

## **Headmaster's Report for the Academic Year 2020-21**

I am delighted that we are able to hold our prize giving in these wonderful surroundings, and wish to extend my welcome to those present with us and those joining us virtually.

I would like to start by thanking the various musicians who have entertained us so beautifully today.

Thank you to Mr Craig for his warm welcome to our Speech Day as our new Chair of Governors.

I would like to wish him well in his new role and to echo his thanks to Ms Ayres for her dedication and service to the School over the last 25 years. I too am pleased that she is going to continue as a governor. Whilst she cannot be here today, we will have the chance to thank her formally in the future.

This is an important year for the School as we celebrate several milestones, including 125 years since the School was founded, 20 years since the opening of our Outstanding Nursery and 10 years since the Senior School became coeducational, a change that has been incredibly successful. We heard from students of the School's humble beginnings and the development of the School over the past 125 years. The history of the School is well documented and I would like to pay tribute to all those who have been involved in the education of so many children over the years.

As we reflect over the past year, and celebrate our academic and other achievements, we must also reflect on another most difficult of years.

Who could have ever imagined the change to our daily lives that the pandemic would bring? Our thoughts and prayers remain with those families most affected by the pandemic, those who have lost loved ones and those who continue to recover.

As we returned at the start of last academic year, pupils returned to classrooms, working in Bubbles, and in set classrooms.

Well done to all pupils who quickly adapted to a new routine at School, with face coverings, one-way systems, learning in one place for much of the time, lunch in boxes, COVID testing and remote learning. You approached a difficult year with positivity, enthusiasm, grit and determination.

It is also worth noting the skills you have gained, including those of independent learning, time management and of course those all-important IT skills.

Today, we come together to congratulate those who are to receive awards and all pupils in the Nursery and School who worked so very hard last year to achieve such considerable success in very difficult circumstances.

## **Nursery**

The Nursery has continued to adapt to the restraints due to Covid 19, remaining open throughout the year and the second national lockdown in January. Working in bubbles, staff and children have adapted marvellously. Despite these restrictions the children have continued to have some wonderful opportunities to develop their interests and learning, exploring the school estate by going for walks in the Forest School and the grounds.

We have had some unexpected visitors though – a swarm of bees and in the summer a colony of 250 pipistrel bats. We eventually learned to live with our temporary visitors and my thanks go to all the staff in the Nursery and School for showing great flexibility during this additional challenge.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Children in Reception class followed the revised EYFS curriculum a year early; and, despite a disrupted year, all children made very good progress. They had a wonderful day practising their bike skills, riding over ramps, tackling roundabouts and cycling through the slalom. It was a joy to see so many happy, smiling faces. The Reception Classes enjoyed a day of pirate themed activities; Captain Lang brought along his talking parrot to help and he gave everyone a piece of treasure.

### **Key Stage 1**

Year 1 celebrated the end of their African Adventure topic with a celebration day today making an African themed hat and danced to a traditional African gumboot dance. A fun day was had by all.

Children in Year 2 made excellent progress and we are proud of the percentage of children reaching Greater Depth in their assessments. They also enjoyed a day in the life of a Pirate at Tallington Lakes enjoying Kayaking and Raft Building. They showed their dancing ability too with a dance medley performance, organised by the Peterborough Performing Arts Programme.

### **Key Stage 2**

Year 6's Standardised Tests were cancelled again this year; however, in May the children completed past assessment papers and their results

showed a significant increase in the number of those achieving the Exceeding Standard in SPaG and Mathematics compared to previous years.

A key feature of an education at TPS is the plethora of trips and visits; and, after a year of restriction, we started to venture out and about in the summer, Year 6 enjoying their Geography fieldtrip to Hunstanton, taking in the beach, the cliffs and the ice cream!

Children have enjoyed another year of Forest School, building shelters; learning about fire and playing many team games, although sadly the infamous Bushcraft Residential had to be postponed.

Well done to all our Prep children on their achievements.

## **GCSE and A Level**

In January, the Prime Minister announced that GCSEs and A level exams would not go ahead in the summer as planned and instead being replaced by Teacher Assessed Grades, which saw students' performance based on assessment throughout the course. Thank you to teachers and Heads of Department for their additional work, assessing students in School.

Students demonstrated a confident expectation of success and celebrated an outstanding set of GCSE and A Level results and my congratulations go to all the students on their achievements.

Year 11 pupils had much to celebrate when results were released in August, with our best ever results since the change to the new grading system was introduced. 63% of grades were at 9-7, equivalent to A and A\*, with 1 in 7 grades at the highest Grade 9, the top band of A\*.

Individual successes included Danielle and Gabrielle Owusu-Ansah who both achieved ten Grade 9s, Sam Patel-Espin and Ben Meadows who were awarded seven and five Grade 9s respectively amongst their results.

