

Overmark

An Unofficial Newsletter Produced By Pupils For Pupils.

Issue 6, Volume 1, June - July 2004, Page 1 of 4

ActivBoards... The Future of Education?

As you cannot fail to have noticed the interactive whiteboards, known as ActivBoards have been breeding and new ones keep appearing all over the school. Until about a month ago the only one the school had was used by Mr Riordan, but the boards seem to be a success and recently new ones have been fitted in Geography, English, ICT and Business Studies rooms, as well as this more are planned for History and other departments.

Over the summer all the older science labs are going to be refitted, and all the science rooms are going to have the ActivBoards fitted. This all sounds great ... but are the boards really worth it?

For starters Overmark has found that many of the new boards are not used because teachers don't know how to use them, although this is an issue which can hopefully be rectified by long-term staff training. As well as this one must consider the cost of an ActivBoard. Although nobody has given us (or been prepared to give us) the actual cost of a board, but we estimate their entire cost to be between £1500 and £4000. As well as that each teacher who uses the board needs a laptop (so that's an additional £800).

One has to question whether spending all this money on high-tech educational resources is really worth the money. The boards are undoubtedly beneficial to the teaching environment, but could the money not have been better spent elsewhere? For example continuing to replace the useless windows in the art department, or the windows on the C and D floors which let all the noise from the music department in. Another use for the money, within IT would be to upgrade the school's copies of software such as Visual Studio, Publisher and Windows to bring the entirety of the school's IT resources into the 21st century.

Another possible *real* reason for fitting the new boards is that it is a way of 'Showing Off' to other local schools. The school's new boards bring them into line with other local schools such as Chatham Boys Grammar, but the new ones going in over the summer would make our school a trendsetter. We spoke to Mr Riordan about the interactive whiteboards, see the teacher column for all the details...

In the school's defence they do not have the power to spend money exactly as they choose, they have sub-budgets for departments and facilities. We were told that our Science College status has granted us an additional £50,000 for IT resources, combined with the schools existing IT budget, the school *has* to spend the money on IT, it cannot transfer the funds to other budgets like maintenance.

So, is this really the way to fund a school? Its not the school's fault, but rather the Government's. It would seem to us that this cannot be the most effective way to run a school, unfortunately this time any change is beyond even our influence.

Hello again, and welcome to our last issue of Overmark this academic year, we will of course be back next year. In the meantime you will be able to keep up to date with our website which will updated regularly during the summer holidays.

When we return in September we hope to have a new web site built in co-operation with SAPS which will give all kinds of new features such as forums, fun and games, and a chat service. For now though you'll have to make do with our current site! You can find our site at www.overmark.vze.com (and this won't change when we rebuild the site). Don't forget if you want to be eco-friendly and receive your Overmark electronically just e-mail us and we'll add you to our mailing list. Once on our list you will receive Overmark, and updates as news happens in plain text or Acrobat format.

In this issue we look more at sexism; this time within the PE department, we also look at ActivBoards as well as bringing you updates to some of our previous stories including the assemblies vote and Save Our Sixth Form. We've also got the regulars such as News in Brief, Teacher's Column and Words of Wisdom.

Our last issue coincided with the release of 'Inside Mark', and those of you who've visited our website will know that we've given our 'Inside Mark Breakdown' online. We intend to do this for every issue they release so watch out! To find the breakdown go to 'Current Stories' then 'Inside Mark'. We should point out at this stage that this feature is *not* supposed to be a section where we put-down the reporters who work for 'Inside Mark', this section is provided as a *critique* of a 'rival' (not perhaps the best word for it) newspaper offering constructive criticism of hypocritical articles and suggesting improvements.

So, with summer holidays on the horizon we feel obliged to give you the end of year lecture you will no doubt receive from Mr Decker, just as you have for the last eight years or so. So, heads up, pay attention and observe:

- Don't play on the railways (find a park instead)
- Don't fly kites near overhead power lines (get a life instead)
- Stay away from quarries and chalk pits (because there are lots of those about)

But most importantly, as summed on a leaving year 11's shirt, "If you can't be good, be careful."



