updated as the statistics change!

### In The Next Issue; Due Out *May 17th*

- **SEXISM WITHIN RMGS:** We begin our investigations into sexism within the school.
- **TEACHER'S WISDOM:** We bring you the results of our search for the best teacher quotes.
- **And MUCH MUCH more...**



For more details about any of the stories featured in this issue, or to raise concern about factual errors, or to just make general comments about this paper you can contact us by e-mailing: [overmarked@yahoo.com](mailto:overmarked@yahoo.com)

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THIS PRODUCT MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF NUT.

**PLEASE RECYCLE THIS PRODUCT BY PUTTING IT IN A GREEN BIN (IF IT HASN'T FALLEN APART) OR BY GIVING IT TO SOMEONE ELSE!!!**

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