

Prizegiving 2022-2023

A year ago, I stood here and explained how Hollygirt had captured my heart -how I had fallen in love with the school.

A year later and it feels a bit like a marriage; we know each other better and are getting used to each others' 'little ways' -

Hollygirt is an unusual school. We are known for our genuine warmth and care of the students and against the backdrop of difficult financial climate and the post- covid recovery period, we are doing well! We have an increasing roll and at the latest count –our student numbers are up by 15.6%from September 2021.

Last year, (as well as my falling in love in love with the school) I spoke of levelling up – a comment the Y11s had made 'Hollygirt is levelling up' – and we did level up and continue to level up: WE asked the students what they wished for and We introduced GCSE PE and Business Studies - we listened to them. All of Y9 had their options facilitated; my thanks to the flexibility of staff around this. We introduced Philosophy for Children into the Juniors. We had new loos in the senior school and new blinds – we increased the number and types of roles of responsibility the students can hold and the opportunities for pastoral time; we used the latest research in cognitive science to prepare students for high stakes tests -national assessments. AND with trustees we revised the school aims to reflect the school vision: our core values of hard work, resilience, kindness and honesty; (this list is not exhaustive) we listen – we are always open to feedback.

And for all those of you whom I have spoken with over the last year - with truth and communication at the ehart of parent and student conversations - we have moved mountains.

We had an inspection report that captured the voices of our youngsters- and although you may not spend your time reading ISI Inspection reports (I don't think you do anyway??) ours was exceptional – one can truly hear the student voices: **All pupils spoken to expressed the view that pupils are very respectful towards each other and that the whole community of the school is kind. This was commented on as a highlight of joining the school by a number of new pupils' AND pupils show the highest regard for diversity – they are welcoming, accepting of all and the school embodies a culture of appreciation and empathy regardless of background'.**

Back to Levelling up - This year sees the opening of a sixth form, the establishment of a scholarship programme and we are talking about a minibus to take us to many more fixtures- We will review our IT strategy and our estates and I look forward to our strategy day with trustees in November as we pull together the five year plan that will underpin the school vision and future.

I am nothing without the team - and so my thanks for the support of the trustees /SLT and the teaching and support teams – everyone who knows Hollygirt knows that we thrive on this spirit of team- work and the above and beyond attitudes of our staff – and this was feedback from our recent open morning too;

My last thanks goes to our lovely students and their parents.

Hollygirt students -you are wonderful; your sense of humour and fun carries us through the day; your love of Hollygirt and the ethics and morals we stand for I liken to a stick of rock. If I were to cut you in half I would see the word Hollygirt. (not that I am planning to -this is a metaphor) When you told the inspectors that **'you found a home in the school'** and **'that you feel safe and able to be yourselves without fear of ridicule'** I realised how lucky I was to work with such wonderful students.

Please remember to thank your parents who work hard to provide these opportunities for you – recognising the value that an independent school education in class sizes of no more than 15 with unique pastoral care -gives you. Thank you, parents for the taxi service and the support; the bearing with until we get a sleek comms system and for your feedback which is always welcome. The support over the last couple of weeks has been wonderful – a real sense of the community pulling together.

So . let's look to it to: Ever onward and levelling upward...