



Principal's Address at Prize Giving, September 2014

Your Excellency, Mrs Walker, Directors, Honoured Guests, Ladies, Gentlemen and boys.

This evening I would like to speak about three key areas which we have been focussing on at the College over recent years. They are the three Cs: community, change and finally, character.

Commitment to the community has been a long standing feature of the College. As we reminded ourselves during last year's 450th anniversary celebrations, the school was originally founded in 1563 to produce Protestant clergymen to serve the island parishes and combat the injustices, discriminations and general mayhem which had characterised the island's malevolent administration throughout the 16th century. Although these strong words could equally be applied to the majority of Headmasters who took charge of the College over the subsequent 300 years, in more recent times the College has served its island community whole-heartedly, most obviously perhaps through the production of numerous leaders and key figures we see in various aspects of island life today.

It's not just the island community which Old Elizabethans have historically served so well. With this year marking the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War, one naturally remembers the 662 boys of this school who travelled far and wide abroad to fight in service of Great Britain. 110 of those old boys lost their lives, over half of them having only left the College within the previous five years. We will be commemorating their loss in various special ways later this term.

Reading through the biographies of those who served in the First World War and OEs more generally during the 19th and 20th centuries, one is struck by how globally gregarious they were. Having started their lives in the relative comfort of a temperate small island in the

English Channel, many of them headed off for highly successful and exotic careers in the far flung corners of the Middle East, the West Indies, Africa and the Far East. One could easily conclude that they were trying to get as far away from their old school as humanly possible. Perhaps there is another, happier explanation.

Our guest of honour tonight, John Walpole, has also made a pretty good escape bid; I am not sure San Francisco, home of Twitter HQ, quite matches the remoteness of the Congo Basin or Borneo Rainforest but it is certainly a fair old distance from St Peter Port and having been fortunate to visit it myself, I imagine it to be a wonderfully outlandish and cosmopolitan place to live.

Whilst the College serves its community, it is in turn strengthened by its community and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents who contributed generously to our anniversary appeal. The College is already benefitting from the fruits of the highly successful appeal, with our wonderful FG Manchester Refectory in full swing along with the new Performing Arts Studio, a new classroom at Acorn House and, having opened for use barely two weeks ago, a fantastic brand new Mathematics Faculty building.

The ongoing work of the Old Elizabethan Association and The Friends of the College in their support of the school continues to be hugely appreciated. It is fair to say that both, thanks to the dedicated and generous voluntary efforts of particular individuals, have taken on new leases of life over recent years and are playing increasingly active and important roles in the success of the College going forward – long may that be the case.

As well as the people it produces, there are of course many other varied ways in which the College serves the community and our pupils play a full part in that. For me it's a fundamental part of an education founded on Christian values such as kindness, generosity and compassion for others; our CCF provides cadets and logistical support for various island parades and events, our musical groups perform regularly and freely for charitable organisation, Sixth Form pupils coach sport weekly in all the primary schools on the island, the student Charity Committee helps co-ordinate the raising over £10,000 per year for local and national charities, many pupils do voluntary work for charities around the island and we have recently developed a mutually beneficial link with Le Mare de Carteret school, most recently involving a joint pupils' art exhibition in the Gate House Gallery and a joint gifted and talented project in association with the Guilles Alles Library. Critically, from an early age and throughout their time at the College

our pupils understand the value of serving a community and appreciate the importance of giving up their time and energies for a higher, collective sense of purpose.

I would like to pay special tribute to one particular member of our own staff community, who will be leaving us at the end of this term (he is fully aware, I should add) and who fully understands the meaning of service.

Rick Le Page has chosen to retire at the end of this term after 25 years as the School Staff Instructor to the school's CCF. His role as SSI is only one of a multitude of responsibilities that he seems to have picked up over the years. Fire safety officer, health and safety officer, transport co-ordinator, first aid officer, games teacher and master-in-charge of shooting have all come under his remit and that doesn't include his role as a master of the dark arts of e-bay. Many OEs will best remember him of course as a legendary shooting master, having inspired countless pupils to develop a great passion for the sport and achieve great success at the College and thereafter. It has been a fitting final year for Rick with the College coming third nationally in the annual rifle shooting competition at Bisley and the selection of two more pupils for the GB Athelings – the Great Britain U18 shooting team. Rick – we thank you for all your service to the College community and wish you all the best in your retirement from the New Year.

