

## **PRIZEGIVING 2008**

### **Charlotte Avery Speech**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, Mrs Wilkinson, Ms Cotton, Governors, members of the CJ community, Pastonians, parents, staff and students.

My welcome to you all today is especially warm because it is in response to the wonderful welcome I have received from all of you during this my first year at St Mary's. I have had delightful times sharing convivial meals with many of the girls: suppers at De Luca's restaurant with Year 11, teas with Year 6 and the Sixth Form and lunches with Years 7 to 10.

It's been a remarkable year, full of magic moments, outstanding performances and many surprises – all very exciting. I was once told very early in my career that in teaching, I should expect the unexpected and it is in this spirit of surprise that I will not be giving a traditional Prizegiving Speech listing all the year's events. Instead, you will have found a book on your chairs describing our many events and the girls' outstanding achievements in all the school's departments, all of which give us countless reasons to be proud of all the girls. Far better, we thought, for you to be able to ponder over the information than try and remember it as I list it all. This leaves me able to talk to you about issues which have struck me particularly during the year and to allow some of the girls to participate.

#### **[JUNIOR SCHOOL LIAISON]**

Junior School liaison has gone from strength to strength and it has been a great pleasure to work closely and happily with the Junior School's Head Mrs Deirdre O'Sullivan. I have thoroughly enjoyed my visits to classes, assemblies, concerts and plays. I am delighted to record that St Mary's now has 630 pupils aged from 4 – 18. There have been many fruitful new joint ventures this year including the 21<sup>st</sup> Fun Run– Circus and Carnival themed - personally memorable as I dressed up with Mrs O'Sullivan as a pantomime horse: I was the rear end! Joint School Christmas cards and 2008 calendars featured art work and photographs of Junior and Senior students. We have happily shared Sports Day, trips, clubs, and Year 6 have joined the Senior School Council.

#### **[PARENTS]**

The PTA have got into the spirit and swing of liaison and I am grateful to them for a series of joint social and fund-raising ventures this year including the welcome party for new parents, the November Mulled Wine Evening and the Christmas Fair which raised almost £3,000 for PTA funds. Thanks are due also to Shirley Charters and the Pastonians for their help raising awareness of St Mary's and bringing the generations together. And there's more of this later

## [GOVERNORS]

The Governors work incredibly hard to ensure that the School has a secure future. I would like to thank them all for their unstinting warmth and support and most particularly, Denise Wilkinson as Chair of Governors.

## [RESULTS]

Teaching at St Mary's continues its outstanding record. Last summer, we once more broke all records at A level. 40% of all the girls achieved straight A grades. 62.3% of all grades were A, 86.8% were graded A – B. Five girls gained places at Oxford and Cambridge in addition to all six girls who achieved places for Medicine and Veterinary Science. At AS level, one third of the girls achieved three grade As or more and 20% of the girls achieved four grade As or more.

At GCSE this year 98.7% of the pupils achieved 5 A\* - C grades. 64% of all the grades achieved by the girls were at A and A\* which equated to 17 girls achieving straight A and A\* grades, Special mentions for Fiona Blower, Sarah Hickling and Rebecca Shercliff who achieved 10 A\* grades and to Kate McDonald, Laura Munglani and Fiona Sheppard who achieved 11 A\* grades. I would like pay a huge tribute to the excellent effort of the teaching staff at St Mary's and to the girls who worked extremely hard to achieve this success.

## [BOARDING]

An important area of life at St Mary's is our **boarding community**. We were delighted to receive the accolade of an outstanding OFSTED boarding report at the end of the Easter term. Lina Al-Araj received the additional accolade of the Hobson's International Boarder of the Year Award 2008 in the Year 12-13 category. The awards have been designed to celebrate diversity in the UK boarding sector and highlight the immense contribution international boarders make to UK education. Nearly 100 students, from 40 different nationalities, submitted entries in three categories. The Sixth Form category was the most fiercely contested which makes Lina's win even more impressive.

**Lina Al-Araj** will now give a little flavour of what it's like to be a boarder at St Mary's

Since arriving at St. Mary's in September I have a lot of time to think about where I was less than a year ago. So much has changed! Boarding at St. Mary's is truly a unique experience. Making the transition from living at home to boarding can be quite daunting but, when surrounded by girls from different cultures and backgrounds the task of settling in is made easy. Very soon, you find yourself with a second family and day by day you strengthen friendships that you know will last a lifetime.

