

## Speech Day, Mr Ed O'Connor, Head of School

Air Marshal Nickols, Mrs Nickols, Governors, Parents, Colleagues, Pupils and Friends of St Edmund's.

The concept of intelligence is a complicated one. Take my father. He was an extraordinarily intelligent man: a published leukaemia research scientist, an extremely talented writer, a gifted self-taught musician, a skilled painter and a phenomenal historian.

I know you're looking at me thinking "all that missed a generation". I did inherit the hair though! But despite being highly academic, Dad was also capable of very unintelligent acts.

He played the piano brilliantly, but usually sung a different song to the one he was playing. He was a cancer specialist and a perfect gentleman, but he was also a chain smoker and the first time he met my wife, he set her on fire with a cigarette. ("Accidentally", he said.)

And when visiting Nelson's flagship HMS Victory in 1981 he famously knocked himself out on the "Mind your head" sign.

Despite these mishaps my Dad epitomised the theory of multiple intelligences, an idea put forward by Howard Gardiner back in 1983.

Gardiner identified eight different types of human intelligence: Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Spatial Bodily-Kinaesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal Intrapersonal and Naturalistic.

Don't worry. I am not going to discuss them all! But you can probably see where I am going.

Multiple intelligences are revealed, minute by minute, in the daily life of our school and the achievements of our pupils.

Today it is my job to make sure that they are all celebrated.

So let's start with some traditional measures of academic intelligence: exams. Our public examination results were especially strong in what was the first fully examined year since 2019. At A-level, the overall pass rate was 99%.

The percentage of A\* and A grades increased by 10% on 2019 results to 40% and 66% of all grades achieved were grade B or higher. Another big increase. At GCSE, the overall 'pass' rate was 92%, equalling the 2019 level. We are especially proud of the 9-5 (A\*-B) statistics, which at 79% were a significant increase on the school's 2019 results of 57%. So, public examination results are one measure of intelligence.

We also look at higher education destinations. 75% of last year's Upper Sixth leavers progressed to places at their first choice universities. A great outcome.

This year, I think we will do better. In our current Upper Sixth, 95% of our applicants hold at least one offer. Seven students hold a full house of five offers and 20/24 Russell Group universities have offered places to St Edmund's students.

This slide shows the top five destinations for St Edmund's students this year: all elite universities. It also shows the geographic distribution of offers.

Red stars are first choices, yellow represents insurance offers. The highest percentage of students ever are going on to study degrees in STEM subjects. Particular congratulations go to Sienna Cowell, who has won a place to study Biology at Pembroke College, Oxford. We also have offers in the bag from the likes of Imperial College, London, King's College, London and Durham.

Well done to the Upper Sixth and to Mr Symaka for his superb leadership of this year's UCAS round.

We have also had significant successes in external academic competitions. Four Upper Sixth students, Sienna Cowell, Jennifer Chongbang, Nelson Limbu and Lucy Carolan-Evans achieved Bronze Awards in the Chemistry Olympiad, a national challenge run by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Seven Upper Fifth pupils took part in the British Physics Olympiad Intermediate Physics Challenge. Yicong Hui, Henry Goodwin and James Hodgkinson achieved Gold awards, Jonty Harris-Harding, Leo Routh and Blake Scammell achieved Silver, and Emily Jackson achieved a Bronze.

Seventeen Middle Fifth pupils entered the Junior Physics Olympiad. Victor Li earned a Gold Award, eight others achieved silver and 8 more achieved bronze. Last month a group of M5th students took part in the National Scientific Thinking Challenge. Over 13,000 students from 227 different schools took part. Gold certificates are awarded only to students in top 10% nationally. Our school results have been very impressive: Gold certificates were awarded to: Esteban Barange-Onecha, Vladislav Silvestrov, Barnaby Gilham, Matilda Henderson, George Blunt, Lilly-Faye Collier and Joseph Goodwin.

In the UK Mathematics Trust's National Intermediate Challenge, Kyle Feng, Victor Li and Jin Lu achieved Gold Awards.

