

# Respect

*Noun*

due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others.

# Respect

## Ethos of Learning

“Respect is what RGS is built upon. Respect for all staff, the pupils, the parents, the environment and oneself.”

Alex Wallace , Deputy Headmaster

Recently, I read a superb book about leadership called, “Legacy” by James Kerr. James spent time with the All Black rugby team trying to extrapolate what has made the All Blacks the greatest rugby playing side the planet has ever seen. The book contained 15 chapters which broke down the key elements of the All Black success. For me, the most interesting section talked about the key character traits that all All Blacks must possess: Humility, Honesty, Integrity and Respect. These are the very same character traits we are trying to develop here at RGS.

Respect is arguably the most important. I recently asked some students about respect, particularly within the school context. A couple of respondents suggested a teacher should “earn our respect.” I have to say, I disagree with this statement. Surely everyone should start a first meeting in a default position of being respected? I can understand that a person could lose respect but in my eyes, they should all begin with respect in the first place. Why assume the worst?

I’m sure that in all walks of life people can lose respect; it could be the plumber who turns up late, the restaurant that serves cold food, the rugby coach who swears or the teacher who doesn’t mark. However, these people can

regain respect, it may take time and a change in their ways. Respect is not a permanent state, it is dynamic, it can be very hard to build up but can be lost in an instant (hopefully only temporarily).

I see respect gained and lost in school on a daily basis. One of the least enjoyable parts of my role is the oversight of exclusions. The student tends to be very upset at their actions and they know they have let themselves down. They feel they have lost respect. They are generally most upset about having lost the respect and trust of their parents. I do not like these meetings when I am having to give out sanctions. However, there is still a huge amount to be gained by these students in terms of respect. Sometimes I can be speaking to a student who has made a huge error in judgement but the way he conducts himself at the meeting can go a long way in helping me to gain his respect back. Honesty for me is a crucial part of this. We all make mistakes, don't look to blame someone else. Whilst horrible at the time, it is vital you face up to your actions in both good and bad times. Apologise. A simple but genuine apology can go a long way in building up the respect.

I see this in my home life. I make numerous mistakes in my work and home life, so have become fairly used to apologising but it is by no means less genuine. My two year old son's most regular word is "sorry" as he continues to batter his older siblings. However, many people find an apology very difficult to make. Perhaps it exposes a weakness or forces them to admit they have been wrong. There is great strength in an apology both for the giver and receiver, and it certainly stalls the losing respect process.

Our Year 13 have finished school this week and we have had a number of events to celebrate this. Many schools across the country struggle with this event. It strikes great fear into many a Headteacher. Stories of trashed classrooms, cars being wrecked, obscenities written over school walls, livestock! In recent years this has not been a problem for us. The past few days have been an amazing celebration for what has been a superb a year group. I was fortunate to be invited to the Leavers' Ball on Saturday. This is a huge event organized by the prefect team. It was an honour to be part of this. The respect the students showed one another and the staff and school was a pleasure to witness. I am sure a few beers had been sunk but the genuine love the boys expressed to me when talking about the school brought a tear to my eye. At the end of the night, many came and shook my hand before heading off to

the after party. Many were in early the next morning to tidy up after the event.

It was a similar story yesterday. The field was full of inflatables for our Year 13s to enjoy on their final day. There was a fantastic array of fancy dress and prizes awarded throughout the day. It was a delight to see virtually all staff coming out to wish the students fond farewells (may also have been the BBQ on offer). For me, this epitomized the mutual respect regularly on display here at the RGS between students and staff. It is a privilege to work at such a school.

I hope at home your sons are just as polite and respectful to all people they come across. Respect should not be something that is just turned on and off for school. We, as parents need to ensure we continue to model the behaviour we want to see in our children. I was recently shown this clip at a conference, it certainly reminded me what an influential role I have as a parent. "Children see. Children Do"- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7lgLLsVP2Y>



### **A final thought...**

It's really important we don't forget the power we have as parents and/or teachers to influence young people. It is such an honour and responsibility. We are delighted we get to use our power at RGS.

*For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: [rgshw.com](http://rgshw.com) or Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster, [arw@rgshw.com](mailto:arw@rgshw.com)*