There is a strong sense of community which deepens every day through enjoying activities together. During this year the boarders have enjoyed numerous events, the most memorable of which have been trips to London, Shepreth Wildlife Park, the Clothes Show Live in Birmingham and, of course, enjoying all that Cambridge has to offer, including the essential punting on the Cam.

For me, the highlight of the boarding calendar was undoubtedly our annual boarders' concert. It was great to end the evening having raised 500 pounds for the charity ShelterBox.

Although the academic year is nearly at a close, work hasn't finished for the rest of us boarders and we look forward to new challenges and opportunities including, for many of us this summer, the visit to Lourdes.

## **[ETHOS]**

### **[1. Ethos – Charity]**

One of the many outstanding features of this school is its ethos. It has a determination to understand, be part of and help the wider community. Part of this is the school's commitment to charity fundraising and in this year alone the girls have raised over £25,000.

I am going to ask **Becky Shercliff**, one of our Deputy Head girls, to tell you a little more about St Mary's charity work this year:

This year's Fun Run raised over £10,000 to support the continuing work of Sister Christopher in the Zimbabwean school and orphanage: this is a new record and includes the Junior School contribution. Funds in the Autumn Term were raised for Breast Cancer, Macmillan, CAFOD, CLIC Sargeant, Birzeit, the parish that OLEM is twinned with in the Holy Land and a church Community Centre in London. The Sixth Form helped out at the East Anglia Children's Hospice Christmas Party and did a fantastic job entertaining the children, face painting and dancing. Members of the Upper School also took a pre- Christmas shopping expedition for the elderly in the Grafton Centre. The Sixth Form Revue raised [£600] for charities chosen by the Sixth Form. The annual Lourdes Fund-raising fortnight with its dog show, cake stalls and home clothes day raised nearly £4,000 and the total raised for charity this year is a huge £25,000.

Thank you Becky and Lina. Of course my sincere thanks go to Meg Jackson for all her hard work and enthusiasm in overseeing our Charitable Fund-raising programme for many successful years which has helped promote charity work as an integral and very successful part of school life. In fact, since Meg took on the role of Charities Co-ordinator in 1996, the school has raised in excess of £190,000! Quite remarkable.

## **[2. Ethos – The Environment]**

The girls have become increasingly proactive this year about grasping leadership opportunities in particular with environment issues. Year groups are taking responsibility for designing, planting and managing garden plots. In addition, students, supported by Miss Janine Cowan and Mrs Valerie McKee, are working hard on gaining Eco-status for the school. We also move forward with our Fair Trade plans.

**Fiona Sheppard**, our other Deputy Head girl, will give you more details about both these projects:

This term, two of our Sixth Formers attended workshops on caring for the environment, and heard Jonathon Porritt speak at Cheltenham Ladies college. They have since aimed to raise awareness of environmental issues and make a difference in school practice as part of the national eco-schools project. Although we are all aware of the causes and consequences of climate change, the eco schools group aims to find practical solutions to these problems, including reforming our school recycling scheme, encouraging more efficient use of paper and planning activities to raise the awareness of these environmental issues. We have now registered as an eco school and an environmental audit has been undertaken by girls from Year 6 to Sixth Form, resulting in a list of eco friendly targets for St Mary's which was presented to the Heads of Departments by Katherine Hobbiger, Emily Goodridge, Flora Sheldon and Sara Rand. As such, we hope to develop our ideas for sustainability further so we can make a real difference to the school's carbon footprint. On a different note, St Mary's has started to look into buying food for school lunch which has been bought from fair trade suppliers and we hope this will be implemented next term.

Thank you, Fiona.

### **[3. Ethos – Spiritual Growth]**

In February we were visited by Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, who was taking part in a conference at the University entitled "A world to believe in". Students and staff from local schools were invited to his thought-provoking talk, "Your answers questioned".

The round of beautifully arranged Masses, Feast Days and Carol Services are a rewarding feature at St Mary's and many thanks are due to those involved in the school's spiritual life: to Father Tony Rogers, much beloved by girls and staff alike, to Daniel Bennett and Kay Dodsworth for their sensitive oversight of liturgy, assemblies and the prayer life of the school, to Sonia Gears and the Music Department for the contribution that music adds to our services and to the Sisters of the CJ community who continue to support the school with their love and prayers.

