

Overmark

An Unofficial Newsletter Produced By Pupils For Pupils.

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ARE YOUR FILES AND E-MAILS SAFE?

One of the first things taught to pupils in ICT lessons is basic security—things like “don’t write down your passwords”. However, even the most well protected passwords can be made useless by simple human error.

Lists of things such as e-mail passwords, Novell passwords, and even library records are available to anyone who cares to look around—you don’t even have to be *looking for* them; just browse around the public drives and you’ll find all kinds of interesting things just laying around.

Overmark *has* been browsing around, and we’ve found several databases of confidential information, ranging from *your* login details to *your* e-mail address and password. With this information we could log in as you, or as a teacher, or read your e-mail, or even see what books you’ve borrowed from the library. We took all this information and compiled it into a single database, a copy of which has been given to the school as proof of our accusations. We emphasise that none of this information was obtained by breaking any ICT department rules or ‘hacking’ - This information was all available un-encrypted, un-passworded files.

Thankfully, these have only been made public by accident (we assume) - they’re just files that somebody forgot to delete. As a result, they’re a few months out-of-date, and anyone who’s changed their password recently is safe. If you haven’t changed your password in the last few months we recommend you change it immediately, and this applies to your Novell password and you Medway LEA e-mail password.

Its not just file security which is wrong with the ICT department, a lack of up-to-date software means some programs are now more than eight years old, which although may not sound much, in ‘computer terms’ that’s like wearing clothes from the seventies. As a result of this poor network facilities some pupils in sixth form are having their computer science lessons at The Howard School through our consortium where there are more modern and reliable facilities.

Part of the problem is probably a lack of dedicated technicians—with the teachers always busy teaching, there’s no one to keep the network in order. As a result the central server is going offline more and more often, and the workstations are being left unfixed when CD or floppy drives get broken.

As we enter the exam season, there’ll hopefully be a bit more free time for the ICT department—we hope that can spend some of it cleaning up, and maybe replacing some of the worn out parts of the system.

Well, we’re still alive and kicking, as are our ‘rivals’ (I use that term loosely), after a long break for Easter we’re back with another six page issue in which we investigate all kinds of current, important issues, as well as bringing you more fun and interesting information.

Unfortunately just one week after our last issue came out we had the shock of reading that our sixth form is facing potential closure or reform. (Interestingly this came out on the *third* letter which claimed to be the *last* pupil post message). In this issue we go into the exact report by the education watchdog to examine what exactly the options are and how they may affect us.

We’ve also included our finishing conclusion to the whole issue of Uniform, with a summary and a quick look at sixth form uniform. The discrimination in the sixth form uniform led us nicely into our next major topic and area of investigation for the next few issues. In this issue we look at toilet facilities, and the infamous debates about toilet paper. We’ve uncovered through experimentation and surveying definite sexism.

In this issue we also launch a new regular feature, the Teacher Column. We felt that our paper was biased (well, more than we felt was fair) simply because we are all pupils who write this paper, although many of our sources are teachers. In order to rectify this we decided to introduce a space where teachers could comment on what they currently feel is important and relevant—or just to gripe about anything they find interesting. We have secured an exclusive column by MR MOORE for this issue.

I would also like to take this opportunity to plug a new service we’re providing, the mailing list. Rather than us having to keep photocopying papers and then leaving them around, we could e-mail you this newsletter. Not only would you receive your monthly issue of news, fun and other interesting things—you would receive up to the hour (well, day probably) news. News as it breaks. To sign up to this simply e-mail us your e-mail address and ‘I JOIN’ in the subject line. We will reply with a confirmation of your request, and, from then you will receive what news you want, when you want.

Well, until next time, farewell, and good luck with whatever exams you may have.

† See back page

**FREE GIFT
INSIDE EVERY
ISSUE†**

Also In This Issue

- **ASSEMBLIES:** How often do you think we should have assemblies?
- **STUPID THINGS TEACHERS HAVE SAID:** We reveal all!
- **SIXTH FORM:** We look into the proposal to merge the local sixth forms.
- As well as **Breaktime Brainteaser, News in Brief** and more!

