

Headmaster's Report for the Academic Year 2016-17

Mr Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen, girls and boys: I would like to start by thanking the various musicians who have entertained us so beautifully today.

As I started to write this report, I reflected upon my time at the School. It is now 14 years since I started here and I have been Headmaster for 10. I have therefore seen some of you from Reception through to Sixth Form. As Upasana our Head Girl said recently at our Sixth Form Open Evening, the School has very much felt a part of her family and I share that sentiment.

During this time, the School has changed significantly but what is constant is our ongoing success. In fact, 2016-17 represents one of the best years for examination performance at every level with exceptional results and strong performances throughout the Prep and Senior Schools.

In a recent Prep Assembly, I asked the children to think of some big questions; those for which they did not know the answer. Their questions were brilliant and included such things as who invented numbers, why do we speak different languages, who invented words? Some questions were especially profound, for example, what is Heaven? and what is life? All these questions, got me thinking again about the purpose of our time in School: I believe it is to encourage you all to ask such big questions and to seek the answers to them, even if the answer might not be certain.

Another question asked was, 'what is time?' and I thought I would reflect upon a journey through time today

On average we will have about 29,000 days of our life – some will have more and some less. Of these you will spend approximately a third asleep, eating will take up 1635 days, you will be working for 4380 days, and hopefully you will be doing something that you enjoy, and shopping for 3100 days. You will spend 588 days travelling to and from school or work. A massive 3220 days will be spent watching television and 455 days doing chores – parents may wish to do a benchmarking exercise?

This leaves, 5956 days left to spend doing other things e.g. laughing, going for walks, playing sport, learning a new instrument, texting or going on Facebook. But of course you need to decide what you are going to do with this time and my advice to you is to make the most of every day and every minute.

As I look back over the last year, I can see that our children have done exactly that – not a moment has been wasted in their pursuit of the answers to some of those big questions in English, Maths, Languages, Science etc.

So now is the time to review what we have achieved and to reflect upon your successes.

What is amazing about our School is that it's possible to go all through from Baby Room in the Nursery to Sixth Form and it is in the Nursery that we start to inculcate the basics of learning and the importance of asking those questions; after all, how many times have we heard young children simply say 'why?'. With our outstanding provision in our Nursery it is no wonder that it is full with long waiting lists but we reached a milestone this year as we said thank you and farewell to Mrs Bellamy, our Nursery Manager, after, not only starting the Nursery, but growing it to the beacon of excellence that it is today. We pay tribute to Pauline and thank her for her service to this important part of our School.

We measure the progress made by our youngest children at the end of their Reception year and this year they did exceptionally well, making significantly greater than expected progress when compared to similar children locally and nationally. In fact, in 13 of the 17 areas of learning over 70% of children exceeded the Early Learning Goal and our Good Level of Development was 88% compared to the Local Authority of 47% (2016).

The Preparatory School achieved excellent results in the Key Stage 1 SATs. 93% of pupils achieved the expected level of attainment for all three subjects which is on average 24% higher than the national average.

At Key Stage 2, 71% of pupils achieved the expected level of attainment for all three subjects compared to 51% locally.

Congratulations to last year's Year 11 on their GCSE results, which represented our best results for 7 years and the highest results in Peterborough, significantly above the national and local averages. Once again the goal posts have been moved by government and our teachers and pupils had to cope with exam reform at both GCSE and A Level. In fact, it is clear that our students more than just coped, they excelled with 89% of Year 11 Candidates gaining 5 or more GCSE passes including Maths and English and 39% of them gaining A*/A or 9 – 7 grades in 8 or more GCSE subjects, a 6% rise on last year.

56% of all the old style grades were at A or A* (84% at A*-B), 2.5 times the national average, and, despite schools being warned to expect only a small proportion of the top grade 9s, 10% of the TPS English and Maths grades were at this very top level, approximately three times the expected national average.

We measure progress at GCSE with what is called Value Added and external analysis shows that our GCSE students achieved the equivalent of a grade higher than expected in almost half of their GCSE examinations. Exceptional performance indeed!

I am proud of each and every one of our Upper Sixth and their A Level results represent our best for 5 years. Top results came from former Head Boy, Jordan Grinyer who took up his place at Oxford to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics after getting his required three A*s and Rohan Khosla whose four A*s in Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry and Physics gained him a place at Imperial College London to study Computer Science.

Even though A Levels have also got harder, the Upper Sixth celebrated a 100% pass rate and 30% of all grades being at A* or A, with 11.5% at the highest level of A*. Many pupils' results were enhanced by excellent Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) results, two-thirds of which were at A* or A (compared with 50% last year) and two projects were published in the Woodard's Schola magazine.

