

A message from IES Chairman, Dr. Tate

As the new Chairman of IES I have greatly enjoyed my two visits to Holy Trinity this term. I have found a small school with a family atmosphere, friendly and courteous pupils, excellent relations between staff and pupils, close attention to the needs of individuals, and a firm commitment to academic progress and to internationalism. The latter is being reinforced by preparations in the Prep School to introduce the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme (PYP), an educational programme followed by 850 schools in 92 countries and one which, as recent research studies are showing, is leading to higher levels of literacy and numeracy in PYP schools by comparison with non-PYP international schools around the world. I have also met parents who were extremely positive about the school and committed to supporting it in every way possible.

My second visit on 9th December happily coincided with an assembly in which a large number of awards and certificates were handed out to pupils in all parts of the school. Among the many achievements those in swimming particularly stood out. Here the school, which only started taking part in the Independent Schools Association (ISA) regional and national competitions this term, has moved rapidly into an enviable top position, grabbing some of the most prestigious trophies and first prizes at national level.

Seeing all these proud pupils coming up to receive their certificates and trophies made me start thinking why this had happened. Is it because this small school just happens to be blessed with a disproportionate number of pupils able, for whatever physiological reasons, to move rapidly through water? I then looked around the assembly hall and remembered that we were also surrounded by the most amazing achievements in the visual arts (Holy Trinity, in case you hadn't noticed, is one of the West Midlands' best but least known art galleries). Are there similar genetic influences at work, I wondered? Are we also just blessed with a disproportionate number of pupils who have been able to wield crayon and pencil since earliest infancy and are now just bringing their talents to maturity within our school?

The answers to these questions were not slow in coming. These achievements – whether in swimming, art, design, or most facets of learning – have less to do with 'innate talent' (though this of course plays a part) and much more to do with being in an environment in which there is first class teaching, a commitment to hard work, the highest expectations for what pupils might achieve, and an atmosphere that spurs people on to success and that helps them learn from their failures and mistakes. In congratulating the pupils we must not forget to thank all those – teachers and parents - who have helped to create this atmosphere in our school.

At the end of the assembly, and after looking once more at pupils' art work, I decided that there were key messages for *all* our pupils in this. These messages may sound obvious, but it is often the obvious things that get forgotten. First, there is no success without hard work and sustained concentration (at least for most of us). Second, the road to success can be slow and painful. It can involve doing things that you may not like and that are in themselves boring and repetitive. If you insist on instant gratification in everything, you will never get very far. Third, there are few things so satisfying as having worked hard at something, made progress, mastered a skill, and in some significant way changed yourself. This applies to learning a language, playing the flute and

moving ahead with your understanding of algebra just as much as it does to designing a costume or beating the regional record for front crawl.

These messages are not just for pupils. They are for all of us, both for the way we support and challenge the young people we are responsible for and for our own lives. It is perhaps slightly odd that I have chosen this theme at the end of a long term when we are all looking forward to a rest from hard work, but it is what occurred to me as I sat surrounded by brilliant art work watching Holy Trinity pupils being congratulated for having taken part for the first time in the ISA swimming competitions and walking away with the prizes.

Please accept my very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year