

Quakers in Yorkshire – The Mount School Principal's Address Saturday 19 October 2019

Life at The Mount over the past year has continued to be fast and furious. Much change has happened, in terms of the School's offer and continued investment in our educational strategy of providing an exceptional education for girls. Rachel Capper, Head of Junior School, Bridget Perks, Deputy Principal, and I have been working together to drive forward our vision and as a Senior Leadership Team we are very excited by what is currently happening. We have a vibrant, exciting curriculum which challenges and inspires our girls and most importantly, a curriculum that is tailored towards girls.

As you may remember from my report last year, we made the decision at the start of 2018-2019 to go all-girls from the age of 2. This has been the best thing we could have done as it has allowed us to shape and develop an even stronger educational offer for girls and has given us a clear marketing message under the strapline and hashtag 'we know girls can'. We have invested more in marketing and have attracted across the past twelve months over 60 new families to the School.

In September 2019 we had a large intake into Year 7 and Year 12 and pupil numbers are higher this academic year than they were at the same point last year which is extremely pleasing. Currently we have a waiting list for entry into Year 7.

As you can see from the slide behind me, we have a very distinctive brand with a strong message about girls.

I would like to show you one of our new video adverts from our recent marketing campaign for Open Day which took place last weekend.

An all-girls education is still a very sought-after commodity and we are finding that the best way to compete in the local market, is by being distinctively different.

The next slide shows some of our many news articles that you can find on our website reporting on the many activities our girls do, both inside and outside the classroom.

One of our greatest strengths at The Mount is that we are an all-through school, with the advantage of the whole school being based on one spacious site. We are of course blessed with our fabulous grounds! I always enjoy sitting and watching from my study window, girls running around and playing together (in what I like to call The Mount Park!) – it brings a completely different dimension to a school to have this all-through, one site set-up and it suits girls of all ages.

What we never lose sight of, of course, is our Quaker heritage and our uniqueness as the only all-girls Quaker School in the UK. We have recently completed a review of our school aims and ethos and how we couch what we say about what we do as a school and how we interpret the Quaker values. We have now simplified our aims so that they focus on five statements that we have at the core of all we do at The Mount. – see slide in the powerpoint presentation

You have heard from our College Leadership Team about how we are currently developing the interpretation of our Quaker ethos. Last year, The Mount was registered as a Quaker Recognised Body, along with the other UK Quaker schools. For the past two years I have been part of the group, 'Heads of Quaker Organisations', a group of Chief Executives including Paul Parker, who meet twice a year to discuss issues pertinent to running Quaker organisations. It is a fascinating group to be part of and I have learnt a lot personally from being a part of it.

Our girls continue to achieve and excel in all they do, and they bring many new ideas to the table that staff are always keen to encourage. Examination results this summer were once again excellent, at both GCSE and A Level, and girls left The Mount to take up places at a range of universities and

colleges. It was extremely pleasing, that as well as our most academic girls achieving 100% in some of their examination papers, girls with special educational needs outperformed their target grades by on average over one full grade making their value-added quite exceptional.

It is an exciting time at The Mount as the strategy set three years ago, is very much coming to fruition. As Margaret mentioned earlier, in November 2018, we were inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

The outcome of the inspection was that we achieved the top grade of 'excellent' in both areas of educational quality, that is for 'pupils' personal development' and 'pupils' academic achievement'. We also achieved full regulatory compliance – something we had not managed to do in the previous two inspections, in 2012 and 2015.

Our main drive as a Senior Leadership Team this academic year is to continue moving forward our exciting strategic developments. Building our new performing arts studio remains a top strategic priority but we have many other exciting developments in the pipeline, for sport, music and STEM in particular, all enabling us to keep providing an exceptional education for girls, so watch this space as the year progresses.

Margaret mentioned before how much The Mount is used by the community and I would like to pick up on that a little more.

Six local schools regularly use the swimming pool during the school day; this has increased from 3 schools just two years ago. Two local schools use the playing fields for their sports days and one for regular football matches.

In the longer school holidays at Easter and summer, boarding and classrooms are used by study groups, language schools, choirs and many others. Every Easter, we welcome a contingent of Basket Weavers who come to York from across the world to gather for a week of basket making and crafting. The Mount School continues to play a proactive part in York Independent State Schools Partnership (ISSP) and I continue this year as Chair of the Heads Strategy Group. I have led the process this year of appointing a new ISSP Coordinator and last summer The Mount hosted the Primary York ISSP project across three Saturdays in May; 50 Year 6 pupils from a range of schools across York participated in the event.

From 2019, Camp Xplode are providing multi-activity programmes for 3 to 16-year olds during all school holidays, complementing our new term-time only provision for girls in our EYFS Class. This is an exciting new development for The Mount.

The Mount School also hosts public events organised by other organisations such as York Festival of Ideas, York Mumbler and York Literature Festival. We also open our doors as part of York Open Studios.

Mount School Estates Ltd (our trading company) activities are growing and there is huge potential for further growth and development of community use of the School's facilities. To that end we have decided to appoint a Commercial Services Manager to run Mount School Estates Ltd, with the aim of developing the use of our facilities and building new partnerships with local and national sports bodies. Other charitable activities continue to be a priority with an even greater emphasis being put on the giving of bursaries and a shift away from offering discounts and monetary scholarships. Fundraising for other organisations including charity days such as the Macmillian Cancer Coffee Morning, Children in Need, Sports Relief and the NSPCC, as well as termly charity lunches, non-uniform days and cake sales, all play a major part in what we do as a school community to raise money for local and national charities.

So, you have heard from me and Rachel about much that is going on at The Mount. Each day at The Mount is different and can provide us with challenges, but I am sure that Rachel and Bridget will agree that working at The Mount is exciting and a real privilege and I thank you all for supporting us in that endeavour.

Adrienne Richmond
Principal
The Mount School York