### **[4. Ethos – Scholarships]**

I hope you will agree that St Mary's a very special place, so I am thrilled to announce that we are now able to offer five 100% bursaries to girls who would otherwise be unable to benefit from a St Mary's education. We have, in addition, broadened the range of scholarships available to include art & textiles, drama and sport scholarships alongside music.

## [EVENTS]

You will find reports for our busy Sports and Music departments in your booklets, but I'd just like to mention something which is of particular interest to me. As a former rower, I have been impressed by the interest in and commitment to rowing. Our boat has been 'womanned' – we like to call it - by a group of 19 Sixth Form girls and, whilst we may not be the fastest in the water, our performances in events over the year have shown real grit. Our boat isn't named "wholly spirited" without good reason. Here are **Lydia Allen** and **Charlotte Dexter** to give you a brief insight into a year in the Sports Department.

**(LYDIA)** Sport at St Mary's continues to be very successful and incredibly popular. In fact, as a result of the girls' commitment to sport and in particular the many sports clubs, a record number of colours were awarded this year, with 7 girls awarded half colours for 3 or more sports. Well done to everyone who has been awarded colours this year.

Sports Day was an exciting opportunity for the Senior and Junior girls to compete together. In the end, Paston won the house competition and Tilly Becker carried off the Hope Gilbert Cup.

We were pleased to host both the successful Inter-Schools Dressage competition run by Mr Mitchell and parents, and the Girls' School Association Annual Gym and Dance Display.

It has been a terrific year for team sports. The U14 Netball A team, coached by Mrs Fleming, was crowned Cambridge District Netball Champions for their age group and then went on to represent Cambridgeshire in the Eastern Counties Round. The U16 and U14 hockey teams were finalists in the District Schools Hockey tournament and the U13s were crowned District Champions. In tennis, the U15 league team won the South Cambridgeshire League and qualified for the County Finals.

**(CHARLOTTE D)** There have also been a large number of individual selections to represent the county for Cross Country, Athletics, and Hockey at both U14 and U15 levels. In addition, Catherine Mills was awarded the honour of being made this year's U14 County Hockey Captain and Susannah Bedford became the County Champion for U15 Discus. We have also had selections for the U16 and U14 South Cambridgeshire Netball Academy squads.

There is more information about individual sporting success in your booklets but special mention should be made of the students presented with the prestigious Roy Burrell Award in recognition of their ability, contribution and commitment to their chosen sport. They are:

Zahra Malik, Marianne Oliver and Sara Horrell. Sara Horrell was also runner-up in the Cambridge Secondary Schools' Female Sports Personality of the Year.

We have a wonderful team of Sports teachers, led by Head of PE, Miss Jackie Gregg and our thanks are due to them for their hard work and commitment.

In musical terms by far the biggest event was "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat", a joint Junior and Senior School extravaganza, with the cast and crew numbering 136 across the two schools and a total audience over the performances of more than a thousand! A most particular accolade is due to Sonia Gears, our inimitable Director of Music, for masterminding the whole production. I would like to ask **Sarah Smart** to tell you a little more about events in the Music Department:

It has been an extremely busy year for the Music department!

First was the annual Christmas concert featuring performances from a number of music scholars as well as the full range of ensembles. The programme was wonderfully varied and a new audience participation tradition was established with the grand finale performance of 'The Twelve days of Christmas'.

Miss Avery has spoken about the musical spectacular, 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'. It was great to involve so many girls from the Senior and Junior Schools and Mrs Gears certainly had her hands full. We felt a real sense of achievement night after night, but *particularly* on the last night when the audience gave us a standing ovation!

No sooner than Joseph had finished, the school chamber choir 'Allegro' were charging across the countryside to perform at the 'Music For Youth' regional festival in Upminster. The adjudicators said that we were the best choir they had heard all day. They also complimented us on some of the technical aspects of our performances.

This year, the Summer Concert was held at the large and prestigious venue of Cambridge University concert hall. It featured two new groups, The Samba Band, led by our percussion teacher, Mr Vellacott and a new, student-led group – the Upper-school choir, run by Claudia Efstatiou and Jessica Norton, both in year 11. There were some excellent ensemble and solo performances presenting music in a wide range of styles.

All in all, I feel privileged to be a Music Scholar at St Mary's. The music department continues to go from strength to strength and there are ample opportunities for everyone to be involved in the musical life of the school.

Thank you Lydia, Charlotte and Sarah.