Teacher's Words Of Wisdom

Well we asked you for some embarrassing, unbelievable or just downright stupid things teachers have said. Although we received quiet a few we dare not print, here's what we could:

- "The most amazing thing about water is that its wet" (A science teacher)
- "I lie awake in bed thinking about you"
- "I think about you a lot you know"
- "If you don't put that [a ruler] down you know where you'll be shoving it." We got a lot of quotes following this format, a surprisingly high amount regarding one biology teacher in particular...

We also got lots of quotes regarding one English teacher; a quote from one of his reports reads "[pupil] needs to improve his spelling", and being an English teacher he even decided to make up a whole new word ... "positivism". We had more from this teacher but they are too long-winded to go into here ... see the website for more.

✚ Assemblies ✚

What should they be like?

Love them or hate them assemblies are a legal requirement for all schools; however according to the latest statistics from Ofsted over a third of all schools do not meet the statutory legal requirements.

This is an issue we picked up on when Ofsted reported that our school had not been meeting the legal requirements for over 12 years! The reasoning given by the school for this is that there is inadequate room to house daily assemblies for all pupils. Following Ofsted the school's action plan simply said that "pastoral heads [that's head of years] would be reviewing the situation".

But as the statistics suggest we are not alone; the current chief inspector of OFSTED is calling for the law to be changed because schools simply don't have the time and resources to hold daily assemblies. He says it would be far better if there were just assemblies every fortnight or even month—and more effort was put into improving registration time.

The other issue we see with assemblies; is that, according to the law every school must provide "an act of collective, daily worship" and that this *must* be Christian worship. We feel that in today's secularised society this is no longer appropriate; we also feel it is unfair to those of other faiths. Although pupils are not obliged to *participate* in the worship the opportunity to take part must still be there under law; and this is—in our opinion unfair. We would want to see either interfaith services or secular messages which cater for all faiths without excluding those who are not Christian.

Overmark wants to know how often you think we should have assemblies. If the law were to be changed we want to know what you would make it. We have created six basic options to choose from:

1. Assemblies should be enforced on a daily basis.
2. Assemblies should occur twice weekly (about what most of us get now).
3. Assemblies should occur once a week.
4. Assemblies should occur once a fortnight.
5. Assemblies should occur once a half term.
6. We should never have assemblies.

When making your decision we ask you to bear in mind the following points:

- Assemblies take up time which could be spent in lessons (interpret that as you will)
- Assemblies allow us to find out about school events.
- Assemblies improve relations with Senior Staff.
- Assemblies are used to deliver important information about the school.
- Messages could just as easily be delivered through the registers.

You can vote by visiting our website; www.overmark.vze.com and clicking the 'Vote' link on the sidebar. Alternatively you could just email us on overmarked@yahoo.com or text your vote by texting ASS + the number of your option (as above) to number 07952 273911*. We look forward to hearing from you and will publish the results in our next issue.

*Texts cost no more than regular rate. See our legal footnote for more information.

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 which will give users plenty of space in which they can put whatever they want, from just a basic home page about yourself to a games website, or a page on a hobby or interest—if you have spent time working on a site in IT, why not put it online for all to see?

Our service will support Flash animations and Front-Page server extensions; as well as PHP for advanced users.

If you are interested please contact us ASAP, you can get more information by e-mailing us on saps_owner@yahoo.com or viewing our advert on the Overmark website; www.overmark.vze.com

S.O.S.

Save Our Sixth Form

As we have all been notified through letters and assemblies, the government body, The Learning and Skills Council, is currently consulting as to the future of education for 16-19 year olds in Medway. One of the more likely outcomes of this consultation is the merging of the sixth forms at Rainham Mark, the Howard and Rainham Girls into one Sixth Form Centre.

This affects not only our school, but all schools in Kent and Medway could be forced into similar schemes by the LSC if they are not found to be productive or cost-efficient. Recently there has been a lot of press about schools already facing immediate closure of sixth forms in favour of 'colleges'. It all seems to be part of a bigger government plan to make the education system cheaper to run by replacing sixth forms with colleges.

We've looked at the official documents regarding this consultation and there are six main options as to *where* sixth form education will be delivered. The first is to create a new Medway college, which would have sites at all existing sixth forms centres (so the sixth form would stay at RMGS, but would not be controlled by the school).