Also In This Issue

- **ASSEMBLIES:** WE bring you the results of our exclusive survey.
- **AN APOLOGY:** We made a mistake in a previous issue — or did we?
- **SEXISM :** We look at sexism in the PE department.
- As well as **Words of Wisdom, News in Brief** and more!

Words Of Wisdom

We've dug up more peculiarities from our language and culture, these aren't strictly speaking words of wisdom, but they're funny!

Ever Wondered....

- If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?
- Does killing time damage eternity?
- Have you ever imagined a world with no hypothetical situations?
- If horrific means to make horrible, does terrific mean to make terrible?
- Could it be that light bulbs don't really produce light, but rather just suck up all the dark?
- Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?
- If buttered toast always lands buttered side down and a cat always lands on its feet, what would happen if you tied a piece of buttered toast on the back of a cat and dropped it?

Why Why Why....

- Why is it that night falls but day breaks?
- Why are there frosted windows in aeroplane toilets?
- Why is a person who plays the piano called a pianist, but a person who drives a racing car not called a racist?
- Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?
- Why is the plural of ox, oxen, but the plural of box is boxes and the plural of paradox is paradoxes not paradoxen?

Overmark

An Apology !?!

After the "Teacher's Words of Wisdom" last month it seems that we've got an apology to make. It would seem that "positivism" is a real word after all.

We wanted to make public the full details of this discrepancy, however the school has decided to censor the rest of this article from the newspaper.

What we can say is that the full details of this story have been available on our website for some time now, and won't be going away.

At such short notice we can't prepare an article on the pros and cons of censorship in the "free" media, however that's an issue we will be coming back to in the near future.

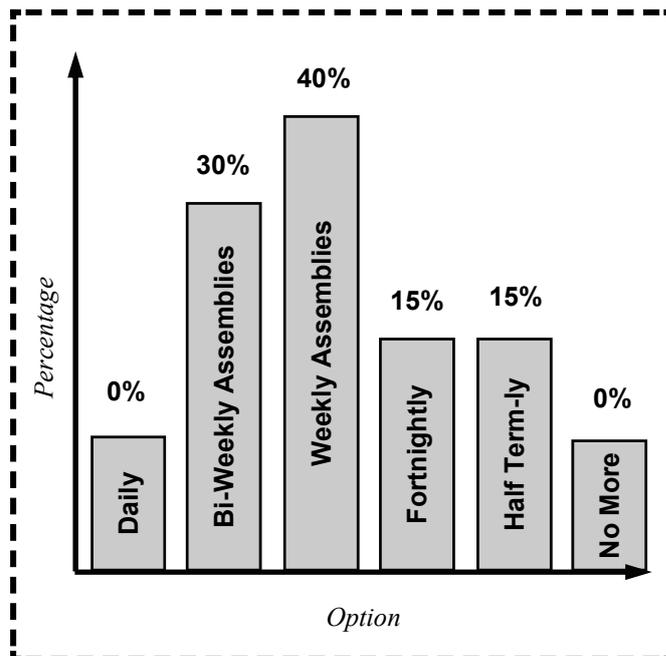
So, don't forget all our stories, in their full and proper glory are available online AND they always will be, because the internet seems to be the only place where freedom of speech actually means anything.

(NB: If we're not back in September, don't send out a search party, we'll have been expelled!)

Assemblies

What Did You Think?

The votes are in, and after perhaps a disappointingly low number of votes (which perhaps speaks for itself in saying that assemblies really aren't that important to you) we are pleased to bring you the results.



Quite interestingly the values are normally distributed, with somewhere around weekly being the average.

What these results show is firstly that you too do not agree with the frankly ludicrous regulation that we should all be participating in a daily act of worship, but secondly it shows that the amount of assemblies you are getting (2-4 a week depending on year group) is about right, if perhaps still a little too frequent.

The results also show that you, our readers, are intelligent enough to have realised that stopping assemblies altogether isn't such a good idea.

