

Prize Giving Report from the Head – 2016

Before I begin my report, I would like to pay tribute to Lucy Pygott - a much loved member of the school community, who tragically was killed in a road traffic accident on Tuesday night, while out doing one of the things she most loved - running.

Lucy was an incredibly talented young woman, academic, musical and sporty. Indeed she was not going to be able to join us tonight despite being awarded The Berry Bowl for Outstanding Sporting Achievement as she was due to be training in Spain. Her recent achievements include representing Britain in the European Youth Championships in Tbilisi Georgia, winning Bronze medal in 3000mtrs, earlier in the year she came second in the London mini-marathon. This was a girl on the cusp of international success.

And yet with all this talent she was extremely modest; Lucy was kind, gentle and a really good friend. She brought happiness into the lives she touched. Her popularity was so evident to us on Wednesday afternoon when the whole year group returned to Farnborough Hill to take part in a service of remembrance for Lucy's life arranged and led by the Lower Sixth. The shock has been great and for this reason some people have not felt able to join us this evening.

Miss Andrews spoke for us all when she said that the brightness of Lucy's hair equalled the brightness of her smile and the energy with which she approached every aspect of school life.

The world's an emptier and poorer place without her.

However Lucy's legacy remains - we must seize the day, live every day to the full and make the most of our gift and talents, treating everyone along the way with kindness. For this reason we have chosen to remember Lucy this evening by a change in the Choir programme to "For Good" from the musical Wicked.

I would like to now hand over to Miss Farmer to lead us in prayer for Lucy's parents, family and friends.

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Mrs Hamilton, Miss Danson, Sisters, ladies and gentlemen and girls. It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you to the 2016 Prize Giving. This is a key event in the life of a school, and for me this year particularly important, as I am able to report to you for the first time on the many many successes and achievements of the girls. They have developed talents, pushed personal boundaries, overcome hurdles and received accolades and rewards in a host of areas. We welcome back last year's Year 11 and Upper VIth as they come together to collect their GCSE and A Level certificates. It is a wonderful moment in a school as we take time to recognise effort, merit and tenacity.

Academic Results

This academic year began with the arrival of the 2016 A level results. Here we were thrilled to bask in the successes of so many pupils' achievements. They are among the very best in the history of Farnborough Hill: 48% were A* and A, with a superb 97% A* to C.

We are delighted with three students now studying at Oxbridge: Lucy Collins with 3A* and one A reading Natural Sciences at Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Holly Smith 3A* and one A reading History at Pembroke College, Cambridge and Carys Dally with 1 A* 2As studying Experimental Psychology at Wadham College, Oxford. There was success across the board with the vast majority of girls getting their first choice universities. Other particular successes include Rebecca Cameron achieving 2 A* and one A reading Earth Sciences at Durham starting in 2017, while Hannah Collier gained 2 A*, 1A and 1 B, going on to read History at the University of York.

Rebecca Cameron, Lucy Collins, Carys Dally and Laura Smolenski shone in Biology, all gained A* in Biology and each gained full marks in one paper. Hannah Collier achieved the same success in History and Lucy Collins repeated her success in Physics as well, while Bethany Voller did the same in Psychology. These grades, combined with the achievements of their peers allow the school to be justly proud of the results. Overall our grades ensured that we are among the top quartile of schools in terms of value added nationwide.

Mention should also be made to the Sixth formers that completed their EPQs. Well done to Hannah Collier, Sangeeta Rijal, Lily Beckett, Lucy Collins, Emma Hebb, Holly Smith, Laura Smolinski and Saskia Vince who achieved outstanding results in the Extended Project Qualification: 6A*s and 2As. Their essays on topics as diverse as Imperialism in the Middle East and Colour Perception in Humans were excellent and their command of their subjects is impressive. This qualification is extremely well-regarded by universities - completion of the EPQ shows commitment, engagement and a love of learning.

Our GCSE results were similarly pleasing. Despite the national drop in results, Farnborough Hill saw no such reduction. 25% of all grades were A*; 58% were A* – A, and 87% A* to B. An amazing 18 girls achieved A* and A in all their grades. With results like this sustained year on year, it is little wonder that in January of this year Farnborough Hill was ranked second place for independent schools in the Daily Telegraph's GCSE league tables.