We again celebrated our best A Level results with 92% of all grades at A\*-B, and two thirds of grades at A or A\*. The pass rate was 100% and importantly all students gained entry in to their first-choice university.

Individual successes included Chiara Bellinzona, Charlie Spencer and Amelia Grotta who achieved A\*s in all subjects, including their Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ).

All students made exceptional progress and, through their hard work and supportive staff, with over a grade of added value on average to each result.

These are an incredible set of results at all levels and we are incredibly proud of all our students for everything they have achieved. They have demonstrated just how resilient they are over the past couple of years experiencing long periods of remote learning.

## **Computing**

Very few people had heard of Zoom or Teams two years ago and now we use IT seamlessly in our work and learning. We have been pleased to be able to enhance access and to expand our Bring Your Own Device Scheme.

Ability in computing continues to grow and last year 193 students across the School took part in the UK Bebras Computing Challenge, with nine

of our students achieving the newly introduced and highly sought after Gold Award for finishing in the Top 10% of the Country.

Furthermore, six Year 8 pupils reached the final of the Amazon Web Services Competition with their Charitology Cambridgeshire App.

## **Maths**

Pupils again excelled in Maths Challenge – particular congratulations to Grace Marriott, who achieved a certificate of Merit in the Pink Kangaroo Competition.

## **English**

In English, several students had work published and everyone was thrilled to be given the chance to take part in the Carnegie Shadowing Group after a year's break due to previous lockdowns.

## **Languages and Science**

In Languages, Year 7s used their creative flair to produce excellent Language Albums, and in Science, a specialist team of Year 10 Physics students were given the task of building the tallest, free standing Marshghetti structure. Many years of playing games like Minecraft and Fortnite have clearly honed their structural engineering skills!

Congratulations to our Biologists in Year 9 and the Lower Sixth on their success in the Biology Challenges. Particular congratulations to Ronnie Willard for achieving a Bronze Medal, and Naman Bhardwaj for achieving a prestigious Gold Medal in the Intermediate Challenge, an award only given to the top 5% of pupils nationally.

## **Art**

In art, pupils submitted outstanding entries to the Prep and Senior Art Competition and continued to be creative throughout the year; the weekly photography competition being a highlight. Once again the work of our exam groups was stunning and adorns the walls of the School.

## **St John Ambulance**

We have seen such heroics from the nation's health workers and in School our own St John Ambulance Division continued to meet virtually. This year we were able to congratulate the highest number of Grand Prior Awards in the School's history and my congratulations go to Charlotte Hemens, Amelia Lawson, Victoria Penev, Darya Robson, Lola Stephenson, Megan Wilkinson and Oscar Viner. Special mention should go to Mrs Shah, our St John Ambulance Leader, who was honoured for her Service to Young People in a formal notice from the Queen. We are most grateful to Sarah and the team of volunteers for their leadership of the Division.

## **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**

This year we had 80 students working towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Award and, despite the restrictions, Bronze and Gold students were able to complete their expeditions, the Gold group walking for eight hours per day over four days, with the blisters to prove it!

## **Sport**

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, 2020-21 was another impressive year in sport with pupils of all ages experiencing notable success, including county, regional, national and international players and athletes across a wide range of sports.

The year started slowly though, with months of no fixtures and virtual PE and Games lessons testing the ingenuity of both staff and pupils (and perhaps some parents). It was clear that students were missing their sport and with lockdown easing at the start of 2021, we were able to start face-to-face lessons, with fixtures and after School clubs also restarting in the Summer term at pace.

The School put on their trainers and took part in the 15 Mile Challenge in January - walking, cycling and running 4,049 miles. Children in the Prep School then continued recording their activity, logging miles towards Tokyo and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and I am delighted that we have James Fox here with us today.

For the first time, the School took part in the Society of Heads Cricket Festival, one of the first fixtures of the year – the girls were runners up, losing by only 2 runs, and the boys a very respectable 3rd.

Sports days, I am pleased to say, were still able to go ahead this year and enabled us to welcome parents back into School for the first time.

## **Drama**

We missed the annual whole School musical this year; nevertheless, innovative performances continued, and we were delighted to share 'No Singing, No Dancing, No Baubles' by Reception to Year 3; and 'Now That's What I Call Christmas!' by Year 5, with various cameo performances by staff! Everyone involved, both children and adults, had great fun producing the videos bringing joy to everyone at the end of the Autumn term.

Pupils continued to attend Speech and Drama lessons throughout the year, working towards Lamda and New Era qualifications. Many



congratulations to Georgia Purtill and Matthew Carr who both gained their Grade 8 Gold Medal in Reading for Performance.

As restrictions eased in the summer term, we planned for the annual Year 6 play to conclude the year but sadly this had to be cancelled. The students should be commended for their hard work throughout the rehearsal period.

