



**MIKE STANFIELD, CHAIRMAN, GAUDY SPEECH, 1ST JULY 2017**

Personal note to parents: when I visit the School - and that has been very often over the past 10 years in the Chair – I never cease to be amazed by the quality of the young people you bring to us. Instead of feeling depressed with the ongoing state of the world, they restore my faith as I sense enormous energy and optimism in the young people growing and developing here, and I know that they are going to make a real difference to our world.

Thank you for entrusting them to us.

Welcome everyone to Gaudy in the School's 154th year. This is the day when we congratulate pupils who have achieved excellence in many fields, but it also allows me to speak directly to you. Welcome to Tom James who sadly retires this year after 31 years' service. He will give away the prizes and I know the Warden will have more to say about Tom.

Here's an update for you on major milestones and developments. Having been closely involved in the decision to become a co-educational school, I am delighted that this September marks the 20th anniversary of full co-education at Teddies. Delighted because we've come a long way from the early days of the late '80s when 12 brave girls were escorted to and from digs in Summertown to share studies with boys during the day. I talked about safeguarding with my fellow Governor, Georgie Dennis, who was one of those 12 girls. She said in her day, safeguarding was far less complex. It was generally felt that the unthinkable dangers of mixed studies could be averted if all parties kept one foot on the floor at all times. When I spoke to pupils about co-education recently, one Sixth Form girl said – 'Why on earth would you want to be at a school where only one half of the

population is represented?' We couldn't agree more, and our plan moves us towards an equal 50/50 girls and boys – we're currently at 40/60 and the original 12 are now over 260 strong .

Talking of safeguarding - we want our pupils to be happy and fulfilled. But we must also ensure that they are safe. Those of you who were here last year may remember that I talked about safeguarding being a major focus for Governors. In fact we were one of the first Schools in the country to have a Compliance and Safeguarding Committee. This emphasis has continued this year, and I know that some of you attended our recent Safeguarding Seminar hosted by Governors and the Warden with a panel of outside experts. A report on this Seminar will be circulated by the Warden to all parents in the next few weeks.

We will be holding regular Seminars for parents on subjects of importance so that you may gain further insight into these issues. Some newer parents may not know how we keep in touch with parents and pupils. We glean views from our annual pupil survey and the triennial parent survey that allows all parents to give unattributed comments about the School. In addition HM's feed through information, comments, thoughts to the Warden. Ten of our 14 Governors are past or very recent or current parents. In addition to five Governor Sub Committees covering all the main activities of the School we have a Common Room Liaison Committee lead by a Governor that meets every term with elected teachers who represent different groups of age and responsibility. Many of us live locally and are regularly in and out of the School, so we know the School well and we keep our fingers very much on the pulse with a constant flow of information coming in.

So it was pleasing to see the high level of parent satisfaction with the School leadership in our latest survey.

Last week the Governing Body took its most important decision for many years: to approve formally a major project to complete the Quad with a modern new Academic Centre, Library, Reading Room and a 1,000-seat meeting and performance space. This project will greatly advance the academic life of the School and many of you will have seen the initial plans in the *Chronicle* last year.

At Teddies, education is now about debate, discussion, conversations, working together, sharing ideas and presenting to each other. Our pupils need more facilities to enhance this. The new Centre will be purpose-built for a modern education and will be a magnificent boost to the School. The Warden will give you more details in the autumn, but this is very exciting news for the academic life of Teddies.

The cultural life of the School, too, has been particularly high profile this year. The stunning Ogston Music School opened and The North Wall celebrated its 10th anniversary. More than 10 years ago we planned that the School should have a performing arts centre. Then Head of Drama, Lucy Maycock, came up with what seemed like a crackpot idea. She took Governors and staff to the School's disused indoor swimming pool. 'Why don't we turn this into the theatre?' she said. Well – the vision grew. My fellow Governor George Fenton and I became heavily involved, as did Bursar Stephen Withers Green, who steered through the whole of this complex development project with great aplomb. What emerged was an arts centre that is unique. It is not by any means just a school performance space. The North Wall has surpassed all expectations and become a theatre of national importance as well as a vital factor in school drama, art and dance – and an important link with the wider community. Its public programme attracts 20,000 visitors a year – which makes The North Wall an appealing venue for top performers, writers and directors, which in turn feeds back into the school community. With the Ogston Music School now open opposite the North Wall on South Parade, we have a really enviable cultural quarter. Please do visit.

New buildings and major milestones are all very well, they are an important part of life in any school. Our emphasis, unlike many schools, is on the community and the individual pupil, that's what's really important to us. We don't believe league tables reflect fairly what we do as we are a broad entry school because what we want are a really good and interesting mix of pupils. That said, the Warden's analysis shows that in our Upper Sixth exams the top 40% of our Upper Sixth outperform our local independent competitors. We need our bright sparks, of course, but we value pupils who bring life to the School for other reasons too: because they're talented and interested in areas other than academia. Just look at the plethora of our societies and other out-of-school activities and things our pupils get up to – charity work, fund raising, helping those less advantaged. And if you've had time

to come to Gaudy Week, you will have seen an extraordinary display of song, music and dance and other activities. This is what makes our School so strong and so appealing. I know you younger pupils sitting here already understand that at Teddies, anything is possible: you can be anything you want to be. Just get involved, start the conversation, find out what you like, what you don't like – and enjoy every single minute.

This is my last Gaudy as Chair. I stand down in December after 10 years at the helm, though I'm honoured to have been asked to continue to sit on the Governing Body. Fellow Governor Chris Jones, will take over from me. Chris, is a former Chair of the Dragon School, and chair of the Blackbird Lees Academy Trust. In addition to having wide experience in educational matters, he is a Trustee of the Ashmoleum and also an international businessman of repute – we shall be in good hands.

For those of you who have attended a number of these occasions, you may be mightily relieved that this is the very last time you will hear my favourite thought for our departing pupils: If you are planning a year ahead, plant seeds; if you are planning ten years ahead, plant a tree, if you are planning a lifetime ahead, educate your children. Have a happy successful and enjoyable summer.

Gaudy, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017