## **[EXTRA CURRICULAR]**

Our extended programme of extra curricular activities has been very well received and girls now enjoy a list of some 50 activities to choose from. There are two of particular note because they show a remarkable level of commitment from staff and girls alike. Our Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme is acknowledged to be one of the most vibrant in the country and this year over a hundred girls have been involved. As they say in the old Heineken Advert, with the number of participants in our programme, it most certainly reaches the parts other beers don't reach! I'd like to thank Fleur Spore, Susan Brown and Richard Atkinson in particular for their leadership and enthusiasm. Now I'd like to ask our Head Girl, **Sarah Hickling**, to talk more about this and about the girls' involvement in the Arts Award:

In our school, we are extremely proud of the Duke of Edinburgh Award that is so well run. Each year, more and more people sign up to participate in the award and this year was no exception. In Year10, 60 people signed up to take part in the Bronze Award with 22 at Silver Level. There are 19 of us in the Sixth Form who are working on our Gold Awards and Clare Morgan, Maria Mikhailova, Sarah Smart and Sophie Jackson have all completed their Gold Award and are awaiting their invite the Palace to collect it. For our practise expedition, the Lower Sixth went to Snowdonia at Easter, wading through thigh deep snow, with two people from our group even reaching the summit of Snowdon. We will now be completing our externally assessed expedition during the first week of our summer holidays, which will be walking 80km through the Yorkshire Dales and hoping not to get too lost along the way!

Another scheme that has really taken off this year is the Arts Award scheme. Sam Lai was the first to achieve her Gold Award, with 36 girls attaining Bronze and 10 receiving their Silver Awards. This means that, 3 years since the award was piloted here and launched nationally, 59 girls have achieved their Arts Award with another possible 10 Silvers on their way by October. The external assessor was impressed by the effort put in by the girls and staff for the completion of the award in a shorter space of time than many other centres

Thank you Sarah.

## **[SIXTH FORM]**

The Sixth Form is an important part of the school community and they have been involved in 'Joseph', D of E, Young Enterprise, as well as mentoring activities. We have launched a new Discussion Group for the Lower Sixth and a Psychology Film Club for all the Sixth Form. Roy Peachey's visiting speakers' programme, called "More than just a Talk" has continued with great success. With our new team of prefects, we are greatly looking forward to seeing the Sixth Form take on more leadership positions within the school and introducing new activities for younger students.

## **[STAFF DEPARTURES]**

We have some significant retirements this year and are saying farewell to people who have played an important part in the life of St Mary's:

**Paul Mitchell** is leaving us to take up the Headship of Cobham School. He has been at St Mary's for a relatively short time, since 2005, but has contributed a great deal, not only as curriculum deputy who has presided over curriculum changes and the timetable but also to the extra-curricular life of the school, establishing a local inter schools Dressage competition which is hosted by St Mary's. He has given memorable assemblies, often with fascinating visual aids!

**Jenny Toller** leaves us after twenty four years. She started her career at St Mary's as a very successful Music teacher and ran many Music groups. She then became very interested in ICT and acquired an outstanding level of skill very quickly. It was Jenny's far sightedness that prompted St Mary's to be one of the first schools to establish a web site and she won an award for the best web site design in the local area. She moved into the ICT department and in addition to her teaching became our web site manager.

**Carolyn Cooksey** will be leaving after twenty three years. She came as a teacher of French but has since also taught Italian, taken on the leadership of French, and then Modern Languages for a time and most recently has taken on two new roles as Professional Tutor and Librarian. One of the things for which she is most fondly remembered by past pupils is the trip to Florence which she regularly arranged.

**Meg Jackson** retires after twenty years teaching at St Mary's. We are very grateful for all the work she has done both in the English department and as Charities co-ordinator. Having accepted the post, Meg quickly developed it and extended the range of our charitable work and definitely increased the element of fun! As part of that responsibility she has organised

the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes and has kindly agreed to continue with that next year. She has added 'puddings' to the distinctive St Mary's vocabulary.

**Jacky Bevan** leaves after twenty years. She came to teach extra-curricular pottery but soon took on a part time role as teacher of Ceramics and swiftly built up the teaching of Ceramics into a significant element in the students' Arts curriculum. She has run Pottery Club for many years and we have all appreciated the crib figures made by the group which enhance our Advent reflections each year. We have also very much appreciated her gentle pastoral care of individuals.