Overall, 92% gained entry in to their first choice university, including Imperial, Durham and Oxford, and we are equally proud of those who, despite having offers for university, chose to accept high level apprenticeships with The Department of International Trade and a leading UK merchant banking group. Students went on to various university courses, while those who entered the world of business were no doubt inspired by their work on the Young Enterprise team, where students get to run a business for a year. This year's company, Serendipity, had a fabulous year, winning Company of the Year and representing Peterborough in the County Finals. Neve Gordon-Farleigh won Best Entrepreneur in Peterborough too.

Our programme of Able, Gifted and Talented lectures was enjoyed by students and allowed them to explore topics beyond the syllabus for example, on the Psychology of Love – from a biological and psychological perspective by Mr Moxon, historical lectures from Mrs Clarkson and Mr Cameron, 'Brexit means Brexit' from Mr Dyer and a Space Physics Lecture from the Upper Sixth A Level Physicists.

I am personally delighted that we have such a prestigious speaker here today, who is a great advocate for STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths) subjects. As we reflect back upon the last year we can see that our strength in this area has grown further with excellent results, and students increasingly taking part in additional stretching activities. Year 5 and 6 girls attended a Girls4Tech workshop at Mastercard working on fraud detection and prevention, whilst our Senior School students continued to work towards coveted CREST awards, the Gold group working on a high level molecular biology project with Oundle School on the effect of 'jumping genes' on gene expression in the Arabidopsis plant. Our A Level scientists pushed their knowledge and understanding even further by attending a professional International Society of Genetics Conference in Dublin.

Huge technological success was gained by our Year 10 Computer Scientists who scooped prizes worth £12,500 by winning the Microsoft STEM Student Challenge for 2017. Teams were asked to come up with an original technology idea which they felt would be around in 20 years' time. Their Asclepius Drone wowed the judges to win this incredibly prestigious competition.

In a first for the School, we hosted a Bloodhound Race Car Challenge, inspired by the 1,000mph BLOODHOUND Supersonic Car being assembled. Children worked in teams to blast their rocket-powered cars along a wire and congratulations to the Year 5 team of Ambar Habib, Isabelle Goodale and Lincoln van Uden, who will have the honour of their names being printed on the tail fin of the Supersonic Car itself.

As well as going with Year 9 to the Salters Chemistry Practical Day at The University of Cambridge; Year 8 also spent a fascinating day investigating flight and aerodynamics with the British Model Flying Association.

In the Preparatory School, Year 6 pupils had a fantastic time outdoors making new friends, learning new skills, gaining confidence and resilience through the Bushcraft Residential trip involving wild foraging, fire lighting and sleeping in their own self-made shelters.

Our children also continued to enjoy outdoor learning in our Forest School, searching for dragons and pixies, whilst lighting both imaginative and real fires! The 14th Nene Scout Group goes from strength to strength, having had a very busy year with camps, and sleepovers, as well as completing large numbers of badges and supporting several civic events. Eight pupils this year achieved the Chief Scout Bronze Award with four gaining the silver award too.

The pupils in the Preparatory Dance Club performed a colourful routine to a Bollywood inspired song to a huge audience at the Peterborough Primary Schools' Dance Festival at the Cresset and in June, we hosted the very successful, Peterborough Schools' Country Dancing Festival.

Year 2 and Year 5 achieved outstanding recognition at the Peterborough Children's film awards, Year 2 not only winning their category but also the highly acclaimed Warwick Davis Best Film Award for their film 'Shape of You'.

Year 5 competed in the Cambridgeshire Maths Challenge and qualified for the Final, held at the Imperial War Museum in Duxford, finishing an impressive fifth out of 150 teams overall, whilst in the Senior School Oscar Viner impressed with his recital of Pi to 101 decimal places!

In the Preparatory School we also introduced our Virtues and it has been brilliant, for example, to see the Prep children demonstrate their curiosity, confidence and perseverance.

As students move in to the Senior School they develop important leadership skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme completing demanding expeditions around the UK. Congratulations to those who gained Bronze Awards, and particularly to Sophie Leggott and O'Nisa Ali who gained their Gold Award.

It has been a busy year for our St John Ambulance Cadets and we remain very proud of the success of this Division. My particular congratulations go to Michael Heys who gained his Grand Prior Award, the highest honour available.