So now you the readers have spoken, let's see if the school responds by making any changes to the assembly rota next year? —Sounds rather 'Big Brotherish' don't you think? "The viewers have spoken, will the teachers abide by the findings???" Only our school teachers (hopefully) don't engage in drunken brawls in staff meetings?!?

**Don't Forget School Starts
Thursday 2nd September (except
for new year 12s who must come
in at 2:00 on the 1st Sept.)**

Investigating: **SEXISM**

As promised in this issue we are looking deeper into the issue of sexism, this time within the PE department. The areas of discussion fall into three categories:

FACILITIES

- Girls have one changing room, while boys have two: although the girls' room is much larger.
- Girls have shower cubicles, allowing them to shower in privacy, while boys have walk-through open showers which require them to strip naked and shower in the presence of their friends. Might this not cause *deep emotional trauma* for those who are less than happy with their appearance—even when dressed!

SPORTS

- Boys have football as part of their compulsory PE, and girls have netball but no reverse provision is made.
- Girls have extra-curricular football, but boys don't get netball.
- Boys cannot take part in aerobics lessons (yrs 10 & 11 only), in case they start "to oggle" at girls (to quote a *male* PE teacher). If this *ogging* does occur, it is sexist to suggest it does not work the other way. As well as this why should *ogging* not take place in other sports activities?

TEACHING

- These claims are controversial but we have received reports which suggest that in PE girls are favoured by the PE teachers, and treated in a more favourable manner. Examples of this include different responses to what to do when it starts raining—more often the girls go straight in while the boys have to remain out in the rain. Another example *used* to be different treatment to pupils forgetting their PE kit. It *used* to be the case that girls often got away with no punishment while the punishment for the boys depended on the teacher.

This situation has been changed recently as there is now a PE 'forgotten kit policy' where a forgotten kit leads to a lunchtime detention, while a repeat results in an after school detention.

You may be thinking "*But do boys want to play netball anyway?*" Well maybe not, but it's the fundamental belief that boys and girls should be equal which is important here. It's the same as skirts and trousers. Although girls can wear both only girls can wear skirts, and boys cannot. Again there is nothing to suggest that boys would want to wear skirts, but its having the option which is important. In law the two sexes are equal, so why not at school?

This may not seem overly important, but it is another example of unfair treatment of pupils at RMGS and Overmark hopes that these issues can be addressed over the summer break.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

We reported that your preferred solution to the uniform dilemma was to adopt a casual uniform or to totally abolish uniform. You preferred our current uniform to a 'Primary School' uniform, and someone must be listening because St John Fisher has just changed its uniform from a 'Primary School' uniform to a blazer and shirt. Although its by no means perfect it's a step in the right direction.

Mr Riordan Says...

"ActivBoards—The Future of Education?"

(Continued from front page).

Well, as promised we're continuing to try and improve our journalistic integrity by bringing you some of the other side of the story — the opinions of teachers. We decided who better to talk to about ActivBoards than Mr Riordan himself. He's helped challenge some of the arguments we gave *against* ActivBoards.

“ I think interactive whiteboards are fantastic. I'm always getting positive feedback from the pupils in my end of year evaluations. ”

In response to the idea that this new style of learning was not to everybody's taste Mr Riordan said:

“ If I were talking at the front of the room, then that's fine for auditory learners. But what about the visuals and kinaesthetics? With the board we can show pictures, have moving animations for visual learners. For kinaesthetics we can have interactive web sites and other activities. ”

When talking in relation to some teachers not using their boards to their full potential, Mr Riordan said:

“ I do appreciate that we [Teachers] are getting used to these new technologies, but I would hope that students can be patient as we battle with this technology. ”

And lastly, in relation to the claims that our school was just *showing off* in order to look better than other local schools, Mr Riordan said:

“ I think I'm right in saying that 80% of all schools now have interactive boards. I would guess that within 5—10 years they will be as common as the black-board once was. ”

We must try to use them well, we're lucky at this school to be so well funded. ”

Well now you have both sides of the argument, Mr Riordan did say "I do think windows are important too", and he can appreciate that in some cases it would be nice to use some of the money on improving the condition of the classrooms.