The University of Waterloo in Canada runs an annual Senior Mathematics Challenge for students from all round the world. A number of St Edmund's mathematicians entered and performed extremely well, receiving highly commended certificates. They were Patrick Sutton, Joseph Henry, Huw Gallagher, Svatolav Aspidov and Yitong Xu.

The New College of the Humanities is a university that was set up in London in 2011 by the philosopher AC Grayling. It is now part of North Eastern University which is based in Boston, Massachusetts. It runs an annual essay competition for Lower Sixth Students across the UK. This year there were 4500 entries. I am delighted to report that Izzy O'Connor (L6) was one of the national finalists in the competition for her essay entitled "How can psychology explain atrocious acts towards humans such as during war times?" She attended a prize-giving lunch at Tower Bridge.

Well done to all of those pupils.

Academic Enrichment: At St Edmund's academic enrichment comes in many forms.

After hearing those excellent competition results, you won't be surprised to hear that our Science Society is flourishing with a series of stimulating talks on topics ranging from coastal engineering to the science of formula one cars and the biology of Manta Rays. Patrick Sutton will Chair the Society next year.

Mr Whitman has also continued his important programme of preparing a small number of U5 pupils for AS English Language entry alongside their GCSEs. Last year, this academic stretch and challenge initiative produced excellent grades from our three candidates.

The Curiosity Shop Lecture Series, now in its tenth year, has provided a range of speakers on topics as diverse as epigenetics, the Science of Superheroes, Women in Business and Mankind's Treatment of Animals.

Our Scholars Programme goes from strength to strength with students presenting their own ideas in an informal symposium format, and our Debating Society continues to flourish with our teams performing with distinction in the English Speaking Union National Debating and Public Speaking Competitions, winning through to the Regional Finals and beating some famous schools along the way

We celebrate academic excellence in many ways.

One is via the Head's Commendation system. This is a weekly award to recognise outstanding work in the classroom. Staff nominate pupils who have excelled and I publish the list outside my office. We also keep track of the results and I would now like to congratulate the pupils who occupy the top two places in terms of numbers of commendations received: Lindy Zajacz and Martha Lane.

Academic enrichment is supplemented by a schedule of educational visits that are designed to stimulate multiple intelligences.

Our pupils and staff have visited Krakow and Auschwitz-Birkenau (for Drama) Blencathra in the Lake District and Malham Tarn in Yorkshire (for Geography), Greenwich Observatory (for Science) Ikea (for Product Design and Swedish Meatballs) and Flatford Mill in Suffolk (for Biology). The New York Drama trip was a huge success. Hair gel, glitter and Broadway dance routines were much in evidence and that was just Mr Sell at Heathrow. The Ski trip to Tremblant, Canada, was also extremely popular. We now look forward to the Geography trip to Japan in October and the World Challenge Expedition to Tanzania in July, led by Mrs Millard and Mrs Lea.

Orlando Barton Hodges is now going to sing Die beiden Grenadiere – Schumann.

Plato wrote that “all learning has an emotional base”. At St Edmund’s we recognise this. If pupils are happy, confident and secure they will be more effective learners. Our pastoral “onion” behind me demonstrates how we achieve that. The school rightly has a reputation for outstanding pastoral care delivered by a team of expert staff, led superbly by Catherine Shearer. But we also seek to develop the emotional intelligence of our pupils. We have a Peer Listening programme, a Peer Mentoring Scheme and a pupil-led Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee. Our Interact Charity Committee (also pupil-led) has raised four thousand pounds. The school fair and fancy dress fun run saw Sumo wrestlers, Sith Lords, an inflatable dinosaur, a giant panda and the King of Hearts do battle in blazing heat around a two-mile racetrack. It was a brilliant event, organised by Dr Masterson.

I am enormously grateful to our Chaplain, the Reverend Joy Atkins for her outstanding Chapel programme which this year has focused on the themes of Compassion, Inspiring Women and People of Faith.

