

Master, Mistress Cooper, Governors, honoured guests, parents and members of the School,

It is again my privilege to be able to report on another excellent year in the school's history. In its 475 years, Coopers has evolved and adapted with every twist and turn of the changing world in which it is placed. As we confront the next avalanche of educational reforms that are flowing from the new Coalition Government, Coopers will again be on the forefront of ensuring that we adapt to preserve the things that we see as being important.

We celebrate the achievements of our senior students and affirm the three key planks that make our school distinctive and I would like to touch on each of these three. Firstly, the academic success that we prize highly. Secondly, the values that we have inherited from our forefathers that see 'Love as Brethren' as much more than a motto. And thirdly, our extra-curricular breadth and depth which provides opportunities for all to grow as young people into interesting, engaging citizens of the 21st Century.

Academically 2010 was an array of success. At A Level the A* grade was introduced for the first time and some 10% of all grades gained were at this level. Two students – Alex Defroand and Hannah Payne – got 4 A* which is a massive achievement. Overall A Level grades were high at 52% at A and B and a large majority went on to university. It is worth noting that we are beginning to see a trend towards increasing financial requirement for university to make even the most suited of students think twice. Although our job is to serve the needs of individual students without party political prejudice, I cannot help but feel that increasing tuition fees of up to £9,000 a year will have a significantly detrimental effect on the thinking of many would-be university entrants, particularly those who are not placed with huge financial resources at home. As a school with a track record of university entrants we affirm the central values of higher education both in terms of the qualification that can be gained but also of the broadening, enriching and maturing experience that university offers. More of this as the policy unfurls.

At GCSE we saw some of our best results ever. 95.8% of all of our students gained 5 A*-C including English and Maths. The Daily Telegraph placed us third in the country in their league table. Our As and A*s hit record levels at some 43% of all grades gained. Dave Threadgold and Sue Regan in Year 11, accompanied by a team of tutors and the estimable work of Jacqui Eades, our Key Stage 4 Learning Mentor, ensured every student was given the best chance of gaining this national benchmark. Many subjects delivered outstanding results, but special mention should go to the Maths Department who pulled their pass rate up to 96% which is a testament to all their hard work.

Coopers continues to be a high achieving school where the expectation is that all will do well. Our curriculum is unashamedly academic. We insist on rigour. Two Languages are taught to all our students and we have confounded the national trends by insisting on GCSE entry in Double Science, Languages and Humanities for all. Hence when we are evaluated against the new Government measure – the English Baccalaureate – nearly 70% of students last year would have gained that standard against the national average depressingly low at 17%. It is encouraging that in many areas where we have felt out of line with education trends the new Government in the White Paper has sought in their wisdom to bring the country in line to where Coopers has been for many years! The end of CVA (Contextual Value Added) as a measure, the removal of vocational qualifications as a means of bolstering league table position and the insistence on the delivery of academic subjects is encouraging and sets us up for future academic success.

Last Friday we were assessed for the NACE Challenge Award which is the National Association for Able Children in Education. In 2008 we became a Lead School for Gifted & Talented when we picked up our third specialism and since then Stephen Lawlor our Assistant Head, supported by Mark Duncan, has worked with colleagues across the school to develop our provision for the Gifted & Talented students academically and in extra-curricular areas such as sport, music and drama. The Assessors found our school to offer outstanding provision in every one of their target areas. In fact the Chairman of NACE phoned me personally to say that the report was one of the best they had seen. Only sixty secondary schools in the country have been granted this honour and we have been asked to present on our

provision at the National Conference next year. Within our Teaching & Learning Charter we place challenge very much at the centre. We seek to push students forward wherever we can to achieve their best and it is most encouraging that the NACE Assessors confirmed that we are on track in this delivery.

The second strand is the attempt to affirm our values in all that we do and 'Love as Brethren' is not just a phrase but a reality. There are so many occasions over the course of a year which highlight the very special community that we work within. This year has seen the fundraising efforts of the school to generate monies to build a new Sixth Form Centre. Some £560,000 has already been pledged and the building is nearly completing its first phase, with second phase refurbishment to follow. We hope the new Sixth Form facilities will be open for business by September 2011. This is physical evidence of the commitment of parents, past pupils, Governors, and the current community to making the school not only successful but an extended family. Throughout the year we commemorate parts of our history which have shaped us – Founders' Day, the Cloker Service, the Mansion House Banquet. Our engagement with the Company and with the City of London reflects not only our roots but also our collective engagement with a bigger vision.

