

# Head of Junior School's Speech

Mr Chairman, Dr Seldon, Governors, Headmaster, parents and of course, children.

What makes the Junior School at St Dunstan's College special? Other schools can claim a working partnership between the home and school, the existence of a broad balanced curriculum, the providing of a vast variety of extra-curricular activity, but few can boast the teamwork, energy and enthusiasm generated by the staff and children within the Junior School. Teamwork that inspires mutual respect between pupil and teacher, teamwork that develops happy confident pupils in a multi-cultural community and teamwork that encourages all children to participate in all activities irrespective of ability. We are not blessed with marvellous new buildings and space, but we do have a heart that beats powerfully and an enthusiasm that encourages children both inside and outside the classroom to do their best and to behave in a friendly, caring fashion towards each other.

Nevertheless, is this introduction a true reflection of what actually happens in the Junior School? Or is it simply a vision, a statement of intent? As you've probably gathered, it's certainly my vision and a vision which I believe all my colleagues share.

Responses to the parental questionnaire convinced me that parents too believe in the unique character of the Junior School. First time visitors to both Departments frequently comment upon the warm, purposeful and friendly atmosphere that they encounter.

Nothing can ever be achieved without fun and a sense of humour and children are often the source of great amusement, often unintentionally so. Just like the teacher who was telling her class about the Apollo moon landings:

A little boy in Year 2 was very knowledgeable and kept interrupting:

"The astronauts took off from Cape Canaveral . . . "

"Miss, they don't take off, they blast off."

"Then they flew off to the moon . . ."

"Miss, they don't fly, they go into orbit."

"When they landed . . ."

"Miss, it's only the lunar module that lets down."

The teacher finished the lesson with relief, only to find that the little boy had stayed behind. She waited with apprehension. He slid his hand into hers.

"Miss, Father Christmas does live on the moon, doesn't he?"

A Religious Studies class was asked to draw a picture of, 'The Flight into Egypt'. There were various versions, one ingenious – a Boeing 707 with Mary, Joseph and Jesus and someone else.

"Who is that?" asked the teacher.

"Oh," said the child, "That's Pontius the Pilot."

Could the following have been overhead during our recent Induction Day?

Teacher: "Where are you from?"

New pupil: "Devon, miss"

Teacher: "Which part?"

New Pupil: "All of me, miss"

And I'm sure teachers and parents alike could probably identify with this conversation:

"Mummy, teacher was asking me today if I have any brothers and sisters who will be coming to school."

"That's nice of her to take such an interest dear. What did she say when you told her you are an only child?"

"She just said: "Thank goodness!"

Last year's KS2 results placed us 64th best Junior School in the country according to the *Sunday Times* league table. Is it right, however, that the academic worth of a school should be judged by league tables? It has been suggested that the raw data presented in these tables does not always do justice to the schools concerned. In particular, it does not show any weighting which would favour those schools that are achieving 'good' results with weaker children. Tables only represent results in the core subjects of Maths, English and Science and do not take into account performance in the twelve other subjects studied in the Junior School. Should we ignore the vexed question of tables being unable to quantify aspects of a school's ethos such as pastoral care, sport, personal and social development, drama, music, community service and so on? In other words, aspects which many parents, pupils and teachers would argue to be the most important in a school community. It is for these reasons that our current practice of publishing results for league tables is under review.

Children, have you worked hard this year and done your best to overcome problems? If you have, congratulations, for that is all anybody can ask of you.

It is the individual needs and performances of children from Reception to Year 6 that are important, not statistics in a league table. Some children need to be extended, others supported to achieve their targets. To this end a programme of identification and support for children with a learning difficulty is being developed and improved within the Junior School. From September a Learning Support Co-ordinator has been appointed to continue this work throughout the College. This is an exciting development and one that will help children.

In spite of my comments about league tables, SATs and the Entrance Exam do provide us with a benchmark to measure our academic performance. The academic development of all children is closely monitored throughout their time in the Junior School. As a result pupil performance at these assessments should come as no surprise to parents.

