

Open Evening 2017

Headteacher's Speech

I'd like to start by saying that it's an absolute delight and privilege to be addressing you as the Headteacher of Testbourne Community School. It's a fantastic school, made all the more fantastic by its body of truly amazing students – they are articulate, polite, enthusiastic and intelligent. With that in mind, I'd like to start by giving you an opportunity to hear a few short words from student from both ends of the age spectrum. Our 2 year 7 students Amber Hibbert and Oliver Keefe and our Head Boy Jack Routledge and Head Girl Abigail Sarginson will give you their perspective on the school and demonstrate some of the qualities that our students develop here.

Last week, I was doing the same as you are now. Attending Open Evening at my local school with my daughter. Listening to the Headteacher's speech, I had chance to reflect on what I wanted to hear about as a parent. I concluded that I simply wanted to know about the person I was entrusting with my child's education. What are their beliefs? What are their philosophies? What are their core values? I am not going to blind you with facts and figures – you can see our press release and other information for that. I am not going to spend an age boasting about our achievements in Sport, The Arts and Sciences – you can see our displays, photos and trophies and talk to our wonderful students for that. Instead, I am going to give you compelling reasons as to why you and your children will want to join us for the next phase of Testbourne's development because you buy into my ideals as this school's Headteacher.

So what am I about as an educator?

I have a range of experience as a teacher – Almost 20 years in 6 schools before this one – nearly half of those years as a senior leader - across the full range of educational circumstances. In my last post as SDHT at The Hamble School, I am proud to say I was part of a leadership team in a school where L and M were judged as outstanding and where the school went from almost being relegated to special measures to just missing the outstanding judgement in March. I believe that leading the school through this process alongside my other my other achievements gives me enough credibility that you can trust my experience and ability to strategically plan improvement and build upon success at TCS.



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One of my most fundamental beliefs is the power of education to change lives. Indeed, I myself am a product of that belief. Alongside that ideal, I am passionate about the right of all children to receive the highest quality education. I am dedicated to providing opportunities for **all** children, irrespective of background or need, to excel academically and to develop and excel in their other areas of interest. In fact, I am a big believer in need before label. Children are individuals with individual requirements. I want children to gain the excellent exam results they deserve but also enjoy and value their experience of education. I want them to become inquisitive and passionate learners so that they develop skills that will aid them in what will be a competitive future.

When I first arrived here at the beginning of term, I asked staff to suggest ideas for a school strapline. Something we could all buy into and something that represented our core values. As a whole staff we decided upon: **Achievement / Excellence / Integrity** because they were values we felt we all wanted to live and work by as a community. You will have seen them rotating on the photo slides as you sat down. These three words quite neatly summarise everything we all believe in.

The core purpose of a school is to educate its students. Sounds obvious? There are a lot of distractions in the modern age. For me, the number one priority is learning and achievement. Other areas are hugely important: the cultural benefit of our exchange with our Ugandan partners, our amazing productions and music recitals, sporting successes and so on. However, the thing for which we are most accountable, and rightly so, is your children's achievement. It is the results with which they leave us that determine their future. With this in mind, I place a great deal of emphasis on ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and that students have the opportunity to learn and are motivated to excel.

That brings me nicely onto the second word – excellence. I believe that we should all do everything to the best of our ability. We should never leave ourselves asking 'what if I had tried a little harder?' Our students only have to answer to their own consciences in the end. They, after all, have to bear the consequences of their actions, inactions and decisions. Those of you who live close to the school will know that excellence is a fundamental belief of mine and that it extends into every aspect of our work – from how we wear uniform, to the documents that we now produce in house, to the way in which we run information evenings such as our recent well received Year 11 parents' evening. From the quality of displays to the quality of our communications with parents, I want everything that we do to be the highest standard we can possibly make it and this will then be a model for our students – we will expect the best from them. I know from



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experience that raising the bar simply means that children raise their performance to meet the new level of expectation. The delight and pride they take in doing so is one of my key motivators as an educator. My longer term aim for Testbourne Community School is to make it a genuine rival for private education in terms of the academic progress that children make. I want our students to achieve at the highest levels academically so that they can progress to the best colleges and the Russell Group universities. I want our students to take pride in themselves, their uniform, their behaviour and their academic and personal achievements. This means as a community of learners, we must have the highest expectations of each other.

We are working hard behind the scenes to improve our facilities and bring these up to the ideal of excellence for Testbourne students and the community. We have a gym for a very reasonable and uncontracted member rate, we have been fortunate enough to secure an external redecoration and repair programme, we are developing sporting facilities and have secured funding for an exciting 3G pitch, we have been decorating internally, have put new flooring down on nearly every floor and, importantly, we are developing and relaunching the school library. We have significantly increased our capacity to cater for our growing community. All of these developments will bring Testbourne Community School into the 21st century whilst maintaining its small school appeal.

I would like to talk now about the third word in our strapline - integrity. I am a person with what some people call traditional values but I just call values. I believe in a community where everyone is polite, caring and courteous and where we have respect for each other, our environment and, importantly, for ourselves. I believe in the highest expectations of behaviour and, at the core of how I manage behaviour in a school, is the idea that teachers have a right to teach and learners have a right to learn. When I talk to children about their behaviour I reinforce the idea that interruptions to one's own learning and that of others is unacceptable. The relentless focus on learning, the elimination of low level disruption, the development of a culture of high expectations and mutual respect are all part of the journey I was on before I came to Testbourne. I am very intolerant of the more serious behaviours and have a track record of almost eliminating such behaviours in previous schools. Fortunately, at Testbourne, we are very spoilt by the fact that only a very small minority wish to test us.

Testbourne is a seed waiting to germinate into an incredible institute of learning and personal growth. The school has the raw materials already and our cohort is second to none. I have quite literally been astounded by the respect, humour, graciousness, intelligence and articulacy of these wonderful people.



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You, like I was last week, will be reflecting on your imminent choices, weighing up what is best for your child. Prior to this year, you will have developed views about our school I must ask you to question how relevant those views are now. I have already, in a few short weeks, demonstrated the fact that I deliver on my expectations and promises so if you have the same beliefs and philosophies as I do, then the choice is simple. This is an exciting new beginning for Testbourne Community School. My intention is to be here for the foreseeable future to lead Testbourne into becoming a top performing, over-subscribed school of first choice and I sincerely hope you will be with us on that journey.



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