Our PSHEE provision, led by Sharon Scally educates our young people about physical and mental health challenges and becoming responsible members of society.

In tutor groups, Votes for Schools software gives students the ability to speak out on the issues that matter to them and contribute to national debates on ethical, political and social issues.

And of course our sports, co-curricular and work experience programmes nurture emotional intelligence by fostering communications skills, team-working abilities and respect for others.

The impact of these various programmes is, in the words of our recent ISI report that “pupils’ self-understanding is excellent, they are confident but modest, fulfilling the school’s aim to encourage pupils to take pride in their achievements and to be humble and responsible members of society”.

Much credit must also go to our Housemasters, Nick Hodge, Victoria Burton, Marie Florence and James Clapp and our school counsellor Nikki Crouch, for their tireless and inspiring pastoral work.

Creative Intelligence: Whatever the future brings in terms of digitalisation and the development of artificial intelligence it seems reasonable to assume that humanity’s creative intelligence will still be the unique and powerful driving force of progress. As Napoleon once said, “Imagination rules the world”. We seek to develop creativity across the whole curriculum but it is fair to say that some subjects embody the creative spirit more completely than others.

We started the academic year with an outstanding set of Drama GCSE and A-level results. Indeed, on a GCSE value-added basis, the department ranked fourth of all independent schools in England.

Mr Sell’s response was “Fourth? That’s not good enough. I want to be first!”

Since September 2022, our extraordinary Drama Department has put on over 40 productions including GCSE and A-Level practical exams, our main productions and the Festival. All were excellent.

But this year was the year of “Remember”.

It was incredibly brave of Mark Sell and the team to take on the most difficult imaginable subject matter, the Holocaust of the Jews, with an original piece of Drama. Given the appalling events and unspeakable cruelties taking place in Ukraine and elsewhere around the world it felt like the right moment to put on a production that could create a powerful learning experience. With that in mind, Mark took the ensemble to Poland back in October to learn more about Polish and Jewish cultures at the Noblisci School in Krakow. They also visited the Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was a deeply moving experience for all involved and our actors brought elements of the experiences to enrich and inform their performances. The show itself was harrowing, poignant and emotionally intense. It was beautifully written by Howard Sykes and Mark, superbly staged by Tam Walker-Reid and her team and brilliantly delivered by our wonderful actors.

In May, Mark, Howard and former pupil Aimee Walker-Reid returned to the Noblisci School to attempt the impossible: putting on a full-scale musical in English based on the Pinocchio story using a cast of Polish children, some of whom barely spoke in English and most of whom had never acted before. And, by the way, they had 9 days to do it! The result was a real slice of St Edmund's glitz transplanted to a school gymnasium in Poland.

It was a monumental achievement that was entertaining and superbly executed. This year we have also seen record breaking numbers of GCSE practicals, all delivered to an exceptional standard and some outstanding A-level pieces that reflected a range of theatrical styles, including Frantic Assembly, Mischief, Knee High Theatre and Artaud. Thanks to the Drama Department on a challenging but extraordinarily successful year.

Those of you who attended the Festival would have seen the extraordinary exhibition of works by our talented painters, designers, ceramicists and photographers. It was a remarkable showcase of creativity across the full senior

school age range. I am extremely grateful to Nick Hodge and his team for continuing to inspire their students to find new and exciting forms of artistic expression. In addition to life drawing classes run in conjunction with the EKST Partnership, the department has organised successful visits to the Courtauld Institute, the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition and the Turner Contemporary. I am proud to announce that Eudora Zhu (M5) was the winner of the 2023 Canterbury Art Prize.

Dance is now a popular GCSE and A-Level option and in March Mrs Payne organised our inaugural Dance Showcase. It was a brilliant demonstration of creative expression. The audience were treated to a variety of performances including contemporary, ballet, jazz and hip-hop pieces. Pupils from Pre-Prep right through to Sixth Form showed off their amazing dance skills and choreography with senior pupils performing their GCSE and A-Level pieces. Congratulations to all the students who took part and to Mrs Payne for putting together such a wonderful evening of entertainment.