The results at KS1 by Year 2 were impressive with 82% and 64% of the Year group gaining Level 3 at reading comprehension and mathematics respectively. I have to say that the maturity displayed by Year 2 during these assessments was a joy to see. A wonderful result, well done children.

At KS2 all children achieved Level 4 in the three core subjects with 73%, 75% and 80% of Year 6 gaining Level 5 in Maths, English and Science. Three Level 6 results were obtained, one for Science and two for Maths, with three more pupils missing the dizzy heights of a Maths Level 6 by one mark.

These results at KS1 and KS2 reflect the fine differential teaching and learning enjoyed by all the children throughout the Junior School. Our weaker brethren have

been well supported whilst others have been given their head and extended. However, I believe the most impressive aspect of these results is that pupils from a wide ability range, following a broad curriculum of 15 subjects and a massive extra-curricular programme have achieved such levels of success in the core subjects. Well done – we're all very proud of you.

For the second year running 20% of Year 6 produced a scholarship standard performance in the entrance exam for the Senior School whilst the top scholar for the third successive year was home grown. Clearly their answers could not have contained comments similar to the following:

- As I approached the house, I saw a man mowing the lawn with a small child.
- Believe it or not, "It was Donatello's interest in the female nude which made him the father of the Renaissance".
- A vacuum is a large empty space where the Pope lives.
- When the volcano Vesuvius erupted, there were floods of molten lager flowing down the mountainside.
- Apparently Sir Francis Drake was moved to say, "Let the Armada wait. My bowels cannot."

I referred at the beginning of this report to schools providing a working partnership between the home and school for the benefit of the children and I do hope that you feel that such a bond exists in the Junior School. We should respond to your concerns immediately, for we welcome your active involvement and want to work with you, to ensure success and happiness for your child.

The stimulation and excitement generated by a host of educational visits helps to extend education beyond the classroom. Week long residential trips in Years 4, 5 and 6, a sleepover at the Science Museum and day visits to castles, farms, the seaside, environmental centres, roman villas and numerous theatres and museums have been enjoyed by the children. This incredible range of activities has been matched by visiting speakers and organisations who have enhanced the curriculum and our Science and Drama Activity Days by talking to the children about such diverse topics as African Art, Egyptian food, the Second World War, reptiles, insects, the water cycle, drug awareness, Tudor Masques and musical instruments where teachers and children could be seen resplendent in Tudor costume and 'Shakespeare for Kidz' where pupils enjoyed a drama workshop based upon, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We have even had a French breakfast to celebrate the College's Languages Day and a World Cup Activity Day. Has school ever been so informative and so much fun?

Music and drama continue to occupy a special place in the Junior School year with every child being encouraged to participate. The Pre-Prep have harvested cauliflowers that are fluffy, 'Rumbled in the Jungle' and followed the 'Shiniest Star', all with their customary enthusiasm and energy which delighted audiences.

How amazing that Year 3 and 4's bugs and machines should be stopped in their tracks by a power cut, postponing their performing arts programme. However, no such force adversely affected all the other wonderful concerts staged during the year. An informal instrumental concert once again demonstrated the wide variety of instruments played by individual pupils within the Junior

School, whilst a concert by Years 4, 5 and 6 enabled the orchestra and groups of brass, strings, fives, percussion and recorders, to demonstrate their prowess. All this was rounded off by a rousing medley of songs from the shows. Dance took its turn in the Performing Arts concerts and remained in step at a marvellous celebration of Dance in the Lewisham Dance Rotary Festival when we joined with Year 7 in a thought-provoking dance programme entitled, 'Together we stand as one'.

*Jack and the Beanstalk* performed by Year 4 was a great success and a superb production. Mind you, that giant was pretty frightening.

Dancing girls and menacing gangsters, accompanied by wonderful choreography, singing, acting, scenery and costumes and being splurged will be my lasting memories of Buggy Malone. The fantastic team spirit engendered by pupils and staff in this superb production proved quite conclusively that within the Junior School, "Dumb bums we 'aint".