**Win Galloway** leaves after fourteen years. She came to us as Head of Physics and has developed the Physics department into an extremely successful department which regularly achieves fantastic results. She has been a much loved form tutor and has also given invaluable help with Boarding and hosting International Students in her home. She has always contributed a great deal to extra- curricular events not even blanching at the thought of taking on the running of the Dog Show!

**Fran Hawken** is retiring after fourteen years service in the PE department. She has been a much loved teacher of swimming and Gymnastics in the Junior School and has also done sterling work with the development of Rowing in the Sixth Form and in coaching the Senior School Gymnastics Display Team. She has also accompanied a wide range of school trips, from Skiing to Lourdes, including a regular commitment to the Alpine Adventure trip.

There are other staff leaving us and we have included information about them in your booklet, they are: **Liz Hurles, Anne Clark, Ruth McGuinness, Erin Hunt , Teika Bellamy, Cathy Priest Jackie Bock, Yvonne McPartland and Amy Whitehouse .**

We will be temporarily saying farewell to Roy Peachey, Head of Sixth Form, who will be taking adoption leave, also to Sophia Leighton Scott, in the Geography department, and Kathryn Cicero, in the EAL department, who will be taking maternity leave from September. We wish them well and look forward to meeting the new members of the broader 'St Mary's family'.

## **[LOOKING TO THE FUTURE]**

Next year is the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mary Ward and the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cambridge University. We are organising a huge programme of events and talks and fostering links with the University. At the start of the Autumn term we will produce a booklet outlining all the events which will be issued to all pupils, parents, alumnae, friends and supporters of the school, along with an open invitation to attend any and all events, including a mass and firework display on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2009.

## **[THE ST MARY'S COMMUNITY – LEAVING AND ALUMNAE]**

Although the end of the academic year spells the departure of our Upper Sixth students and a clutch of Year 11 girls, we were able to celebrate their time here with Summer Balls. Thanks to Aodain Fleming for organising Year 11's Carnival Ball, with its 9 larger than life-size Venetian masked figures created by Francis Jeans. And to Meg Jackson and her team for a magnificent event for the Supper Sixth.

Of course, as students prepare to leave us and we look forward to welcoming new students next year, it is worth noting that the St Mary's Community is very large – it includes everyone who was a student here, whenever that was and wherever they now live. In the past we have been remiss in maintaining our relationships with alumnae – or Pastonians as leavers automatically become – but no longer. This year we have started the process of reconnecting with all the Pastonians. It's going to take a long time, as we don't have contact details for so many but the process is underway. We would like to encourage them to come back and visit us, to talk to us about their lives and to become part of our daily lives again. The benefits are incalculable. Even in this first year of reconnection we have been able to produce a careers booklet detailing personal stories from Pastonians enjoying careers ranging from medicine and entrepreneurial management to arts administration and fuel trading. An invaluable resource for the girls. And next year a number of Pastonians will be returning to talk to the girls as part of the Mary Ward 400 events programme.

However long you have been part of the St Mary's community and at whatever stage you leave us, you always remain part of the community. Our interest in you does not stop when you leave and we hope you will always be interested in us. Don't be surprised if we keep in touch with you to send you news and to invite you back. And in return we hope you will want to keep in touch with us.

As I said at the outset, this has been a wonderful first year and there have been many magic moments, so to end it with the award of so many prizes here today is perfect. Each and every girl has worked hard to earn her award and I am sure there are very proud parents in the room. We are certainly very proud. But what you have seen here, the many achievements we have been able to celebrate, are just part of the process of encouragement and recognition which is so important at St Mary's. Throughout the year we take every opportunity publicly and privately to congratulate the girls on everything they achieve, whether it is for a specific exam or competition or overcoming something more personal. After all, achievement is achievement and every effort is worth recognising.

In Jayne Triffitt's outgoing speech last year she called St Mary's a school that impressed and astonished her. And she was right. It is a wonderful place underpinned by remarkable committed and caring people. I remain grateful to each and every member of teaching staff and to all the non-teaching staff - admin, catering, cleaning, marketing, site management, IT support and technicians - for the crucial roles you all play in making St Mary's a very special school indeed. And to the parents: it is a privilege to walk alongside your daughters as they grow from girls into women: Thank you for entrusting them to our daily care and for your support. The final thanks and congratulations must go to our girls. It is their enthusiasm and energy and willingness to try new things and take the initiative that make each day worth working for.