Our students got out and about more than ever with Skiing to Meribel and the highly popular Sixth Form Cultural Trip being particularly successful. Staying in a hostel in Lisbon the students enjoyed exploring the sights and sounds of this vibrant city. In a change to the usual format of the languages trip, Years 7 and 8 embarked upon a four-day residential visit to France's Opal Coast. In glorious weather, pupils enjoyed various activities whilst practising their linguistic skills and some were brave enough to eat snails. In another first, Year 7 enjoyed their Frontier Centre trip, tackling challenges whilst getting to know each other better and it was great to learn of their experiences during their Independent Learning presentations, which were excellent. Students have enjoyed their learning outside of the classroom experiences in Geography this past academic year, including visiting the North Norfolk Coast to gain valuable fieldwork skills. RS students learnt about other faiths with a visit to the Faizan-e-Medina Mosque in Peterborough and also attended the Academy Conference in Cambridge, where the Sixth Form debated enthusiastically with philosophers and an Oxford Admissions Tutor!

Children continue to develop a love of English and they put their journalistic talents to good use in the new student-run newspaper, The Grapevine, which is excellent. Book Week was celebrated in style across the School, with an exciting performance of the BFG, and Mark Grist, a well-known poet, also joined us. Congratulations to Penny Symonds whose performance of The Crocodile by Roald Dahl won our Off By Heart competition, while in the Senior School, Amelia's Woods' poem 'The Beginning of a Thought' won the poetry competition. Other pupils became published too in a creative writing competition called 'Welcome to Wonderland' which saw fifteen entries accepted for publication.

Prep Create 2017 was again a spectacular display of creative talent, including an Art Exhibition, contemporary dance, ballet, individual and ensemble instruments and singing and speech and drama.

In Drama, we again experienced exceptional performances both within the curriculum and beyond. Students achieved exceptional results in LAMDA or New Era examinations as well as at the Peterborough Drama Festival where Molly Speechley, Daisy Reeves-Turner, Hollie Wenlock, Grace Ricciardi and Georgia Longworth all won their category cups. I must of course mention our musical with a brilliant performance of Elf Junior which set the festive mood, described by one student as the 'best Sparklejollytwinklejingle experience!'

As Ms Ayres has said, we are very proud of our Woodard Ethos and the sense of belonging to a larger family. The Woodard family came together in a big way in February when Year 7 and the Chapel Choir took part in the Woodard 1000 voices concert, led by acclaimed choral conductor Dominic Peckham, performing to a packed concert hall in Birmingham. The Chapel Choirs must be thanked for their contribution to the Chapel but they have also sung elsewhere at various Cathedrals around the Country, including Ripon during their tour to Yorkshire and at the Woodard Corporate Chapter in London.

We celebrated Christingle at St John's Church which was a magical and uplifting occasion setting the scene for the festive season, which culminated in our Annual Carol Service here in the Cathedral. St John's Church has also been a beautiful location to hold our Coffee Morning Music Recitals which allow pupils in the Preparatory School to sing and play their instruments to an audience of parents and the general public. In May, we welcomed Bishop Donald Allister, to confirm a group of pupils from Year 6 to 9 with family, friends and fellow pupils in support.

Music continues to go from strength to strength and our Music Festival again gave students the opportunity to perform and receive feedback from professional musicians, whilst students of all ages continue to be successful in music examinations. Congratulations to Jodie Baldwin who won TPS Young Musician of the year and to Hana Cloke who became most promising musician.

Megan Wilkinson and Sanjana Bhatnager reached the finals of the Woodard Schools Music Competition final, judged by Julian Lloyd Webber and Megan also won best overall performance at the Stamford Music Festival.

In January, the Preparatory School Choir were asked to sing in Latin at the Cathedral and lead the parade at the Katherine of Aragon Commemoration Service and we thoroughly enjoyed a full production of the Carnival of the Animals in the Summer term.

In another successful year the Summer Art Exhibition was host to a range of exciting work in Art, Textiles and Design Technology. Of particular note was ambitious work by Natasha Greenfield and Samantha Wellham in the Upper Sixth who produced thought provoking pieces that addressed issues of migration and refugees.

2016-17 was another impressive year on the sports field with pupils of all ages experiencing notable success, which we celebrated at our Sports Presentation Evening in July, so I won't list all of our success today. This year, we have again produced league Champion teams, tournament Champions, County Triallists, County Academy Netballers, Regional Triallists, Regional Competitors, County Medallists, County Champions, National School Games Qualifiers, National Qualifiers, National team medallists, National Champion teams and International Performers. Our girls also enjoyed a memorable Netball Tour to Manchester in October training with Manchester Thunder.