An active after school clubs programme has generated interest and, yes, that word again, 'enthusiasm' throughout the year with 20 clubs meeting each week. Electronic workshop, responsible for lighting all Junior School productions and the Maths and Chess Clubs deserve special mention. 3,237 schools took part in the UK Junior Maths Challenge. A competition for pupils up to Year 8, and yet one silver and two gold certificates were awarded to members of the Maths Club from Year 6 – a great achievement. Chess under the direction of Grand Master Summerscale has also blossomed. Of the club's 50 members, one young man from Year 2 is considered to be the best under 7 player in Kent, whilst many others have achieved great success 'check-mating' opponents from other schools and clubs in a number of prestigious competitions.

Enthusiastic participation and teamwork have ensured that all our school teams have enjoyed success. It's good to see children of all abilities representing the Junior School in A, B and C teams. The new netball courts have been christened by some fine performances from our netball teams whilst the Under 11 soccer team enjoyed an unbeaten season. Two young ladies joined the boys in the Under 11 cricket team whilst our swimming teams made a great splash this year with pupils representing the College from as young as Under 8. Two swimmers from Year 2 became the youngest children ever to represent the College in an inter-school event. A great renaissance is happening in school swimming which is great to see. Training before breakfast – whatever next – two swimmers represented the Junior School at the IAPS championships and recorded 3rd and 6th places in the finals in their respective events. Triple silver and bronze medal successes were recorded at the London Schools Championships followed by a team victory for St Dunstan's at our own Junior Schools Swimming Championships.

Due to adverse weather conditions the enjoyable Prep Athletic Sports literally became a three-legged tournament whilst the Pre-Prep Activity Sports afternoon saw endeavour that would have graced Japan and South Korea this summer – and that was just from the parents!

Our work for various charities has been pursued with customary vigour. Altogether the Junior School, with your enormous help, has raised approximately £10,000 for

seven different charities as diverse as Sports Aid and Demelza House, a hospice for young children. The variety of charities is only matched by the *range* of activities that helped raise the contributions. My favourite activity remains the Christingle Service with its 300 flickering candles illuminating many innocent faces in the Great Hall. Surely I've got that wrong!

So much has been missed in this report: the disco, Easter Bonnet Parade and the birth of chicks, butterflies and even a lamb at Godstone Farm – miracles of creation witnessed by the youngest children in the Junior School.

At the beginning of this Report I did promise a broad curriculum with plenty of extra-curricular activity. I do believe that this has been achieved, especially as there isn't time to mention, or to do justice, to the vast volume and diversity of other events that have occurred during this academic year.

All this, of course, is only possible with the encouragement, expertise and dedication of a superb team of teachers who give up time way beyond the call of duty to plan and implement an exciting programme of study and activity for the pupils. Children, please show your appreciation for your teachers in the customary way.

I'd also like to thank Kristine Stevenson, the College Librarian, for her enormous help in the planning and organisation of our Prize Givings.

This is a sad occasion for the Junior School for it is a time to say goodbye to children and staff who have left or are leaving the Junior School. As you are aware two colleagues left us during the academic year. Trish Mansi

a founder member of the Pre-Prep and an excellent classroom assistant and Maria Cole, the Junior School's SENCO. Maria did more than anyone to establish an effective learning support programme for the children which is currently being developed and built upon.

Sadly, at the end of this term, we are saying goodbye to four more superb team players. They have all been replaced by excellent people, but every individual brings his or her own particular quality to a team and community. So it has been with Melissa Neal, Debbie Reid, Charles Lowe and Alex Isaachson. Debbie and Alex are getting married and moving to south-west London. I'm sure that you would join with me to wish them every happiness for their future. Charles moves to Bristol and Melissa, Chicago. I will always remember friendship, fine netball coaching, a massive increase in educational visits, *Grease*, *Bugsy*, the improvement in ICT, boys' enjoyment of games, a revamped Sports Day, plus of course superb teaching and commitment when I reflect upon their contribution to the Junior School

Year 6: you have enjoyed considerable success and stand before a great adventure. Remember there are three sorts of people in this world:

1. Those who make things happen;
2. Those who watch things happening and
3. Those who don't know what is happening.

Let us try to be members of the first group if we possibly can.

Mr Chairman, that concludes my Report.