## **Music**

Music successes continued despite a lack of singing and other restrictions, and we enjoyed an excellent online Christmas Concert, showcasing our talented youngsters.

Students have been very successful in their exams despite the unusual circumstances. Congratulations to Harry Kelsall, Megan Wilkinson, and James Bassett, who we will hear today, who all gained their Grade 8 last year.

Melissa Goodrick won The Prep School Young Musician of the Year and Molly Speechley, who played beautifully, won the Most Promising Musician of the Year award.

The coveted Young Musician of the Year prize went to Emily Liu with a sensational performance of The Lark.

## **Houses**

In a year of bubbles, House activities have had to be flexible, creative and, at times, remote! The energy, adaptability and teamwork of House members meant events could still take place, including the traditional House Christmas Tree Competition.

My congratulations to Spencer House who won the Events Trophy and to Newton House who won the House Shield. Well done to all pupils on earning an amazing 36,386 House Points last year!

## **PSHEE - Peterborough Citizens**

We believe that everyone should be kind to each other and develop a real sense of empathy; and we marked Antibullying week with a programme of events and special PSHEE sessions for pupils. This year, more than ever, we have witnessed the positive power that exists when people come together.

Lower Sixth students participated in a virtual Mental Health summit meeting with Peterborough MP Paul Bristow. They found it incredibly empowering and inspiring to unite with like-minded students across the city, showing a determination to resolve the mental health crisis we face nationally; we look forward to supporting their work this year.

## **Chapel**

The Woodard tradition of keeping Chapel at the heart of our School has continued with year-group service. In the Senior School, pupils and tutors engaged in discussion and reflection on questions of life and spirituality, through the weekly Thought for the Day, with music chosen for each theme, feeding back their views via Teams each week.

Live streamed services, included a Remembrance Service in November, a memorial service for HRH Prince Philip, and an Ascension Day liturgy led by the newly-appointed Senior Prefects in May.

For our Harvest Festival Prep children recorded presentations and we welcomed an array of children dressed as vegetables in Year 2.

Our Carol Service was very different this year, with musicians, performers and readers contributing towards this online event for families to watch together.

Later in the year, we celebrated Pentecost, with a special emphasis on the many languages spoken in the School, celebrating our diverse multicultural community.

In the Summer term, the Woodard family said farewell to The Revd Canon Brendan Clover, who has been Senior Provost for 13 years. He has been a regular visitor, preacher and support to the School and we wish him well in the future.

My thanks go to Father Toby for his leadership – in challenging times, he has innovated to provide a continued sense of community through the Chapel.

## **Charity**

We have a real sense of community spirit in School; we look out for each other and celebrate each other's success whilst supporting others who are less fortunate, and pupils raised funds for the Cambridge Deaf Association, our main charity. We held several non-uniform days – the Upper Sixth in amazing fancy dress - and the Preparatory School took part in the annual Santa's Smile event, warming up to Rockin' Robin with Santa.

We also took part in the 'Captain Tom 100 Challenge', and staff emailed Christmas cards and made donations in lieu of buying cards.

We have also been able to support a number of other worthy causes during the year and it was lovely to see the whole Prep School bring

their teddys into School to 'thank the NHS' for all they have done for us during the pandemic.

I am delighted that we were able to raise £4,473 for others in need - an incredible achievement given the limitations we have been operating under!

## **Conclusion**

I wish to most sincerely thank all the staff who work throughout the School and Nursery, and who have adapted under pressure to maintain our excellent provision, thanking especially our teachers who provided excellent remote learning during the Spring term lockdown, in spite of the restrictions placed upon us. Thank you. I would also like to thank my Leadership Team of Mr Cameron, Mr Dharamraj, Mrs Elding, Mr Pryor and Mr Stroud for their dedication and support over the last 12 months.

Thank you too to all parents, grandparents and carers for their continued support over the last year, many of whom have continued to work as Key Workers, or switched to working at home, whilst supporting pupils with their remote learning.

I recently spoke to prospective pupils and parents at our first face-to-face Open Day for two years. I explained that I think I have the best job in the world. Madness, I hear some of you say, when I could have been a doctor, racing driver or astronaut! The way I see it, I get to work with actors, doctors, musicians, nurses, teachers, architects, entrepreneurs, lawyers and so on. It's just that they don't know it yet! From seeing our youngest children in the Nursery and Reception class, grow up through the Prep School, learning to read and write, developing their confidence

in the Senior School and achieving amazing success in the Sixth Form, I get to experience all of these things before others get to.

Whatever you go on to be or do, I would ask that you are ambitious and dream big.

So my final thanks go to the pupils of our wonderful School; it is you all who make this a wonderful place to grow up in. It has been a challenging year in so many ways but you have been nothing short of brilliant and I wish to congratulate you all on your many achievements over the last year.

Well done!



Mr A D Meadows, BSc Hons, NPQH

8<sup>th</sup> October 2021