The second option is to create several sixth form colleges and these will replace *all* sixth forms in schools (so there would be no sixth form at RMGS, instead you would go somewhere else). The third option is to create a single sixth form centre for each consortium. In our case this would mean the Howard, Rainham Girls and RMGS sixth forms would merge and all be taught at the same place.

The fourth option is that the sixth forms within our consortium merge, but are still taught at separate locations (so the sixth form would be independent of RMGS, but most / many of the lessons would still be taught on-site). The fifth option is that things stay as they are, and the sixth option is that the consortiums are split and the sixth forms stay independent.

The more likely of these outcomes are, in our opinion 3, 4 or 5. As the letter we received makes clear all the headteachers of our consortium are opposed to the move. Mr Decker commented that all the schools have their own strengths and 'traits', RMGS being associated more with academic studies while the other schools focus more on vocational subjects. Currently there is some overlap; pupils from RMGS can/will be able to next year take several courses at the other schools; and in exchange some of their pupils have some of their options here.

We question whether the true reason the school is so opposed to any changes is that by merging in pupils from the Howard and Rainham Girls, the school will obtain lower average grades, and not do so well in the school league tables. Whatever the motive Overmark is against any change in the delivery of sixth form education, we think, and you comments to us, suggest that you are basically happy with things the way they are. And that being happy with your education is more important than cost cutting on the Governments part.

As the Medway Standard reported this could lead to teacher job cuts; which could ultimately mean the loss of good, specialised, experienced teachers. The consultation period will soon be over, and we will bring you more details in our next issue and of course we will stay up-to-the-hour with our website or mailing list.



Breaktime Brainteaser



This month we bring you a tantalisingly tricky teaser. The equation below would appear to be proof that $2 = 1$. Mathematicians amongst you will notice that 2 does not equal 1. But, where's the mistake in the equation? There IS a mistake, however it is not obvious. Remember the basic laws of mathematics, whatever you do to one side, you MUST do to the other, and this rule IS NOT broken in the equation.

We will publish the mistake in our next issue, or, if you can't wait that long it will be on our website in about a weeks time. Good luck—and asking your maths teacher is cheating!

$x = y$	<i>This is the starting point.</i>
$x^2 = xy$	<i>Multiply each side by x</i>
$x^2 - y^2 = xy - y^2$	<i>Subtract y^2 from each side</i>
$(x + y)(x - y) = y(x - y)$	<i>Factorise each side.</i>
$x + y = y$	<i>Divide by $(x - y)$</i>
$2y = y$	<i>Substitute y in place of x</i>
$2 = 1$	<i>Divide by y</i>

Concluding: UNIFORM

It's a topic we've been investigating since our 'birth' in December last year; but finally we think we've come to an end in our analysis of uniform at RMGS. We've shown that you're not happy with the uniform and you don't think it is enforced effectively. (Statistics collected by Overmark: Over half are not happy with now abolished red card system and over two thirds are not happy with current uniform)

There is just one issue we think is still worthy of a quick investigation—and that's the 'no shorts' rule in sixth form.

Pupils lower down the school may not have even been aware that the sixth form (boys) are not allowed to wear shorts to school. This seems strange to us because 20 years ago the school's uniform had shorts as compulsory!

Here at Overmark we can see no logical reason why boys should not be able to wear shorts—girls can wear skirts (as long as they are not *too* short) but not boys. In PE boys wear shorts, as do girls. So why not in normal school? The school classes them as beach wear and therefore not appropriate for school—but why is showing legs allowed for girls but not boys?

This leads us quite nicely into the next topic we are going to be investigating in the next few editions Sexism.

Investigating:

SEXISM AT SCHOOL

You wouldn't think that in our current society there would be real examples of sexism; especially not at school. However that's not what our research has concluded. We've found that there are several areas of school life where pupils are still discriminated against according to gender.

In the next few issues of Overmark we will investigate the highly debated topic of sexism, starting this week with 'The Great Loo Review'

We decided to look first at the issue of Toilet Paper, we couldn't believe that there would be any truth in the infamous claims that the boys had lower quality toilet paper than the girls ... but we were proved wrong.

It may seem hard to believe, but there is a vast difference between the quality of papers between girls' and boys' toilets, and indeed between different areas of the school, and (surprise – surprise!) between that found in student and staff toilets!

