

## Improving the security of Minsthorpe Community College

June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016

Dear Parent/ Carer

In today's world, security is a top priority in all types of places. From government buildings to small businesses to residential areas, more and more security equipment is being put in place on a daily basis in order to keep people and their property as safe as possible. Although security should certainly be taken seriously in any situation, there are few situations when it is more important to keep people safe than in a school setting.

The Ofsted inspection of March 2014 highlighted a number of concerns about the openness of the site at Minsthorpe Community College and how easy it is for members of the public and unauthorised visitors to gain access to almost the entire site without immediate detection. In the new Common Inspection Framework, Ofsted inspectors are required to make a judgement on the effectiveness of arrangements to provide a safe environment and a safe site. As things currently stand a person can enter Minsthorpe from virtually anywhere and, if they want to, students can do the same- or, indeed exit the college, if they so choose. We could be considered negligent in failing to improve our site security, especially as we know how vulnerable the site is to intrusion.

Minsthorpe Community College has actually experienced a number of unauthorised incursions- both in the school day and after college- that cause me great concern. Indeed in 2016 alone we have had a number of attacks of vandalism that have caused disruption to the normal functioning of the college whilst the damage has been repaired. Many recent, highly publicised arson attacks on schools are also a concern. It is entirely foreseeable that there could be an occasion when outsiders enter the site with malice aforethought and the open nature of our site makes us, both staff and students, extremely vulnerable.

Taking proper security precautions can help keep others who go to the college, such as teachers, parents and guests, as safe as possible from danger and harm. Virtually every school in Wakefield has a secure perimeter fence around the site to prevent or manage authorised access. I propose that we try to deal with this issue before we have to face an unpleasant event that could have been managed better by making the site less open. Of course, fences can be breached- just as other security measures can be- but their very existence should deter the opportunist and all but the very determined to effect entry into the college in order to do harm.

The fences will not only increase security they will also make it a safer environment for students whilst on site and make it more difficult for students to abscond from the college during the day. This means that we know that those students are being safeguarded. Having a smaller number of entry points will also allow us to be able to

monitor timekeeping of students and to carry out uniform checks in the morning before college starts.

Since 2014, we have tried to fund an improvement to the college's security via the DfE's Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). However, this fund is unable to cope with the huge annual demand from schools who need urgent building improvements and we no longer afford to wait and hope that the worst does not come to pass. We are, however, able to use the profits from college businesses such as the Sports & Fitness Centre and the Training & Conference Centre to spend on making improvements to the site and I am proposing that we use some of these funds to enhance the security of the college.

We can never make Minsthorpe 100% secure and we do not want to make it look like a fortress. We are a community school and want to be open and allow the community to access our site. This will not change. However, we have to balance our desire to be an open, welcoming college, with the fact that not all visitors come to the college with good intentions and the fencing will be aimed at preventing unauthorised people (and those with malicious intent) from having free access to the site. It will not prevent people who need and want to access the college from doing so. Across the country, school fences have reduced arson and fire incidents, trespassing, vandalism and break and enters significantly and I believe that we need to take steps to make Minsthorpe a safer school and work will begin on installing the fences over the summer.

Yours sincerely



R.P. Henshaw  
Principal