The government has recently introduced a new measure for educational attainment which replaces the traditional 5 A* to C measurement. The measure is called Progress 8 and is designed to measure a student's progress across a raft of subjects from Year 7 to their GCSE results. Independent schools do not have to report their statistics, but we are delighted to be able to say that 2016's GCSE results place the school in the top 5% in the country based upon the value added score measured by Progress 8.

Scholarships

Linked very closely to successes in national examinations in terms of academic excellence and potential for further success are school scholarships. Recipients of the 2016 Sixth Form scholarships are, Emily Angell, Catriona Flesher, Imogen Usherwood, Lucy Edgar and Paige Knight - these were awarded on the basis of academic success in a challenging examination. Later in the year Rosie Whittle, Catherine Hynes, Hannah Macdonald, Madeline Wigley, Jessica Stinton, Abigail Cook and Megan Pawley joined their peers when they were awarded Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Sports & Farnborough Hill Old Girls' Association scholarships and Sixth Form awards. These awards go some way to demonstrating the breadth and depth of talent within the school body. Further academic scholarships were awarded in the summer to girls on the grounds of their GCSE results - Katy An, Jessica Peachey and Alice Watson. It is a great pleasure to recognise all these pupils and we very much hope that this recognition will give confidence and the conviction for each girl to realise their talents in the years to come.

School Awards

It is appropriate and right to acknowledge the work that the Sixth Form do, and in particular the UVlith as they act as role models to our younger pupils. Their commitment, enthusiasm and approach to life have lasting effects on the school and go towards continuing the ethos established over a century ago. Much has changed since then but not the central tenet of respect and educating the whole person.

UVI students take on leadership roles throughout the school – working with departments, year groups, teams and ensembles. This whole year team is ably led by the Head and Deputy Head Girl and so Amelia Freeman and Eleanor Selby are worthy of recognition. I would also like to extend my thanks to this current year's Head Girl, Anna Martinovic and her Deputy Olivia Pockett for all their efforts and enthusiasm.

The centrality of chaplaincy and the spiritual life of the school is apparent through both the liturgical celebrations that take place, and also through the celebrations of events special to the school community. Key moments to mention include the refounding of the Youth Alpha group, the energy gained from the school retreat week in February, and the Thanksgiving Service on the retirement of Sarah Buckle. I should also mention the funeral of Sr Teresa Hawkins – a much-loved member of the RCE community. Dom Cuthbert Brogan, Abbot of Farnborough Abbey, celebrated the Requiem Mass. This was a beautiful and fitting celebration of a life devoted to God and service to the school.

Sports

School sports develops from strength to strength; during the Summer holidays our netball and hockey teams represented the school on a 10 day Sports Tour to Sri Lanka. This experience was invaluable to the girls, building their skills further, but also giving them a wonderful cultural insight.

Meanwhile closer to home 15 pupils attended the GSA "Girls Go Gold Conference". Olympic medallists including Katarina Johnson Thompson, Sally Gunnell and Amy Williams addressed the audience and inspired our pupils.

Farnborough Hill talent is never in question, but the breadth and variety is quite something. However for the purpose of this report I will focus mostly on the achievements of the girls in Year 10 and above last year.

National Level

Lucy Pygott won a gold medal in the National Road Relays in Birmingham. Emma Wilson, Ella Barker and Amelie Prevost-Snell competed in the British Schools Modern Biathlon Championships in March.

Holly Cookson won a gold medal at the British Rowing Championships in July in the double scull event, while Emma Wilson represented Great Britain at the Biathle U15 World Championships held in Austria and came 2nd.

Other significant talent being fostered include:

In Cricket Alisha Windeatt and Catherine Evans-Wiggins were both selected for the Under 16 team to represent the North Hampshire District. At County Cricket level Providence Cowdrill was selected for the Under 17 & Senior Women's team. Providence this year played for the Senior Women winning the double, becoming Royal London Division 3 Champions and also being promoted in their T20 division.

In Cross country we have enjoyed great success. Our U15 and U17 teams won their District Cross-Country events, this combined with the success of our younger pupils, meant that Farnborough Hill made a clean sweep of district competitions – never before achieved.

Athletics is yet another area of real talent.

In the Senior District Athletics competition we performed very well. Isabella Bretherton in the 80m hurdles was champion, 2nd in Long Jump; runner-up for Best Track performance. Chloe Wells, was 2nd in 200m and 3rd in Javelin. Isabella Rainier came 2nd in 1500m. Aila Patidar was 3rd in Triple Jump. Our U17 Relay team of Isabella Bretherton, Chloe Wells, Aila Patidar and Katherine Manicom became District Champions. Isabella Bretherton and Aila Patidar went on to represent the District at the County Championships and came 2nd and 5th respectively in the 80m hurdles and triple jump.

