

15th September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

There appears to be a great deal of misinformation and conjecture being spread on a private social media group around some recent school improvement that has no basis in reality. I would respectfully point out that the members of this group have neither fact-checked their information with us or provided a right of reply.

For complete clarity, the Headteacher is neither leaving or intending to leave The Abbey School. We can also confirm that Barry Smith, an ex-Headteacher and school improvement advisor is not employed by the school, nor has he ever been. Neither is the school planning to employ him.

All schools regularly use the services of educational experts, advisors or auditors to aid improvement and development, whether that be whole-school or subject-based. In fact, like many schools in Kent, we have support from KCC in the form of a School Improvement Adviser who will visit us periodically, check our systems and processes, and provide advice and support where necessary.

All this week we are lucky to have Barry Smith on site sharing motivational strategies and techniques to support staff and students with our school improvement journey.

Barry has met our wonderfully enthusiastic students in assemblies, lessons and during lunchtimes as well as supporting teaching and learning improvement. All of his interactions with children have reinforced our current expectations of behaviours, including modelling the importance of basic respect and courtesy. His methods do not deviate in any way from our current school procedures or practices. He's just giving advice on how to implement our own rules in a different manner.

Barry's methods may be viewed as somewhat controversial and different from what our students are used to, but he has a strong track record of school improvement and has had many successes including the Michaela School, which is now one of the most respected and high performing establishments in the country.

Barry is strongly supported by Katherine Birbalsingh, the Government's new Social Mobility Commissioner and his ethos aligns with our own and that of Gavin Williamson, the Education Secretary.

Barry works with a large number of schools nationally and across the South East and The Abbey is just one of these – we are not special or particular in that respect.

Yours sincerely



Dr R Speller
Headteacher