We enjoyed the various House events throughout the year with the energising and hard fought inter-house rowing being a highlight. No wonder, with such depth in our student talent, that we took this rowing success to District, County and National success again. In the Concept 2 National Rowing Championships all teams who entered finished in the top three for the Eights or Fours, the highlight being the Year 9 and Year 10 girls claiming gold and becoming National Champions. Jamie Hall in Year 7 achieved a third place finish in the National Youth Indoor Rowing Championships, in a field of 173, while Archie Sootheran was a National Championship Winner as part of the Eastern Region Quad. Benjamin Mackenzie took part in the National Junior Regatta at Peterborough during the Summer, where he won his sixth rowing title of the year. He joined Hannah Bassett and Georgina Parker to row in the National Schools Regatta in London

Netball continues to be a key strength within both the Preparatory and Senior Schools. The Preparatory School enjoyed a very successful year, with teams in all age groups claiming impressive victories. In the Senior School, the girls dominated the District Leagues and Tournaments. The Under 16 team deserve particular recognition for qualifying and representing Peterborough at the Cambridgeshire County Championships.

Georgia Price leads the way in Athletics competing in the National Championships and qualified for the English Schools Championships.

Sanjay Nithiyalingam was selected for the England Golf Squad, competed in the Sky Sports Junior Open and has qualified for the European Junior Open Golf Championships next month. In swimming, Rachel Wellings gained a gold medal at the British Championships and went on to represent Great Britain at the European Junior Championships in Israel.

Fencing continues to grow and the School hosted the Cambridgeshire County Tournament, with students winning Gold, Silver and Bronze in different age categories. Daisy Reeves-Turner should be congratulated for qualifying for the British Championships.

The School's tennis teams completed their season with a fantastic set of league results. Congratulations to our U13 Boys who become Regional Division 2 Champions and finished a brilliant fourth in the National Final

Sport remains an essential part of our newly designed Sixth Form curriculum and each Sixth Former now completes regular enrichment and volunteering as part of their overall Sixth Form experience. I have been immensely impressed by the commitment shown by our students, with particular congratulations to Neve Gordon-Farleigh, Hannah Parker and Marina Bain who have each volunteered for over 100 hours in a short period of time. I am always impressed by the extent that our pupils go to support others who are less fortunate, and pupils throughout the school have worked hard to raise money for some most worthwhile causes, in particular our nominated charity, Little Miracles, which supports families of children with additional needs, disabilities and life-limiting conditions.

I am delighted that Michael Clarke from Little Miracles is able to join us today and would now like to ask him to come forward so that Jess Meloni, our Charities Prefect, can present him with a cheque for £6,133.78 towards their ongoing work.

We have continued to physically develop the School this year and were delighted that the Prep Playground refurbishment and enhancement has provided much needed outdoor space. My thanks go to all our parents as members of the Parent-Teacher Guild, and its Chairman, David Bennett, for supporting this project.

We welcomed a number of visiting preachers to our Chapel services this year to add their perspective and to challenge our pupils' thinking. Pupils continue to take an active role in services and this strength was identified within our Christian Ethos Review in February when our visitors commented that our children gave a strong expression of their sense of being valued, understood, accepted and known as individuals whilst also having a sense of family and belonging. Father Toby has led the religious life of the School whilst offering pastoral care to pupils and staff and this was no more needed than in recent weeks when we mourned the passing of Jos Nicholls, our longest serving member of staff. She epitomised these values, also giving her best for the good of our pupils for 28 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank on your behalf of our many hardworking staff who teach and care for our children throughout the year. I would also like to thank my Leadership Team of Mr Cameron, Mr Johnson, Mrs Elding and Mrs Rivers for their dedication and support and to welcome Mr Stroud, our new Director of Sixth Form to the Leadership Team.

My final thanks go to the boys and girls of The Peterborough School; it is you all who make this school such a wonderful place to be. I would like to congratulate you all on your many achievements over the last year and I am sure your families would like to show their appreciation too with a well-deserved round of applause.

While I started talking some time ago, those of you who had bets on the length of my speech might be reflecting on the last 20 or so minutes, but it is also most important to take time to reflect on our own successes and achievements and of our friends and colleagues. Take time to celebrate and to set your goals and ambitions for the future. Use your time wisely and make the most of every hour, minute or second. I wish you well in the future and the next 365 days or so and look forward to more success to come.

Finally, I would like to just wish you all a very happy half term holiday – you have deserved it especially after an exceptionally busy last week or two - and I look forward to seeing you all back in a couple of weeks. Well done!



Mr A D Meadows, BSc Hons, NPQH

20th October 2017