It has been a tremendous year for the music department. We have had a series of outstanding lunchtime concerts, a brilliant House Music Competition (won by Baker House) an ambitious Michaelmas Concert which took us on a musical journey from Bach to the Beatles, a superb Carol Service and a great Gala Concert at the Cathedral in March. I'd like to mention a couple of highlights. The Carol Service was led superbly by the Chaplain and we were treated to a range of tremendous performances from our soloists and Choirs. The Chamber Choir gave us "A Simple Gloria" by Libby Larsen and "A Spotless Rose" which also featured a wonderful solo from Orlando Barton-Hodges. The Chapel Choir sang "Lully-Lulla, thou my little Child" with a beautiful solo by Katherine Pennington-Arnold "A Maiden Most Gentle" with the Choristers. In addition, we heard the "Wexford Carol" which included outstanding solos from Joseph Henry, Felix Preston and James Hodgkinson. The Gala Concert in March was a triumph. It involved performers from both JS and SS culminating in a joint choir's



performance of the Schubert Mass in Gand Parry's 'Hear my words, ye people'. In the first half, a number of our Sixth Form singers and musicians played some wonderful solos.

So well done to Edith Burton, Joseph Henry, Orlando Barton Hodges, Ella Wheadon, Felix Preston, Katie Pennington-Arnold and Nele Erdmann for their performances. One audience member said "It was a superb concert in every way Wonderful music played and sung by gifted young musicians with a true sense of enjoyment".

I am delighted to announce that Ella Wheadon will now play a piece for you from the Gala Concert, Allegro (first movement) *from Suite for soprano saxophone and organ* by Stamm.

There have been some superb individual achievements too. In November, the Kent Festival Junior and Senior piano Classes saw entries from both schools. The overall Senior Section title of 'Kent Young Pianist of the Year' was won by L5 pupil Ami Watters. Ami, Anhelina Musiakka and Jonty Harris-Harding have successfully managed to get through to the final of the Canterbury Festival Bursary Competition 2023. Well done to them.

The Lutine Prize is offered by the Guildhall School of Music. The prize was founded in 1982, originally supported by Lloyds of London, who named the competition after their famous Lutine bell. It is one of the most prestigious prizes available to young musicians in the United Kingdom. Needless to say, standards are exceptionally high, and many previous winners have gone on to have professional careers in music. It is my absolute pleasure to announce that Thomas Young in our Upper Fifth is the winner of the 2023 Lutine Prize, after a sensational clarinet performance over the weekend. This is a phenomenal accomplishment. Thomas, we are immensely proud of you.

I should also point out the high levels of success achieved by our pupils in ABRSM and Trinity practical and theory exams with multiple Grade 7s and 8s achieved. This year, Grade 8 Music Awards have been earned by Ella Wheadon for Clarinet, Jonty Harris Harding for Trumpet (with Distinction) and Theo Bawtree for Voice (with Distinction). Well done to you all. Our Music Tour to Northern Italy runs from Sun 9th July -Sat 15th July. The senior choir will sing a Mass in Padua and singers, and instrumentalists will also perform in two venues around Lake Garda as well as enjoying trips to Venice and Verona. My thanks to Mr Payne, Mr Swatman, Dr Rowcroft, Mr Underwood, Mrs Clapp, Mrs Walker and the team for their extraordinary work in Music and on a truly terrific year of success.

Howard Gardiner would say that sport develops Spatial, Bodily-Kinaesthetic and Inter-Personal Intelligences. That has certainly been evident in the 171 sports fixtures we have contested since September.

The girls' hockey teams have been hugely successful. The U15A's won all but one match, including a victory over Kent College. Sorry – I misread that - a **crushing** victory over Kent College. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI also worked exceptionally hard, winning or drawing all of their fixtures including a 7-0 victory over St Lawrence and a hard fought 1-1 draw against Kent College. Sorry, I've done it again - a **crushing** 1:1 draw against Kent College.

