

I would like, on behalf of the school community, to say a big thank you to our Board of Governors who put in so many unheralded, unpaid and largely unrecognised hours on behalf of the pupils and the school. A particular thank you goes to our Chair, Richard Thompson, who is a huge support to the school. Thanks also go to the school's exceptional senior leadership team. However, it goes without saying, we are a whole school community in which the staff work tirelessly to provide a top class education and top class facilities for the pupils, and for that I am incredibly grateful. Thank you.

Throughout the school there is a genuine desire that we provide the best for your boys and girls and as educators, our overriding aim is to prepare our pupils for a life of learning; to instil in them a thirst and desire for knowledge. From our youngest to our oldest, we watch them buzz and bubble with excitement as learning is presented in an array of interesting and challenging ways, as we know that Mahatma Gandhi couldn't be more right, 'The future depends on what you do today'. Mrs Mitchell and I make no apology for the length of our Reflections. To make it any shorter we would not have able to do justice to the hive of daily activity that all contributes to an academic year at St. Hilary's.

As I walk around the school pupils clamber around me, eagerly sharing their ideas and work, or simply ignore me - too engrossed to notice my presence. The older pupils certainly like to talk as they walk and chat about this and that whilst the youngest children twirl my necklace or hem line. And it this hive of activity and buzz that I love.

Throughout all this daily buzz and excitement, our ethos remains the same and our core values underpin everything we do. Our school motto, 'Non Tibi Sed Omnibus' (Not for oneself but for all), reinforces St Hilary's high expectations for our pupils in becoming responsible, valued citizens of tomorrow's world. Long gone are the days where Prep schools' sole responsibility was to prepare pupils for their Senior School. Instilling soft skills, values, beliefs and a thirst for information and knowledge are embedded at an early age.

We provide a plethora of opportunities, in which boys and girls have been guided to be independent learners (DIY Moments) and team players, be risk takers (TAR Moments), have empathy (Sawubona Moments), but above all to buzz and love learning and achieve their Personal Best (PB Moment) in everything they do.

As I mentioned earlier, the children are at the centre of our school, just as they are in your home. School days are supposed to be the happiest of your life. In reality, life is not plain sailing for pupils just as it is not for adults and quite simply they hate to let anyone down. As parents and educators we need to encourage the children by rewarding effort and not always solely the outcome and allow them to enjoy the journey and not become obsessed by the destination. We need to model patience but also find ways to let them work things out for themselves. Self-esteem can be more dented by our reactions than the actual disappointment of not securing the best results, a medal, a solo, a part in the play, etc. We all want the pupils to achieve their Personal Best, in everything they do. Crucially we cannot expect more as it is never possible to exceed their potential.

As parents we want to protect our children and to shield them from disappointment, to have their back, partly because we feel their pain. And - as my children are much older I can vouch this does not get any easier. However, sadly the truth is that with no pain there is no gain. A good education should enable a child to lose, be frustrated and occasionally be unhappy. It helps to prepare them for the real world, build resilience and to deal with disappointment proportionately. The Japanese proverb, I fall down 7 times and stand up 8 springs to mind.

Of course, it is a balance and there is some irony that the better you do the further you fall. Many of us watched Andy Murray, struggling to emulate previous championship success at Wimbledon pulling out of the tournament the day before it began. In severe pain, he admitted that he may never be able to play competitively again, engendering sympathy from us all. Less than a year later, following major surgery he recently won the men's doubles at the prestigious Queen's Tennis Tournament, a great example of True Grit and resilience with the power to bounce back. Yet, he is clear about the values he wants to teach his two young daughters, that your best is your best and that winning is not ultimately the most important thing. Quite remarkable for a competitive sports man!

Without doubt, our boys and girls need to be given opportunities to develop intrinsic resilience. Whilst we should never underestimate the capabilities of our children, if we put them on a pedestal, as I said earlier, they have further to fall and they are not sufficiently emotionally mature to deal with the crash landing that entails. As parents we should resist the temptation to try and emulate our own success or indeed for our sons and daughters to succeed where we once failed.

As JF Kennedy wisely said, 'For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.'

At St Hilary's, we do not stand still. Situated at the top of hill, in the heart of Surrey we are not trapped in a cosy bubble. Needless to say, it is a considerable responsibility preparing our pupils to live and work in an uncertain, fast paced world. Furthermore, we know, that 65% of all children that started primary school last September, will leave education to work in a job that does not exist at the moment. We continually review our curriculum and our results reflect that excellent specialist teaching pays dividends. Last year at this time we launched STEAM as we injected the Arts into the much talked about STEM (Science, Technology, English and Maths), highly relevant in today's world and even more so in tomorrow's. Injecting the Arts is critical, as they provide the human creativity that robots cannot and may never master.

Albert Einstein wisely believed, 'Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow'. Indeed, today soon becomes yesterday and history is quickly made. It does not seem five minutes since it was full steam head on the little miniature train in my home town or when I made the choice to do wood work rather than touch typing - I had no dreams of becoming typist. I should point out, that I have done no wood work since and that typing would have come in useful in my work today. Our speaker, explained to our Head Girl, Alecks and her Deputy, Florence, in their face time chat that he made robots as a child out of cardboard boxes

and know doubt it would have been considered far-fetched to think that robots could be real and functional so quickly.

