Headteacher letter to candidates

I feel privileged to be the headteacher of Tanfield school. The day I started in July 2017 was the proudest day of my career so far. I’m lucky to lead such fantastic students and staff and I truly believe their potential is limitless.

I’m sure you will do your research about the school and realise that we are not in the strongest position. We were judged to require improvement, by Ofsted in November 2016, and have achieved disappointing results in the summer of 2017 and 2018.

So, what are we doing to improve?

As Peter Drucker says, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” We believe that the main driver to success is creating an achievement-oriented culture. A culture where it is cool to be smart and where all students work hard to attend the best university or a real alternative. We do this by having a ‘no excuses’ approach. We believe this instils strong learning habits, which ultimately helps students to become better qualified, more successful and happier. We expect students to follow homework and equipment rules, wear uniform with pride and always be ‘on task’, fully engaged and ready to learn.

We aim to provide high-quality education to all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is widely recognised that pupils from deprived sectors of society are less likely to have had a knowledge-rich start to life and may already begin school at a disadvantage. Therefore, we have implemented a knowledge-based approach to address this and close any gaps in attainment.

We know that teaching is the most rewarding, exhilarating but exhausting profession. We are guided by a philosophy of simplicity that aims for maximum impact on pupil learning with minimal workload for staff. We reduce burnout by applying this effort-to-impact ratio to everything we do. For example, our slimmed-down marking, centralized homework and detentions minimise work. We use oral feedback to reduce workload. We want staff to nurture a healthy, sustainable balance between their school and home lives.

As an individual, I am driven to be the best that I can be, and I expect the same from students and staff. Therefore, we are constantly looking to take the best ideas from academies, schools, the independent sector and abroad. We don’t believe in off-the-shelf strategies or practices; there is no silver bullet. It is really about being values driven, having clear vision, focusing relentlessly on results, operating strict routines, doing the simple things well every day, and building strong relationships at all levels.

If you are wholly committed to our mission, have the persistence and humility to return to it every day; to sustain our routines and live our values over and over, we would love for you to apply for this vacancy.

Regards,

Steven Clough