The U16 boys' football team had successes in the Kent Cup until meeting a very strong Herne Bay High side. A 1-1 draw at the mighty Tonbridge School for the 1<sup>st</sup> XI was very pleasing indeed, as was an U16 3-0 victory. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XI beat Kent College 5-0. Which was nice. And the U15 team beat Dover College 4-2.

The Lent term was also highly successful. Our U14 Hockey Team achieved a magnificent 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Regional Tournament, our U15 team won the Plate at the Peter Firminger Tournament, beating King's 2-1 in the final, and the 1<sup>st</sup> XI secured good wins over Duke of York's, Claremont and King's Rochester. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Netball teams also won against Kent College, Sir Roger Manwood's and Dover College. Our U14A's played a superb game against King's B's, winning 14-10.

There were also a wide range of excellent individual sporting achievements by our pupils before Easter. Adam Whitlock and Teigan Sullivan were selected to run for Kent Schools' at the English Schools' Cross-Country Championships. Both performed brilliantly on the day "and emptied the tank" in runners' parlance. Particular congratulations to Adam, who came 13<sup>th</sup> in a field of 327. Adam also recently won a gold medal in the U17 1500m in the Kent Schools Athletics Championship.

Our U15A Boys' Cricket team are unbeaten this season, having defeated Kent College, Harvey GS, Ashford, Claremont and King's Rochester. U15 Girls' cricket continues to grow in popularity. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI boys completed their season with a fantastic victory over Harvey Grammar School and fielded teams to compete against the Band of Brothers and the prestigious MCC side as part of the Festival.

The U18 boys' tennis squad has earned some fine victories over King's, Tonbridge, Ashford and St Lawrence College with Charlie Gotke (L6) and Samson Buck (U5) outstanding. The U15 boys' squad has had some resounding victories, especially over KC and Ashford.

In swimming, Marcus Crossman in our U5 recently won 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Men's 200m Breaststroke – Junior, at the AP London International at the London Aquatic Centre.

Sports Day was a great event and there were some impressive individual performances, with many records broken, The Victor Ludorum went to Theo Bawtree and the Victrix Ludorum to Emmie Jackson. Wagner eventually won the day, from a House perspective.

Several of our pupils are now playing at representative level: Will Surridge, Martha Lane and Sofie Goode have been chosen for the U15 England Hockey Pathway, Lizzie Wiltshire plays U16 Girls' Football for Kent, Angelica Docwra plays Kent U15 girls' football and was Ladies League player of the season, Eddie Knoupe and Luigi Cioffi have been selected for the U15 England RFU Pathway with Saracens, Bea Alexander represents Kent in U15 Cricket and Iona Lester in L6 plays National League Hockey for Canterbury Ladies. In U14 Hockey, Freddie Post, Ben Beatty, Joey Burden and Bea Alexander represent Kent. Henry Goodwin plays for Kent Hockey at U16 level and Elysia Bridges at U18.

My sincere thanks to Mrs Millard and her team for their excellent leadership of St Edmund's sport this year

I would also like to wish the best of luck to former pupil Alexandra Millard who represents Team GB in the European Athletics U23 Championships over 1500m in Finland this summer.

I will now ask Mrs Shearer to present the L5 & M5 prizes: **L5 & M5 Prize-giving.**

The Festival this summer provided a superb showcase for our school's creative, artistic, dramatic and musical talents. Ian Swatman and Sarah Rees delivered an ambitious and exciting programme that provided a fantastic end to the school year. There was a phenomenal exhibition of pupil art and design work in the old gym. Please pop in and have a look today - you will be blown away by the ingenuity and originality of creative expression. We also enjoyed a superb workshop and assembly by the renowned artist, Kevin Dalton-Johnson.

There was a Pupil Cabaret expertly compered by Joseph Goodwin and Scarlet Newman- Cousins that showcased a remarkable range of performances from both Junior and Senior School.