Probably the greatest challenge facing education today is to keep pace with the constantly changing and increasingly modern world we live in. With technology now accepted to be developing at an exponential rate, how can we possibly prepare young people for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet?

Those are the now-famous words of American educationalists Karl Fisch and Scott McLeod, who produced the viral Youtube clip, (now listen carefully) 'Shift Happens'. Amongst various unnerving statistics, the four minute clip also includes the scary statement that 'given the amount of new technical information is *doubling* every two years, for students starting a three year technical university degree, this means that *half* of what they learn in in their first year of study will be *outdated* by their final year of study.'

I think that John would agree that when he was at the College during the 1990s, he had no concept at all of the job he would now be doing now and that it certainly didn't exist. Again this makes me ask; how can a school prepare people to flourish in such a fast-changing world, especially a school with the motto 'semper eadem' – *always the same?*

Firstly and vitally, the overall ethos of a school has to set the right tone. Our stated ethos is to provide a rich, diverse and exciting experience for pupils of all backgrounds, enabling them to flourish and make the very most of themselves.

We want boys that come to the College to have a fun, enjoyable and stimulating time here - one which will open their eyes and encourage them to be open-minded, curious and creative in what they do and the way they think. It's a well-known fact that children are usually born this way but that, tragically, such traits are gradually 'educated out of them' through modern school systems which rely on over-prescriptive curriculums and an un-healthy infatuation with exam results.

Fundamentally linked to this ethos, is our current aim to change from a culture of teaching – where pupils are instructed by teachers what to know - to a culture of learning where pupils are encouraged to learn for themselves through more independent activities and their instinctive curiosity. This is not dissimilar from the old adage 'give someone a fish and you feed them for a day, teach them how to fish and you feed them for a lifetime'. Our aim is to encourage our pupils to be self-starters, instinctively hungry for learning and to maintain such hunger throughout their lives.

As with most brilliant concepts that sound so straightforward, it's not quite as simple as that and it's fair to say this is work in progress; one can't achieve cultural change overnight, there are some subjects which lend themselves more easily to this approach than others and whilst we are keen to adapt our vocabulary accordingly, referring to 'learning' rather than 'work' for instance, even I cringe at the term 'teacher' being replaced by 'learning facilitator'.

But I think we'd all accept that being inspired in a subject and being able to work out things for oneself because one intrinsically wants to rather than because you feel you ought to, has to be a seriously good thing, in school and thereafter in life.

There are other, more tangible, areas where we are changing our curriculum to suit modern needs. Our delivery of ICT in the school has been completely transformed recently, through our ditching of ICT as an examination subject and its replacement with more effective application of ICT skills across our all subjects and the very popular introduction of Computing A level which will give our students the higher level skills of understanding how computers work and writing programming code rather than the simplistic use of software. We're even doing our bit

for the emerging island federation of schools with two Grammar School pupils having just started the course here at College.

Promoting academic excellence and the nurturing of intellectual ability must always be key functions of schools and as well as being highly noble pursuits in their own right, they are also going to support our pupils' ability to cope in an increasingly technological world.

Again this summer, many of our students exceeded expectations and achieved outstanding examination grades at both GCSE and A level. At GCSE half those grades achieved were at A or A* and the top two pupils achieved a staggering 13 A* grades apiece. At A level we achieved a 99% pass rate with 84% of grades at C or above, with one young man (whom I won't embarrass though you might have seen him on the front page of the Press in August) achieving 6 grades higher than statistically predicted – the equivalent of three As when he should have got three Cs.

