



LAWRENCE SHERIFF SCHOOL
Home of the Coventry and Central Warwickshire Teaching School Hub
RUGBY

A HAPPY SCHOOL

‘For students and staff to be happy during their time at Lawrence Sheriff School’

I wonder how many schools have this statement at the top of their Headteacher’s job description and as the primary aim of the school. I think it is brave of our governors to make this their aim and the first point on my job description. However, I recently read a document where the first line read: *I have never heard of a happy school before and I am still not sure what it means*. Surely all schools should be happy! But maybe this signals that I need to clarify what we mean by a happy school.

Firstly, it is my experience that any person at any stage of their life and career performs better when they know they are valued and they enjoy what they do. A happy school creates an environment where all people can be heard, where all people have the space to develop themselves and all people are respected. It is important to note that when working in a school with over 1000 students and over 100 staff this does not mean that everyone does their own thing and everyone can do and say what they want, when they want – that would be anarchy. It is also unlikely to have a school where everyone agrees on what should be done and when. Instead, the happiness comes from **how** we do things: we listen to each other even if we disagree, we talk to each other nicely even if we have opposing opinions, and we act considerately even if we want to do things differently.

A quote from Maya Angelou comes to mind at this point ‘people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel’.

Another aspect of happiness that builds on this is one of expectation. Despite what anyone says an easy life is not a fulfilled and happy life. Taking the easy option may at times give you time to breathe and short term gratification but deeper happiness comes from challenge. I cannot imagine a school where we settled for learning the easy stuff, or accepted superficial knowledge or skills. As teachers we don’t work hard to achieve mediocre teaching and learning; we get the buzz from challenging ourselves and challenging each other. You only have to walk into a classroom where the teacher has created challenge but has also structured the learning to help students achieve and you can feel the energy!

When next asked what we mean by a happy school we can sum it up with: where everyone is valued and everyone is challenged to be the best version of themselves or perhaps as a familiar voice would often say ‘it’s the way we do things around here’.

Mrs Teresa Mpofu
Headteacher