Around the school we found two different types of toilet paper. The first is best described as grease paper, it is truly unbelievable that anybody is expected to use such stuff. If you'll excuse the explicit language, (if you're eating, stop), it 'spreads' rather than 'cleans', it has no absorbency at all. This is often referred to as 'Tracing Paper' however we feel this description is rather over-generous, and we prefer the term 'Grease Paper'.

The second type of paper we came across we shall call 'Value Paper', since it is roughly equivalent to Tesco Value™ Toilet Paper. Although it leaves a lot to be desired, it's not too sad for an establishment which is trying to cut costs at every opportunity.

So; where do you go for the good paper? We've compiled, just for you, the one and only, Handy Dandy Loo-Guide. Feel free to cut it out and stick it in your planner (Go on, you know you want to!).

"I think that the average RMGS boy is too stupid to know how to use it [toilet paper] anyway. Many are OK, but year 10 pull the average way down" (Anon male pupil)

"Its disgusting, it doesn't clean it just spreads"
(Anon teacher)

"I wouldn't mind so much if there wasn't so much rubbish, I mean there was a tampon on the door yesterday. Why can't they put bins in there?" (Anon female pupil)

So, we wanted to find out why this was the case, why is it that the girls have higher quality paper than the boys? Well, the official reason is that the boys are more likely to flood the toilets or waste the paper than the girls (a sexist statement in itself). However we conducted a little experiment, we took samples of the 'Value' paper and the 'Grease' paper, and tested just how easy it was to block up a sink with (not at school of course). We found that the grease paper is a lot stronger than the value paper, and it takes a lot of pressure to break it. With the value paper, it broke down with just a little bit of water.

This would suggest that it is in fact *easier* to cause flooding with the boys toilet paper (and we **don't** condone such usage of the paper). So why is it that the boys get the low quality paper. The only other reason we could think of for the boys having lower quality paper, is that its cost-cutting. Boys are *probably* more likely to waste the paper by misusing it, however these events are infrequent, and if anything the girls will use more paper on a regular basis, simply because boys refuse to use the low quality paper they are given.

The other issue we have with the toilets is the appalling state they are all in, we can appreciate that the school is reluctant to invest in upgrading the toiletry facilities. Overmark realises that it is not always possible to conjure up an extra toilet, however they do ask that the school gives the boys decent paper, rather than pushing them to the **bottom** of the list.

But seriously though, how can we be expected to 'use' the toilets properly when they are dirty, smelly, the taps don't work, the towels are dirty, the driers are broken, the locks don't work, the soap's gone and there's rubbish (often even sanitary towels) lying around. Overmark predicts that if the school were to improve the toilets, in such a way that they were 'nice' to use, pupils would respect them and not vandalise them.

If you have any comments regarding sexism within our school, please let us know. You can e-mail us, text us, visit our website and leave comments, or leave us a voicemail message.




Enclosed in this issue is a free gift, some *nice* toilet paper. We ask you to think of us when you use it, and think how much better life would be if Overmark were in charge...

So, is toilet paper an example of sexism within RMGS? We think so, we have shown that the girls get far better toilet paper than the boys, for no apparent reason whatsoever.

We hope this article has helped highlight some of the issues regarding the toilets and we hope it will put pressure on the school to improve the facilities.

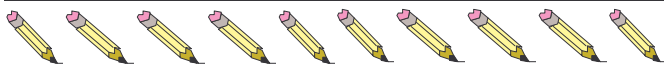
Handy Dandy Loo-Guide

Courtesy of Overmark

BLOCK			
A	Value / Grease (Varies)	Value	Value
C	-	Value	-
D	Grease / None (Varies)	-	-
M	Grease	Value / None (Varies)	Value
N	Grease	Value	-
H	Grease	Value	Value
L	-	-	Value
F	Value / Grease (Varies)	Value	-
Q	-	Value	-

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah

Exam time is here again!



Well as you are probably being constantly reminded the exam period is once again upon us. Whether it's A Levels, AS, GCSE, SATS, mocks or just end of year tests you will all either have just had, or will be about to have exams. In terms of advice we don't want to bombard you with more advice as you are no doubt being reminded of the importance of whatever exams you are taking at least once an hour as it is.