Our 1<sup>st</sup> XI went toe to toe with the MCC with Theo Bawtree making an impressive 50 and all of our players demonstrated exemplary sportsmanship, unlike the Australian test team! Football Fest gave the local community a brilliant coaching and playing opportunity.

I especially enjoyed the brilliant lunchtime concert which took place in Chapel last week. The standards of performance were exceptionally high and I would like to commend our soloists, Brunelle Sauvegrain, Orlando Barton Hodges, Frederick Butler, Thomas Young, Nina Sauvegrain and Ami Watters who gave dazzlingly good

performances, playing with compassion and technical accomplishment. I was also hugely impressed by our Chamber Choir, who sung Steal Away and The Mermaid with real skill and a jaunty, nautical swagger.

Our Dragon's Lair event gave young entrepreneurs the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to an expert panel including local businessman John Pettman, marketing expert Amanda Selmon and former pupil Mark Wong, who now runs his own alcohol free beer company. All the pitches were cleverly thought through, impressively delivered and had a clear understanding of the importance of sustainability. Ultimately, the winner with her pitch for a protein based healthy yoghurt product was Loren Goode.

Our Big Band superbly supported Ray Gelato and the Giants. The Counterfeit Stones demonstrated that it may only be rock n roll, but we definitely like it and Mark De Lisser led an extraordinary choral event that included over 300 people from St Ed's and the wider Canterbury community. The Icons performance brought everything to a spectacularly grand conclusion - the standing ovation was fully deserved.

Needless to say, it has been a monumental team effort and I am immensely grateful to all the departments that contributed, to the Festival Crew and Sarah Rees for their organisation and to our sponsors, especially Paul Roberts Associates and The Canterbury Auction Gallery for their invaluable support. Finally, I must thank Ian Swatman for being the inspirational driving force behind the Festival. Ian, you are simply brilliant - Thank you.

### **I now ask Mrs Shearer to announce the Upper Fifth and Sixth Form Prizes**

#### **U5 & Sixth Form Prize-giving**

CCF continues to prove extremely popular, with 222 pupils currently on roll. This year, cadets have participated in First Aid, Skill at Arms, Field craft, Navigation and Drill and had a trip to Jersey Camp on the Isle of Wight. After Speech Day, 18 of our cadets travel to the Peak District to participate in adventurous training. I am immensely grateful to Major Jones, our contingent commander and Colour Sergeant French for their outstanding leadership.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is also flourishing at St Edmund's. Twelve students undertook a DofE Gold Expedition to Snowdonia this year and during Lower Fifth Outdoor Education Week, 73 participated in the DofE Bronze expedition. I am grateful to Mr Jon Kincaid and his team for driving our DofE provision forward. Jon's initials, by the way, are JFK.

The other, slightly more famous, JFK once said "We do these things, not because they are easy but because they are hard". Kennedy was talking about the US space programme. But that phrase also sums up our approach to the challenges of outdoor

education. Like so many aspects of our co-curricular programme, because it is difficult, it breeds resilience, teamwork and leadership.

I would now like to introduce the leader of our pupil community, Captain of School, Lucy Walker-Reid.

### **Captain of School Address**

I am delighted to announce that next year, our Captain of School will be Charlotte Richards and the Vice-Captains will be Izzy O'Connor, Jens Chappell and Mark Lower.

### **I now ask Mrs Shearer to announce the Leadership Prizes**

### **Leadership Prize-giving**

Sadly, this year we lost two special people for whom St Edmund's was an integral part of their lives. Catherine Davis played a vital role at the school, working in various different capacities over many years within our administrative team. She was a wonderful person and a regular attendee at Eucharist, Carol Services and Concerts. We will miss her.

We also remember a legendary former teacher and St Edmund's Old Boy, Robin Hawkins. Robin worked here as a Teacher of Physics, Commanding Officer of the CCF and sports coach for 34 years. His recent memorial service in Chapel was a lovely event. The large number of friends, family and colleagues who attended reflected the deep respect and affection in which he was held.