We like to think that when any student is in trouble they are supported and helped, that our systems are humane and that we care for the individual. I think our pastoral work and support of students is of the highest order and I commend our Heads of Year, the work of Julie Dunn and the Learning Mentors and our SEN Team for their commitment and engagement. This year we have introduced a new experiment in Year 10 to mentor more effectively. Students are in smaller groups using support staff as well as teachers. The outcomes seem to be most encouraging so far. However, for me when I arrived at the School, one of the most commendable features was the way it remembered those in the community that were no longer with us. The Bradford 10s in July, the Matthew Mead Memorial Rugby, some of the awards that we grant and indeed plaques, benches and trees around the school that mean that those that have passed away are still with us.

Coopers is perhaps at its best when pulling together in terms of hardship. This last week has been no exception as we have been hit very hard by three losses. Last

Thursday we heard of the sad passing of Katelyn Donovan, a Year 10 student who had been wrestling with sickness for two years. On Saturday James Balfe, husband of one of our Governors and a parent, succumbed to a long struggle as well. And to add to these tragedies, on Tuesday night Jake Staines, a student who left three years ago and who made huge contributions to our Music Department, was killed in a car accident in Brentwood. I am always amazed at the capacity of the school to absorb this level of pain and yet to offer human and genuine heartfelt support. It is this humanity which I think permeates all that we are and means that 'Love as Brethren' is a value that goes far beyond the structures of the school.

In the last week at Staff Briefing we were told of a Year 7 boy who twisted his ankle in a cross-country run and yet still managed to continue and come in third in the competition. When asked by his teacher why he carried on going, he smiled and said 'I did not want to let my school down'. Coopers students in sporting competitions, in concerts, plays and in the examination room carry a value and a commitment that make them do that little bit better than perhaps on paper they should do and I am convinced this is part of our value system that is part of the ether in this place.

The third strand to note is our extra-curricular provision. As we speak, we have enjoyed the Sixth Form pantomimes and regularly witness the hard work that Miss Sarah Piper and the Drama Department are putting into the production of 'The Producers' for next term. Last year we enjoyed the fantastic production of Mr James French's 'Brassed Off', combining the musical talents of our brass ensemble with the acting skills of many. To quote Laura Jenkins, an ex-Coopers' student who wrote the review for us: 'I challenge you to find any other production of 'Brassed Off', let alone a school xxxxxxxx that compares.'. The drama showcased the talents of so many. Our musical endeavours do the same and it is a credit to newly appointed Director of Music Mrs Jan Bristow and her team that year-on-year they manage to produce high quality concerts and music for both school and Company consumption.

This year it is perhaps in the sporting arena that we must make special note. We are delighted that we were selected to be one of fifty secondary schools in the country

out of a thousand applicants to be a World Olympic Dream secondary school. These schools have been linked with institutions around the planet where Olympic athletes had emerged. We think we have been allocated a school in Kiev, Ukraine that produced a number of Olympic fencers but it is just more recognition of the continued national acclaim that our sports offer. This year we were national finalists in XXX and XXX (park lane?). We participated in sixteen national finals – tennis, hockey, rowing, skiing, swimming, biathlon, athletics, cross-country and produced national standard performances, not only by the elite star students of Niall Engerer who is European Squash Champion and unbelievably Nicole Raymond who in September became World Aquathlon Champion, but also the array of athletes below this elevated rank who week-in, week-out produce contributions of the highest order. Denise Lewis, the Olympic Gold Medallist who graced our Sports Presentation Evening, was blown away as are we all by the standard of school sport at Coopers. When we add to that the world of our artists that win local and national recognition and the contribution made by our overseas work, which has this year been awarded by the gaining of the British Council International Schools Award, we can only say that students are provided with opportunities for extending their interests, enthusiasm and talents that compares with any state secondary school in the country.

However, much of this is at risk as funding to secondary education is being cut. Governors are all too aware of the need for rationalising the services that we offer as Government funding is reduced. I am committed to ensuring that these three strands that we are so proud to declare are supported and held.

We are delighted that we have with us today Mr Chris Grant, Director of Youth Sport Trust. He symbolises a year where excellence is under threat. For six years we have led the provision of school sports through the School Sports Partnership in Havering under the leadership of Mr Leigh Marshall. However, as you will have heard in the press, SSP funding has been completely pulled this year which means our provision has been laid bare and staff cannot be funded. Continued political wrangling may result in some concessions and we are seeking to offset the worst impacts of this cut but there is no escaping that there is a direct correlation between funding and outcome and when funding is pulled we are unable to offer the same quality that we would like. These are difficult days and my plea to staff, Governors

and parents is to hold the faith and to push and if necessary contribute the time and money to uphold the things that we know have given the school over many years a beacon of success. We have no preordained right to hold on to that success. We must all work together in a committed focused fashion and I have absolutely no doubt that that is what we will do.

May I add my congratulations to every student here today for their prizes and awards. They represent individual endeavour and commitment and I wish each one all the very best as they continue their life's journey. My thanks to parents and guests for attending and for your continued support.

Let me finish by saying that the school is in good heart.