

Wilton Park School

COMMENTS ON ARTICLE IN THE MAIL ON SUNDAY 20TH JANUARY 2013 BY MARK NICOL

This statement has been prepared by the Trustees of Wilton Park School who legally affirm its accuracy having investigated all the facts.

SUMMARY

- The Mail on Sunday has published a defamatory and erroneous article which is a serious distortion of the facts which we emphatically and categorically deny as being both false and prejudicial.
- At the time of writing (Tuesday 22nd January 2013 0900 hours) Wilton Park School has received no notification or advice of any impending investigation by the Wiltshire County Council, the Department of Education, the Police or any other agency
- The headline '*Christian sect school that 'shut up' girl pupil*' portrays the biased and inaccurate character of the entire article: it is completely untrue to suggest that this government registered and accredited school in any way acted upon directions or instructions from the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church.

SPECIFIC REBUTTALS OF SOME OF THE ERRONEOUS STATEMENTS

"Christian sect school" The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church is a mainstream Christian Church holding substantially the same doctrines as the Church of England. The PBCC is not a sect but is structured and operates on common Christian ground as taught by Holy Scripture which is available for all Christians.

"A fundamentalist Christian church... is being investigated about claims of child cruelty" The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church is certainly a "fundamentalist Christian church" but the latter part of this statement is completely untrue.

"Yesterday a local education authority confirmed it was investigating allegations of child cruelty and failures to teach the National Curriculum at...Wilton Park School"

Wilton Park School has not received any notice or advice of any investigation whatsoever. Teaching at Wilton Park School is based on the National Curriculum and is completely open to unfettered inspection by relevant Government Authorities at all times.

“The only girl was shut up for the longest number of days...”

- The ‘only’ girl was never ‘shut up’ and the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church congregation in her parish have never taken any action restricting her activities.
- The girl’s father was going through a difficult time and the girl’s agreed wish was to stay at home with her mother in support of the household.
- This was done with the full knowledge of the school, and the school provided educational resources and support so that she could do her schoolwork at home temporarily
- It is unconceivable that a national newspaper should denigrate a school that was showing support and care for a family that was going through a difficult time

“... boys and girls, aged 16 to 18, are subjected to gender segregation at all times” This allegation appears next to a picture (two boys and a girl talking to each other) and is both completely false and damningly unbelievable. Boys and girls are taught together in the same classrooms and participate together in extracurricular projects and excursions. Nor are they restricted in any way as regards appropriate social contact. This preposterous allegation is clearly intended to ridicule our very treasured young people who enjoy and cherish very active lives as youthful members of our community.

“Laptops are considered instruments of evil” this is completely untrue. Laptops are found in nearly all Plymouth Brethren homes and businesses and are used in all Plymouth Brethren Schools. Computers and mobile phones used by Brethren members have restrictions to prevent access to the unrestricted, immoral and contemptible filth and corruption that we regard as evil and which is so readily available on these electronic devices.

“Liaisons and relationships between pupils are prohibited and monitored using CCTV” use of CCTV show our commitment to Child Protection and school security. According to an independent study last year, more than 2000 secondary schools and academies used 47,806 cctv cameras in total, including 26,887 inside school buildings. Wilton Park School is hardly unusual in this.

“Pupils seldom play any competitive sport” this is another falsehood. Pupils play football, hockey, cricket, table tennis, basketball, volleyball, tennis and other competitive games. They enjoy competitions between houses within a school and also compete in carnivals between schools.

“The Exclusive Brethren ... formed in 1848. In that year they broke off from the much larger Plymouth Brethren... founded in 1832” The Mail on Sunday cannot even get basic historical facts right, which can be found in any encyclopaedia. The Brethren originated in Dublin in 1827, after J.N.Darby with others separated from the Established Church. In 1848 there was a division and some members set up other churches also known as “Brethren”. The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and the other “Brethren” continue to hold JND’s teachings. The “Exclusive Brethren” name was ascribed to the PBCC by the press in the late 1950s.

FURTHER FACTS ABOUT WILTON PARK SCHOOL:

TEACHING AT WILTON PARK SCHOOL

- Wilton Park is an excellent school with a fine record
- The latest School Inspection report praises Wilton Park's provision for its pupils' wellbeing and makes no adverse comments about the school at all – see:
- http://www.focus-school.com/wessex_downloads/wilton_park_report_2011.pdf
- Teaching is almost entirely by non-Brethren professional staff and is based on the National Curriculum
- Examination results are significantly above the national average

CHILD PROTECTION AT WILTON PARK SCHOOL

- Wilton Park School is committed to child protection and has a Child Protection Policy which is made freely available
- Two Designated Persons are trained to deal with any issues that may arise and to liaise as required with the relevant agencies
- One of the school trustees has overall responsibility to ensure that all legislation and directives are complied with
- Use of CCTV shows Wilton Park's commitment to school security and child protection

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