Some members of the Senior School teaching team are leaving the school this summer to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

Page Tolmacci joined us this year as a supply teacher in RS. She returns home to her native Australia. Danielle Veurnes leaves the Geography department to undertake a PGCE at Canterbury Christ Church. Dan Colquhoun, teacher of PE and MiC Hockey is also off on his travels as he takes time away from work to see the world/ Lucy Wilmott, teacher of Biology is also moving on. After teaching for 20 years, she will be looking at non-teaching opportunities. Katie Bennett, teacher of Business and Economics leaves us to become Head of Business Studies at Fulston Manor School in Sittingbourne. Katie also got married this year, so we wish her double congratulations. Dr Edouard Chiatelli also leaves St Edmund's to become Teacher of Classics at the famous Habadashers Askes School in Hertfordshire. "Buona fortuna" , Eduardo! We also say goodbye to Isabel Beeching, who taught EAL, Geography and English. She has decided not to come back to the school, following her maternity leave. We wish her every happiness with her new family. All of those people are extremely talented, committed and passionate teachers and we wish them every success.

Famously, Napoleon also said "an army marches on its stomach". This year, our school caterers Holroyd Howe have peeled 4200kg of potatoes, cooked 5380 burgers (and no – that's not just for me) and chopped 6360 cucumbers. There are other things on our menu as well, by the way, but hopefully that gives you a sense of scale! Phil Vince, Donna Steers and their team do a tremendous job feeding us all, as you will very shortly see for yourselves at lunch.

My thanks go to our Senior Leadership Team. Firstly, to Ross Underwood, our outstanding Assistant Head - Safeguarding, for his caring and compassionate work. Brilliant job Ross.

Edwin Jones and his team have worked exceptionally hard, sometimes 24/7, to provide an enjoyable, vibrant experience for our boarding community. My thanks to Edwin, Lucy Harding and our boarding staff.

Leigh Millard our Assistant Head - Co-curricular, has transformed the school's clubs and activity programme over the last five years. He has also led by example, taking a hugely successful trip to Kenya in 2019. Leigh is stepping down from this role and I would like to express my sincere thanks for his vision, relentless positivity and determination to provide the very best opportunities for all St Edmund's pupils. I think he deserves a round of applause. He will be replaced in this role by Nick Hodge, who steps down as Housemaster of Watson. In turn, Nick will be replaced in this position by his current Deputy, James Anderson. We wish them well in their new responsibilities.

Nick Scott-Kilvert our Bursar has worked tirelessly to keep St Edmund's both fully operational and financially secure. The work of Nick and his Business Services team is absolutely integral to the School's current success. Bursars are not usually known for their sunny dispositions. But Nick has been especially cheery, since his beloved West Ham United won the Europa Conference title this year. The last time West Ham were successful in Europe was 1965, when Nick was in his early thirties. So we can allow him a smile of satisfaction!

Dr Cathy Sotillo and Anya Bensberg - Director of Studies and Deputy Head (Educational Development) - have driven the school forward academically with insight, kindness and analytical intelligence. I am especially pleased to have Anya back at St Edmund's. Her role in achieving an "Excellent" inspection outcome in terms of pupil achievement was absolutely invaluable.

Catherine Shearer, our Deputy Head (Pastoral) has managed to keep her obsession with Wrexham FC and their Hollywood Chairman Ryan Reynolds broadly under control. Cath has led our pastoral teams with extraordinary care, pupil focus and empathy. It is a job that is never finished. And it never gets easier or less complicated. Thank you Cath.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our extraordinary teachers for their dedication and hard work. They are the ones who make our school what it is. They are the ones who inspire our students to grow and to learn. And at the end of an exhausting year, they are the ones that most need a drink!

Researchers in Austria recently discovered that “funny” people, particularly those who enjoy dark humour, have higher IQs than their less funny peers.