Following our advice about coursework we have found some more essential grammar rules for you, make sure you remember these in your exams. (It is a proven fact you are more likely to remember something if it is funnier or more interesting.)

- Don't use no double negatives.
- Verbs has got to agree with their subjects.
- Don't write run-on sentences when they are hard to read and leave you gasping for breath afterwards.
- Don't use commas, which aren't necessary.
- Try to not ever split infinitives.
- It is important to use your apostrophe's correctly.
- Proofread your writing to see if you any words out.
- While a transcendent vocabulary is laudable, one must be eternally careful so that the calculated objective of communication does not become ensconced in obscurity. In other words, eschew obfuscation.

For you reference we have also compiled some useful dates which may have been lost in pupil post. (There are still less than 1/2 of all parents at RMGS signed up to parentmail after all ...)

- Friday 14th May. Sixth break up for study leave.
- Friday 21st May. Year 11 break up for study leave.
- Thursday 24th. Sixth form induction day.
- Friday 25th. Last day of external exams.

(CHECK DATES — ALSO Yr 10 study leave?)

So you have of course been revising long and hard, and those that have been (and those lucky enough to have a good medium term memory) will be rewarded with good grades. GCSE results are out 26th Au-



Teacher's column



See our breakdown of the latest issue of "Inside Mark" by visiting www.overmark.vze.com

Don't forget that you can keep up to date with all the latest news by joining our mailing list.

NEWS IN BRIEF ...

SCIENCE EXODUS

Gukhool, Riordan, Wallace (retiring), Gulston (retiring), Debenham (?) [Please Confirm / Add]

Are all leaving, strange really seeing as we've just got our science college status—are we going to have any experienced science teachers left to teach it?

GIVE UP ON YELLOW BUSES?

We have been given some interesting statistics on the Yellow Bus (or not) system. The statistics, gathered by Year 11, show the average speed of each mode of transport on the way to school. It shows that the average speed of the School Bus is just 4.5 mph. Compare this to an average of 4.7 mph for walking, 11.7 mph for a car and 7.3 mph for an Arriva Bus and you begin to wonder if we should even bother with the bus system?

WHAT MUSIC BLOCK ?

We were told that work on the new music block would start over the Easter break — well that came and went with no sign of any work except the PE shed being removed. We asked Mr Moore and he said "blah"

NOTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK

Well the sixth form common room has now been refurbished, complete with its new 'kitchen' which comprises of a sink and a hot drinks vending machine. Its hardly what we were expecting, but we do appreciate it.

Apart from that the room now has a new floor and new furniture which has helped create a better atmosphere for working and relaxing. We hope to see a similar refurbishment for the small adjoining computer room soon!

I SAW A MOUSE...

I saw a mouse.

Where?

There by the sink.

Where by the sink?

Right there!

A little mouse with a smock on.

Well I declare!

Painting his favourite lump of cheese. Mmm Cheese!

Oh yeah!

There have been sightings of mice in the music, science, DT and art departments. Pest control have also been seen in the area. We apologise for the lousy rhyme.

In our quest to find fun and interesting things we came across this: A Plan to Improve the English language (although funnily enough many of you already seem to be using language very similar to this—are you just ahead of your time, we think not).

In Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replaced either by "k" or "s", and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only case in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later.

Year 2 might reform "w" spelling, so that "which" and "one" would take the same consonant, while Year 3 might well abolish "y" replacing it with "i" and Year 4 might fix the "g/j" anomaly for all.

Generally, then, the improvement would continue year by year with Year 5 doing away with useless double consonants, and Years 6-12 or so modifying vowels and the remaining voiced and unvoiced consonants. By Year 15 or so, it would finally be possible to make use of the redundant letters "c", "y" and "x" -- by now just a memory in the minds of old dodgers -- to replace "ch", "sh", and "th" respectfully.

Finally, then, after some 20 years of orxogrefkl reform, we would have a logical, coherent spelling in use throughout the English-speaking world.

By Mark Twain. For more funny things by Mark Twain simply Google search for him.

In The Next Issue; Due Out June 21st

- **SEXISM:** We move into sexism within the PE department. Including sports provision and the changing rooms.
- **ASSEMBLIES:** We bring you the results of our exclusive survey into what you think should be done about assemblies.
- **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

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