

## **Check-in, Check-out: what is it any why are we doing it?**

### **What is it?**

For the first 10 minutes of the school day on Monday, and the last 10 minutes of the day on Friday, students will sit in a mixed-year group of a maximum of twelve students and talk about how their week has gone or what they have coming up. They might play ice-breaker games, and debate various topics.

This is a big change for us, and many of us – adults and children – don't respond well to change.

### **So why are we doing it?**

Much of the communication we engage in these days is electronic, not face to face, and for secondary school aged children, social media is the prime means of communication. Although you may interact with your immediate friendship group during the school day, how often do you have to speak to someone you don't know well?

We all know that in every class there are one or two confident students who put their hand up to answer all the questions and can dominate the class's interaction with the teacher. It's possible for a quiet student to go through a school day and never have to speak. And if they are asked to participate, they may find it very difficult.

We want every person in our school to have a voice, and to speak and be listened to on at least these two occasions in the week. No-one in our school should be anonymous, or slip "under the radar".

Very few people feel comfortable speaking to new people or those they don't know well, and some teenagers struggle to make phone calls or ask for things in shops and businesses.

### **So what?**

One way or another, you need to be able to communicate effectively with others once you leave school. At that point, the comfort blanket is gone, and people will not make the allowances your parents and teachers make.

How do you cope with going to uni and being in student accommodation with 5 strangers? How do you get through a job interview if you can't argue your point and back it up? How do you get on with your new classmates at college or uni, or your new colleagues – people of all ages – in your first job?

That's why this is not just about building relationships across school, but about getting you ready for your life beyond school. Not just "Ready to Learn", but ready for life.

### **Why do we sit in a circle?**

In a circle everyone is equal, there are no corners, no hiding places, no place more important than any other. Everyone can see and make eye contact with others in the circle. There are no barriers in a circle.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

- More socially confident young people who can communicate face to face with people of different ages and backgrounds, who are not part of their usual social circle

- Promote acceptance and understanding of others and sweep away stereotypes and generalisations about different groups of people in our school community – to see that every person is an individual with hopes, ambitions, interests and their own perspective.
- To break down barriers, so the scary year 11 boy isn't a thug, he likes playing football and wants to be in the air force. The nasty lady in the office is actually a really nice person who has two kids and walks her dog on the weekends. The irritating Year 7 has actually got a good sense of humour and goes go-karting at the weekends, and the boring teacher who couldn't possibly understand anything about your life went to this school as a child herself and spent a year travelling in South America.

### **Social media is not real life**

*Imagine yourself 5 or 10 years in the future:*

You and some other staff want a kettle and microwave in the break room. Do you start a facebook campaign to get them installed? Or do you just go and ask the boss?

Your boss has had a word with you about the blue tips on your hair, and you're not really happy about it. Do you go on social media and criticise or even insult him? What would happen if he found out?

You don't like having to attend the weekly office briefing – it's a waste of time. Do you start an online petition to have it scrapped? Or maybe suggest to the manager some different things that need to be discussed during the briefing.

### **Beyond the "Social" Educational - Developing Oracy Skills**

As a school, we want to work on improving our pupils' spoken communication skills. As adults, we know we rely on effective communication in all parts of our lives, whether this is to give information to a doctor; to ask questions regards travel arrangements, or to have to speak clearly and fluently to clients or customers.

So why are these skills important? Research shows that:

- that extroverted people, or those who have a certain 'polish' or talent in spoken communication are 25% more likely to be in a high earning job once they leave school.
- between more than 60% of young people in the youth offending system have a speech, language or communication need.
- by 2020, half a million UK workers will be severely held back by poor communication.
- students from a disadvantaged background will have heard 30 million fewer words by the time they are five than their more advantaged peers.

Quite simply, we know that by helping our pupils to become effective communicators, we will help them in whatever path they choose when they leave school.

Now, we know that not all children are confident speakers, nor are all adults. However, if our children were poor at writing, or poor at maths, we wouldn't say 'well, we won't do that anymore.' The same must be said for speaking. In school, we want to ensure that more opportunities are created for students to develop their speaking skills: check-in and check-out is just one way we hope to work towards that. Certainly as they get the opportunity to discuss and debate relevant topics on a weekly basis, we hope they will learn how to challenge the views of others politely; how to build on the views of others, and how to summarise and clarify.

Moreover, we are looking to do more than just build communication into check-in and check-out. All staff have received training on how to improve students' speaking skills. The whole of Y7 have been trained by English staff, and given the responsibility to push this forward in all subjects. We are also looking to provide further opportunities such as debate teams and "ignite speeches". We want to create a buzz around talk, to allow all students the opportunity to experience effective communication and to build the skills over time that we know they will rely on in later life.