Their analysis shows that funny people have higher verbal and non-verbal intelligence and they score lower for rage and verbal aggression. The funniest person I know, and therefore by this analysis, the most intelligent is Lindsay Murphy, my PA. However, when dealing with me, she often scores extremely highly for rage and verbal aggression. So the theory is only half right! But according to the Independent Schools Inspectorate, who collectively fell in love with her, she “is the most organised person they have ever met”. I have to agree.

I would also like to thank all of you – the parents and friends of the School, for your support and for the sacrifices that you make to give your children the best possible education.

Finally, we are lucky to have an outstanding Governing Body who fully support our efforts as a school to be all we can be and I am grateful for their critical friendship, especially to Chris Nickols. No one loves our school more than Chris and I thank him for his wisdom and advice.

I am acutely conscious, while giving a speech about intelligence that our Chair of Governors, is not only an Air Marshal of the RAF but also a former Head of Defence Intelligence. This puts some pressure on me. Because there’s always the worry that if I make a mistake or go on too long, he can zero in a satellite and take me out with an air strike. But Chairman, we have almost reached the end of my report, so you can take your finger off the “launch” button.

My theme today has been intelligence.

Or more specifically, different types of intelligences and how they are nurtured at St Edmund’s.

I would like very quickly to reference one more.

At St Edmund’s our organisational intelligence is immeasurably stronger than it was ten years ago. And that is for me, the main reason why our school achieved “Excellent” on all measures in our recent ISI inspection.

We have a clearer sense of purpose. Effective leadership in key positions. Stronger use of data and educational research. Pupil-centric pastoral systems. Outstanding

teachers. A sense of humour that runs through the school. A culture that drives constant organisational improvement.

And one of our real strengths is that we understand that success is as individual as a fingerprint.

Einstein said “if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”. That is not what we do.

At St Edmunds we understand that human intelligence is multi-faceted. Every individual has aptitudes that deserve to be celebrated. Unlike Artificial Intelligence, the human mind make profound imaginative leaps and show compassion, empathy and brilliant originality of approach and expression.

I hope that my report demonstrates that the young people of St Edmund’s embody all of those qualities.

Thank you.

### **CMN Final Comment**

In my opening remarks, I mentioned some of the key challenges facing us all at present.

But I perhaps missed one important one out, which could potentially impact all of us.

We appear to be increasingly living in a world where complex issues are summarised by many, particularly politicians and media headline writers, in simplistic ‘one liners’.

And these views are generally becoming more extreme and intolerant of others who have alternative, and very often more nuanced, views.

I sometimes summarise this sort of approach as ‘ideology trumping proper analysis’ and it is becoming increasingly common in very many walks of life – not just politics.

One example is the current threat to independent schools through dramatic changes to our tax status with no real acknowledgement of the economic impact, both local and in exports, as well as the many other public benefits we provide.

In my view, two of the core values of our society are choice and social responsibility, and the independent education sector is a shining example of both.

You have chosen to spend your money on an excellent education for your children; that should be your right and we should be able to continue to provide that for you.

In any walk of life, we should be using examples of excellence to stimulate improvements in the less good, not trying to suppress all down to a lowest common denominator.



We all need to continue to articulate what the independent school sector does for our society.

A classic example of that is of course in our social responsibility.

St Edmund's currently has 12 Ukrainian pupils at the School, down from 14 at its peak a few months ago and the most in any school I know.

Not only is it the right thing for us to be doing, and an example of practical social responsibility in action, but it has also enriched the lives of all of our other pupils through understanding of another culture and the appreciation of the many and varied talents they possess and have shared with us.

Finally, I would like to address our leavers, who have not only done incredibly well here at St Edmund's, but I am sure will continue to represent us so well in whatever their future holds. You are the future leaders of our society.

And I don't necessarily mean by becoming top business people or politicians or sports professionals (although some of you may).

But, with your St Edmund's education behind you, you can set an example and lead our society's thinking, in small ways and perhaps large ones at times, in your future careers, so that we can generate a more tolerant and sustainable world for the future.

That's a big challenge which is why it will take the combined efforts of so many like you.