Given our broad ability intake, arguably the broadest of any school on the island, it is such individual, value-added achievements in which we take greatest pride and it's fair to say that aggregate and average exam statistics representing such diverse year groups are not very meaningful at all. The key thing is that every pupil achieves his best according to his own ability; that is certainly the case with all the boys here tonight, many of whom, it is interesting to note, did not pass their 11+. In support of this is another current objective at the College - the encouragement of a Growth Mindset culture amongst our staff and pupils. This fundamentally relates to the idea that one's abilities are not limited by innate attributes and that all can improve their performance through positivity, perseverance and the new in-vogue word 'grit'.

There is no doubt that pupil performance in public examinations is, and will continue to be, very important to both schools and pupils, particularly in terms of determining future opportunities, but I do believe it is only one measure of a person's potential in life. We all know people who were anything but natural scholars at school, who have gone on to live hugely successful and happy lives and whether we like it or not, the world cannot simply rely on academics. Educational thinker Ken Robinson made the point in his book *Out of our Minds: Learning to be Creative* 'if all you had was academic ability, you wouldn't have been able to get out of bed this morning. In fact, there wouldn't have been a bed to get out of. No one could have made one. You could have written about possibility of one, but not have constructed it.'

That is why we never judge pupils here simply according to their academic ability and also why we strongly encourage wide participation in the great range of broader activities on offer. Such sporting and extra-curricular activities are enjoyable in themselves, foster the development of individuality as pupils find their own niche and also help develop essential character traits which cannot as easily be taught in the classroom; again perseverance, but also resilience, confidence, teamwork and commitment, for example. Such a broad education of varied opportunities has been a feature of the College for many generations, of course, and makes us distinct from other schools on the island.

And it is this broad education and the fostering of character, underpinned by the strong moral and community purpose one would expect of a Christian Foundation, which I believe is fundamental in explaining why Old Elizabethans have always flourished, both near and far

I am now referring to the concept of *character education*, which is based on the idea that a school should be measured not simply on exam results, but on the quality and character of the people it produces, given this will be the main determinant of their ability to lead happy and successful adult lives in which they positively contribute to the broader community.

And since the College is, and always has been, seriously into the business of Character Education, it's important to make clear that we are not looking to produce identikit people of the same character destined to follow similar careers with similar lives. One only has to consider the guests of honour we have enjoyed listening to at Prize Giving over recent years: a university professor of genetics, the first BBC journalist to present the Antiques Roadshow, a world and Olympic champion show-jumper, an Anglican Bishop and today a leading global figure in social media technology.

The College wants to produce individuals with uniquely developed skill-sets, attributes, interests and passions, who will fire off in all different directions into the cornucopia of the modern world. And the key character qualities that we want to develop in all our pupils actually encourage such individualism; creativity, independence of thought, intellectual flexibility are all things that lead to diversity rather than uniformity.

These are also character qualities which will make our leavers most adaptable to change, which will be essential in their future lives. Remember Darwin's clarification of his evolution theory:

‘it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, it is the one that is the most adaptable to change’.

Being open to such change, being prepared for it and willing to embrace it is something we all need to do, despite the fact it may cause some discomfort along the way. This is what Ken Robinson had to say about his son doing homework: *‘When my son, James, was doing homework for school, he would have five or six windows open on his computer, Instant Messenger was flashing continuously, his cell phone was constantly ringing, and he was downloading music and watching the TV over his shoulder. I don’t know if he was doing all his homework, but as far as I could see, he was running a global empire’.*

So finally back to my three Cs – community, change and character.

I believe character education is something that the College excels in and has done so for many years – the inculcation of key qualities – creativity, perseverance, curiosity, flexibility, open-mindedness, risk-taking, have long been delivered by the broad education we offer and can be further developed by an evolving modern curriculum, Growth Mindset and new culture of learning. This will allow our leavers to relish and embrace the reality of an exponentially changing world as well as developing them as distinct individuals who are able to write their own, unique life histories.

And recalling the College Ethos, we remember our moral purpose in wanting our pupils ‘to live lives that matter’, lives in which they truly value the strength of human communities and strive to make a positive difference to them.

If it’s the constancy of delivering such character education for individuals, underpinned by the College’s strong and un-wavering commitment to the community, then I am confident that our leavers will continue to embrace change and flourish as a result of it. In a world of relentless change that’s why ‘semper eadem’ - always the same, still holds true.

Thank you.