

Blazers of GLORY



Arguing with truculent teens about the correct way to wear a tie might not instantly seem like a valuable investment of teachers' time – but for Educating Essex's **Vic Goddard**, it's a matter of pride. And not just Mr Drew's...

It's interesting how something that is supposed to provide consistency and avoid students being distinguished by how much money their parents earn (and therefore what 'labels' they can afford), can still provide so much to talk about.

The case for uniform is quite straightforward: it lessens people standing out, supports the drive for high standards, and promotes a positive school image. However the arguments against should be given as much credit for their logic and potential impact, especially at a time when creativity in schools feels under threat and our need for the next Steve Jobs or Lucien Freud grows ever greater.

I guess it would be difficult to say anything other than that I am pro-uniform, with a few million people having seen my somewhat surprisingly telegenic deputy enforcing it in our school with such vigour. I became head at Passmores five years ago, inheriting a uniform that was similar in design for everyone... but not in application! It always amazed me how different identical clothes could look. We named many of the various incarnations:

- **The Dog's Tongue** – the short, fat tie worn with the big, baggy knot.
- **The Britney Spears** – a low-slung tie and as many buttons undone as possible.
- **The Magic Skirt** – designed to roll up over

and over again as a young person walks but miraculously stopping just as decency starts to be drawn into the equation.

■ **The Miami Vice** – blazer sleeves rolled up, usually with the sleeves of the shirt intermingled just to ensure that full movement is restricted and the removal of said blazer is almost entirely impossible.

Obviously I could go on ad nauseum... and don't even get me started on the dreaded hood!

Like most new heads I asked students what they thought of the uniform, and got a range of answers, but one request came through loud and clear: 'Can we have a summer uniform?' Being a person that values student voice, and wishing to demonstrate that I am 'the caring head, who listens', I agreed to a trial half term of polo shirts, no blazers, and shorts being optional. It was no surprise that the first week saw the vast majority taking the option – but it didn't take long before more and more of our students were returning to our traditional shirt, tie and blazer; by the end of that half term the polo shirts were almost extinct.

Why did our young people make that choice? They said that the changeable weather meant that our 'standard' uniform was the most flexible option and also, heart-warmingly, that they felt a sense of pride in being recognized as Passmores students. This gave us the green light to make sure that we all demonstrated that pride. The 'Proud of Passmores' campaign happened quickly and the 'POP' card was upon us.

Every week all students are issued with a POP (Proud of Passmores) card. It works very simply; it has six bullet points on the back and

◆ VIC GODDARD IS
◆ HEAD TEACHER AT
◆ PASSMORES
◆ ACADEMY – AS
◆ SEEN ON CHANNEL
◆ 4'S 'EDUCATING
◆ ESSEX' SERIES ◆



a space for three signatures (soon to be two but don't tell my students yet). The bullets are:

- Wear your uniform with pride.
- If you have no 'strikes' at the end of the week you will receive 5 Passmores Points (each is worth 5p but that is a different article).
- If you receive 3 strikes you will receive a detention.
- If you cannot produce your card when asked you will receive a detention.
- If you don't know what is expected, look at a poster or ask.
- We are proud of you so be proud of your appearance.

I guess the rest is self-explanatory and it transformed our uniform overnight; all staff bought in and enforced it and we introduced a new phrase into our vocabulary: 'being POPped'!

Not everyone likes uniforms and I understand that, but I strongly feel that if you *are* going to have one then wear it with pride – or, as we say on Twitter, #proudoypassmores.

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