Here at Overmark we are not 'against' ActivBoards in principle; however, we feel that wider reform of school budgeting is needed to make sure money is *also* spent on perhaps more important projects - before being spent on what some may see as unessential equipment.

NEWS IN BRIEF ...

UNIFORM BLITZ

We're in the midst of exams at the moment, and with year 11 off the school took the opportunity to have a blitz on uniform. The 'blitz' ended as the recent hot weather began (coincidence? I think not), during this period any pupil spotted not wearing their uniform correctly was put in automatic lunchtime detention. Mr Moore commented that over two hundred and fifty detentions were issued for uniform during the period (that's approximately a third of all pupils). The blitz seems to have been a success with most years smartening up.

SIXTH FORM IS SAVED

The Learning and Skills Council has now announced that it has scraped all proposals to change the delivery of sixth form education in Medway. This means that for now at least the school's sixth form is completely safe!

The school authorities, Medway Council and the majority of the student body are all reported to be pleased with the outcome.

SEXISM AND UNIFORM

It was reported on BBC South East News, that a year eleven student attempted to challenge the sexist uniform rules at his school by wearing a skirt to school. The school (which we shall leave unnamed) responded to the stunt by placing the pupil in isolation for all of his GCSE exams that day.

The news program ran a poll, of which 90% of the viewers supported the student's decision. The general consensus was that it is sexist to allow girls to wear boys' clothes, while boys are not allowed to wear girls' clothes. Especially when one considers that men have actually be wearing skirts since prehistoric times when trousers weren't even invented.

So, what do you think? Apparently a similar stunt was tried at RMGS a few years ago and the pupils were sent home. Do you think boys should be allowed to wear skirts just as girls can wear trousers? Let us know!

ARRIVA UPHEAV-A

Medway has just received the largest launch of a fleet of buses the UK has ever seen, with 61 brand new buses and 40 refurbished buses all being launched on the same day – Monday 14th June. Rather ironically in our case all buses laid on for schools will as of now be painted yellow. Some schools such as the Hundred of Hoo receive free bus services for all pupils; because the school serves many pupils who live a long way away (on the Hoo Peninsula).

We've been going on until we're blue in the face about the yellow *American* buses, but it seems the scheme still hasn't got the green light. After nearly a year there is no sign of the shiny new buses, instead we are still relying on a temporary solution, which is—let's face it not brilliant. It is however worth pointing out that this humungous muck-up is not the fault of our beloved school, but rather Medway Council.

Overmark suggests that if the Government wants to lower road-usage they should subsidise free bus travel for travelling to and from school for all pupils, to solve all the bus problems.

ART CAMERA STOLEN

Mr Lydon has asked us to make a request on his behalf. Recently the art department's digital camera was stolen. Without a camera GCSE and A/AS level coursework and exams were severely affected. If you have the camera you will probably find that it is useless without the proper drivers and you are requested to return the camera to the art department—no questions asked.



Another apology to make here, oops! We said we'd put the solution to this problem online, but forgot! These things happen, we're all human (yes even reporters). However here is the solution to the tantalisingly tricky teaser:

- 1) $x = y$
- 2) $x^2 = xy$
- 3) $x^2 - y^2 = xy - y^2$
- 4) $(x + y)(x - y) = y(x - y)$
- 5) $x + y = y$
- 6) $2y = y$
- 7) $2 = 1$

The problem with the equation is that there is division by zero at lines 4) to 5). You divide y by $(x - y)$ and also divide $(x + y)$ by $(x - y)$ BUT $(x - y)$ is of course 0 because $x = y$.

So there you have it, you can never divide by 0 because anything divided by 0 is equal to infinity. From here on the equation is wrong, because the result of the division is incalculable. So you can now sleep safely in the knowledge that everything you ever thought you knew about mathematics was not a lie and $2 \neq 1$.

In The Next Issue; Due Out September

→ **SOMETHING:** We'll undoubtedly be reporting on something important which happened or will happen soon.

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:
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If you have been affected by any of the issues in this paper then phone our dedicated psychiatric line and leave us a message, 07952 273911.



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