As we look forward, the forthcoming academic year brings exciting things. St. Hilary's opens a new chapter as it extends its offerings to accept boys into Year 3, as we move to reflect the real world, and become fully coeducational by September, 2022. We open our Lego Innovation Room, in which all pupils will create, design, build, code and programme, supporting their learning across the curriculum. Our thanks go to FOSH for their generous support in this project.

Our older pupils will design and build electric cars and drive (race?) them round the playground – who would have thought this possible only a few years ago, or that our boys will be able to stay and experience this with our girls. The excitement is palpable but so relevant today with over 130,000 registered electric vehicles in the UK. And, over the last week JLR announced that Britain will be retooling its production line in Castle Bromwich, to build the new XJ capable of travelling almost 300 hundred miles on a single charge and BMW begin making electric minis at its Oxford factory, from November.

We are full of aspiration for our pupils and as one of our school values we strive to instil in our boys and girls the power of aspiration. They can, as the Oxford Dictionary says, 'have a hope or an ambition of achieving something' and indeed to be the best they can be, which has always been a keen theme for us and remarkably the first quote that featured when I did a google search was:

Good, better, best Never let it rest

Until our good gets better and our better gets best.

This was my toast to the parents and staff when I first joined St. Hilary's and has been reiterated many times since.

As Christopher Robin said,

'You're braver than you believe and stronger than you seem and smarter than you think'

In order to widen the boys and girls understanding of what they can aspire to, and the opportunities open to them we will be reaching out to our current parents, to talk about what they do with hope of letting your son / daughter and a group of friends, to talk to you in your work place, via skype or face-time, etc. to give them a small inside glimpse of work. Interested and intelligent, be ready for a challenge as I am sure our pupils will be inquisitive and ask searching questions.

At our recent music outreach events I was surprised to hear that the six and seven year olds' aspirations have not changed over the years. The boys were keen to be astronauts or footballers –they may need to watch out as our girls are well and truly hooked on STEM and sport. The girls dreamed of being pop stars and vets but just look how well the ladies' cricket and football teams are doing. It will be interesting to see! To have aspiration pupils need role models-

people who have done well in their field and I can think of no better place to start than our Old Hilarians for inspiration as we begin to collect photos for our new gallery, showcasing their success and how aspiration is worth its weight in gold.

Our expectations are rightly high and the pupils learn at a measured pace with a sense of urgency. However, the boys and girls need to learn to be kind and not to be too hard on themselves, so that improvement does not become a burden. For many their schedules are busy, too busy for some as they work longer hours now than they ever will as an adult, as they cram in a myriad of activities before, during and after school and then in the holidays as well. On the theme of aspiration, we need to allow our children to aspirate, in medical terms to literally draw breath. It is difficult to believe that our oldest children, and I say children, are only eleven years old when they leave us and they benefit hugely from time to relax and – play. We realise the benefit of Forest School for our pupils' well being and the role art, music and sport can play in relaxation and fitness. However, as we approach the summer holidays, remember it is good for the boys and girls to be bored, at times and plan their own quieter schedule. It is then they will be at their most creative. ⁶

As school strives to achieve the full International Award, a much coveted award we are reminded how important our heritage is whether that be of our birthplace or where we grow up as a youngster. We touched on this in assembly recently and the fact that many would move away from this area in the long term but they will undoubtedly return as the roots are deep. Many will say they are going home, as I do myself when I return to my home town, Scarborough. Family is also important and many will return to visit for that reason. Thank you to my Mum for making the trip south to be here tonight, to my husband, my eldest son and his fiancé for their support. Family offers a scaffold when times are good but also when the chips are down. St Hilary's is very international in many ways and the International Award has inspired pupils and I have enjoyed lessons from them recently about Poland, Germany, Ukraine, China and India, to name but a few.

Our Awards Ceremony is a chance to reflect on a year of endeavour, pleasing aspiration and impressive achievement. The prize winners are a representation of everything that we stand for at our school. These articulate young people are an asset to our school, a credit to their families and an inspiration to us all. I am very impressed with the achievements of everyone here today, but you will not be surprised that I am especially in awe of those of you who will be rewarded for effort.

The end of the academic year also marks the end of an immediate association with the school by our Year 6 girls. We wish them all the very best as they move on to their senior schools, well done on all you have achieved in your time at our school and for making the most of all the opportunities on offer. Our Year 6 girls, or should I say young ladies are the embodiment of St Hilary's: girls who have endeavoured, aspired and achieved in so many areas of their lives already. And of course, it is the end of an era for many of our parents who have dropped off at the school gate for many years and for some who will soon no longer have a school run to do at all!

We are equally proud of our Year 2 boys and girls and excited for them as they graduate and embark on their journey into prep school life whether that be at St Hilary's or elsewhere. We are very proud of you. You all suddenly look very grown up. The future looks very bright for you and the sky is the limit. Make sure you reach high, full of aspiration, work hard but always find time to play.