

**HEADMASTER'S SPEECH**  
**CAISTOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL AWARDS EVENING**  
**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 22ND 2016**

A very warm welcome indeed to you all to this most special of evenings at Caistor Grammar School. We are delighted that so many of you have taken the trouble to be with us. I am especially pleased to welcome Mr Simon Cohen here. In the way he has lived his life and successfully grown a business which has inspired huge numbers of people, he has demonstrated that it is possible to live your life to the highest of ethical standards and to build a culture of care and commitment. When I heard him speak earlier this year, I found his eloquence and charisma compelling and wanted our students to have the chance to experience it too. I am very grateful to him for being here.

Very soon, I will be taking my leave of this place as has been mentioned. It will be “Goodbye to all that!” for me. After 24 years or more at this School, it will be very hard to say goodbye to all this and to all of you. What will I miss most, and what makes CGS such a remarkable place to be: to study and to work? Well, I think that there are a number of factors which contribute and which we should celebrate tonight. I would like to choose just four.

Perhaps the greatest factor about CGS is the huge number of people who care about it and who go to very great lengths to show that they care: staff, governors, parents, students. This remarkable collection of cups is a very good demonstration of that commitment and that love for our School. They have been built up over many years from many different sources and each year – this one being no exception – seems to bring another cup into existence. This 28 page epic programme for tonight is another demonstration too. It seems to me that there is a settled view established here that the efforts and achievements of those who have gone

before us in this School mean that we who are here now should care too. the love seems to be infectious. I see this in the smiling faces of our new Year 7, but it is also evident in older students joining the School. I recently interviewed all 25 new Lower Sixth Formers who started in September. Their determination to excel at a place which they associate with excellence and their embracing of this passion for personal improvement was arresting and impressive indeed. And I think at CGS it has been like that for a very long time. I have here a book recently handed into the School which was awarded to one G Beswick in Form 4 as a Form prize in July 1926 and it bears the signature of the then Headmaster, Henry Ernest James Coxon, MA, just as all the book prizes this year bear my name. In its simple modest way, it conveys powerfully the continuity of key values and these always seem apparent to me whenever I meet Old Caistorians and hear them talk about our School in the past.

Another thing which I will miss is the commitment to excel and to be “our best selves” as the recently deceased David Jenkins, one time Bishop of Durham put it in a visit to the School in 1995, which is such a powerful, intoxicating and charming characteristic of our School. Our motto, “Ever to Excel”, invites such an approach and it is one that is well established in all the different activities we carry out. But this is not just about people doing the best they can for themselves as individuals but also about a collective spirit in which it is recognised as our Mission Statement says it, that we should “Grow through sharing”. I will greatly miss this sense of teamwork which is such a part of our School’s character and success. That sharing, within and between year groups is a powerful motivator and inspirer in our community, too. Older students in this School acting as prefects, counsellors, mentors, House Officials and much more help to create a tipping point momentum which is unembarrassed about seeking high achievement. That is why our House events, such as Sports Day, House Music and House Plays are such rumbustious and delightful occasions. Our School Walk is the perfect example of this “conviviality” in action. It helps create the

School atmosphere that we strive for but it would not be possible at all if our community were not at ease with itself and happy to rub along with one another.

I am very proud of the culture of high achievement, which prevails at CGS. And at this point, I would like to do honour to our students who took external exams this summer at GCSE and AS and A2 levels. We are delighted that our class of Year 11 have achieved so highly and equally impressed by our class of Year 13, whose destinations listed in our programme seem once again extremely impressive.

Some 20 years ago we invited the expert on Gifted and Talented students, Dr David George, to speak at our Awards Evening. He spoke of promoting a culture of achievement as follows: “To go further than I thought; to go faster than I hoped; to reach higher than I dreamed; to become the person I need to be” and it has been an enormous privilege to see so many young people grow so successfully into the people they need to be, over the years since.

That set of slogans is on view in my office, as are two more that I want to quote to you in explanation of my fourth key factor to celebrate CGS tonight. I think that we promote here the living of a full, enriched, balanced life in which we want “to work hard and to develop all our talents” but in which we recognise that not all will always go as it has been planned to. As I look back over 24 years, it is impossible not to remember things which are very sad or which have not worked out as we had hoped. On my wall is a poem from Friedrich Rückert, “You must not shut the night inside you but endlessly in light the dark immerse, a tiny lamp has gone out in my tent, I bless the flame that warms the universe.” This is a huge challenge, for often for some the light of hope seems very dim. We have many, many staff who work extremely hard to help and support our young people in this challenge. I am immensely proud of the talent and dedication of my colleagues, teaching and non-teaching in the School. They seem to me to set the highest of standards and to achieve something close to the ideal in their professionalism and commitment to their task. The

words which follow hang in my study and are an inspiration to me, though sometimes a reproach too, for whilst every day I seek to follow them, I am conscious of shortcomings revealed every day too. But nevertheless, I am content to end by reading them to you:

“I would be true for there are those who trust me, I would be pure for there are those that care,  
I would be strong for there is much to suffer,  
I would be brave for there is much to dare, I would be friend of all the foe the friendless,  
I would be giving and forget the gift,  
I would be humble for I know my weakness,  
I would look up, laugh, love and live.”

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Roger Hale    September 2016