

Headmaster's Speech 2009

Members and friends of Trinity School, I am delighted to welcome you to Trinity Speech Day in this magnificent marquee, where we have been entertained by our swing band and where we have the opportunity to see some of our pupils' superb artwork displayed.

It gives me great pleasure also to welcome our Guest of Honour, Neil Roskilly. Neil has been appointed to the new post of Chief Executive of the Independent Schools' Association, a position he takes up this summer. He is moving into the post from his role as Principal of the Cambridge Centre for Sixth Form Studies, an institution with a national reputation that has grown rapidly under his stewardship. He has huge experience in the educational world and is speaking to us for the first time in the South West in his new capacity. Neil, we are very grateful that you have agreed to speak to us.

As is usual, our report on the year for the three sections of the school will be presented by Liz Saunders, Jean Whatling and David Milnes.

I therefore now invite Liz Saunders to report on the Nursery's year.

(Individual Department reports given)

Thank you Mrs Saunders, Mrs Whatling and Mr Milnes.

Your reports have given us a flavour of the successes of all three departments and we will shortly celebrate individual successes with the presentation of prizes to many members of our community.

You might have noticed that today we have made little mention of our excellent inspection report from November. You are all well aware of its contents and there is so much else of more importance to report. Nevertheless, it spoke of many outstanding features that mark the School

out, many of which have been confirmed or illustrated through the reports already presented.

Before I proceed to my main theme for the day, I must express my thanks to all who have made this success possible – namely the Staff, the Governors and the Friends of the school. I would ask all pupils and parents to join me in showing our appreciation in the traditional manner with a round of applause.

Some of that team will be moving on this year. Our Registrar, Jenny Hudson is retiring after many years of being our welcoming face for new joiners. Karen Sanders is taking a career break to travel the world. May Ho is seeking to broaden her professional experience at Dawlish Community College. Sarah and David Angus are moving to Malvern College to develop their careers and David Milnes is retiring after 30 years service to the School, most recently as Deputy Head.

We thank them all for their hard work, dedication and kindness. I ask you all to join with me in a round of applause to show our appreciation of their efforts and to wish them well for the future.

Replacing such members of staff is never easy, but we have a very strong set of new staff joining us in September who will bring new skills and talents to the community. One of them, Claire Collins our new Head of Girls' boarding is with us today and I welcome her to Trinity on your behalf.

These changes lead me on to my key theme for the day.

Anyone reading the papers or watching the television at the moment will realise that the pupils at Trinity need to be prepared for a rapidly changing world.

How do we do that?

Many in the media would have us believe that the country is doomed and that we don't have the wherewithal to turn things round.

Yet this is a country responsible for so much innovation and discovery:

The jet engine, the computer, the internet, television

The theory of evolution, vaccination, antibiotics

These are just examples from a huge list of positive contributions to the world that have come from the UK.

We have world leaders in so many fields, we have four of the world's top ten universities, we have huge presence in the literary, artistic and cultural world.

We have no shortage of talent and we have no shortage of opportunity.

This leads to the key question I hope I will answer today:

How can our children best use their talents to seize the opportunities that are out there?

The Answer seems simple:

They need to get used to aiming high and they need to be ready to innovate.

At Trinity we look to identify a pupil's strengths and build upon them. Aiming high is a way of life here.

Whether that strength is academic, sporting or the less easily defined strengths of personality and character we will encourage your sons and daughters to build upon it and develop it.

For a small school to have so many pupils performing in sport at the regional and national level is very unusual. To have that, along with exceptional value added, departments that are receiving awards for the best A level performance in the country and an ethos that brings the best out of every individual really is unique.

But whilst all this helps set our pupils up for their future and will help them develop their talents, it still isn't enough to allow them to seize the opportunities out there.

That's where the second part of the simple answer comes in: they will also need to innovate.

They will need to be ready to take risks

They will need to be used to a culture of new ideas

At Trinity we are intent on preparing them for this too.

Teaching staff here use technology to bring lessons to life.

You also have heard many examples of how we take learning out into the community,

How our pupils are being exposed to the concept of enterprise,

How we try to get them to experience and empathise with the perspectives of others.

We are also innovating, ourselves, by way of example.

Our new website is self built and driven by our ideas.

We will shortly have our video site Trinity TV linked in to it, this providing us with a window into our world as lived by us.

This part of the site will have substantial pupil involvement – many components of it are already up on Youtube.

We also hope to set up a share point system later this year to act as an electronic core to our community, helping speed up and simplify communication between us all.

All of the above are examples of innovation and change that have clear positives, But innovation and change can sometimes be unsettling and controversial. Many of you will know that we are currently re-structuring aspects of boarding. This will produce a boarding community with three distinct houses and a much more domestic feel. Such a change is clearly for the better, but produces uncertainty in the short-term. Pupils can find this very difficult and disruptive and this can derail them.

Aiming high and innovating are therefore part of the answer for our pupils, but not all of it.

The final component emerges from another question that I am often asked:

How does embracing innovation and change fit with our origins and traditions? Is such a 21st century outlook compatible with them.

Our Chaplaincy committee recently held a very positive and stimulating meeting aimed at further developing our Chapel life. I am looking forward to building on their ideas next year and helping Trinity's spiritual life grow and prosper.

At that meeting the final part of my answer became very clear: The truth is that being a Christian school, having a clear set of principles by which we operate and a shared moral, social and spiritual perspective not only is compatible with change, it actually helps us embrace it.

Having that certainty and foundation at the heart of Trinity means that whatever the challenges in the short or medium term, the School community has a driving force for reflection and renewal that will carry us forward with the optimism and confidence to which our school motto refers.

So, to conclude my speech, the answer for our pupils is clear:

Yes, aim high.

Innovate by all means,

But remember that you can only really succeed if you have a set of core values that define you and support you.

As Trinity develops and moves forward over coming years, our pupils will learn to aim high. They will also learn to innovate and they will learn to develop a flexible, adaptable approach to life.

But I hope also that they will grow to appreciate and understand that Trinity's ability to adapt, evolve and meet the challenges of the future comes from the values and beliefs that underpin it.

I commend those beliefs and values to you all.

Thank you for coming to celebrate with us today, congratulations to all our staff and pupils for another highly successful year and may I wish you all a very restful summer break.