Hockey always a mainstay of sport at Farnborough Hill, and never more so with the example of Alex Danson at the forefront of our minds is also a great mine of talent. No doubt the all-weather Alex Danson pitch facility, now on site, has helped to raise standards.

Our **rounders** teams are also enjoying success - Year 10 team were District Champions

As the **netball** season drew to a close the position of Farnborough Hill's teams was significant, demonstrating the depth and breadth of skill as well as the energy invested in this sport at school. A particular highlight was the fact that the Year 10 team was runner-up in the district League.

Other Achievements

As our minds turn to the outdoors. We congratulate Hannah Martin and Leah Hogg for their achievement in completing the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award - this is a valuable and well-regarded qualification requiring dedication, service and grit to achieve. We also congratulate the 42 pupils who have completed their first stage and achieved the Bronze certificate. We look forward to their continuation with the award scheme – one day receiving their gold qualification at Buckingham Palace.

Other significant expeditions and trips include the summer expedition to Southern India. 25 pupils, ably supported by 4 members of staff embarked upon a 3 week hike and community aid project. This trip tested the girls in a variety of ways, but drew out their resilience, teamwork skills and sense of community.

Earlier in the year the Classics department arrived in Italy with 83 students! This was a tremendous experience for the girls as they visited Pompeii, Herculaneum and Rome, and the logistics involved in organising are not to be underplayed.

While a smaller, but no less significant trip was undertaken to Auschwitz by Lily Beckett and Katie Fretwell. They told of their experiences and raised awareness within the school of the sorrows of the Holocaust.

Mention must also be made of the wonderful experiences available to the girls within school, in terms of fostering their love of learning and inspiring an inquisitive nature.

The **European Debate** held last year in school so apposite given the referendum of 23 June was exciting and thought-provoking. Imogen Usherwood and Catriona Flesher chaired the debate on the question of whether to remain in the EU. It was a highly charged and exciting discussion, with outside experts adding to the discourse.

The result: – overwhelmingly Farnborough Hill wished to remain in the European Union....there is no voter apathy here!

More recently we welcomed **Sir Gerald Howarth MP for Aldershot** to school. He was interviewed by members of the **F'Hill Radio team** and they benefitted greatly from the opportunity to practise their journalistic skills in this way.

The students have also had the opportunity to learn from and talk with **Julie Etchingam**, political journalist and ITV News at Ten broadcaster, as well as **Dr Ashok Jansari**, an eminent cognitive neuropsychologist.

Communication – a key transferable skill that is always a strong suit of Farnborough Hill girls. This point is made most clearly by considering the achievements of several of our current Upper Sixth. The **former national champions of the English Speaking Union 2015** - Isobel Walter, Sophia Taylor and Isabella Embleton - turned their attention to the **Rotary contest** and won the local heat yet again this year. Throughout their career at school, each of the girls have competed many times with the following positions: Chairman – Isabella, Speaker – Sophia, and either Questioner or Vote of Thanks - Isobel, in contest after contest; bringing back trophy after trophy and putting us on the map of the public speaking world, as was mentioned by last year's guest speaker, Jane Easton, the Director General of the English Speaking Union.

The Upper School had a very successful year in extra-curricular Mathematics. In February, some girls in Years 9 – 11 took part in the **UK Mathematics Trust Intermediate Maths Challenge**; six girls were awarded a gold certificate, putting them in the top 6% of entrants nationally. Additionally, Abi Cook, Ciara Smith and Abi Terry were selected to compete in the Intermediate Kangaroo Challenge. Owing to her success in this event, Abi Terry was invited to be one of 40 girls nationally to attend the Summer School for Girls at the University of Oxford.

In the **scientific arena**- particular highlights include Lucy Collins achieving a Gold in the British Biology Olympiad, while Emily Bird and Ciara Smith had similar success in the British Biology Challenge. 13 girls took part in the British Physics Olympiad GCSE Challenge, 10 of these girls were commended, and Lucy Collins received a merit after taking the A2 Challenge in this subject.

Music

Musical extra-curricular activities have continued to develop. The Senior Choir has sung Evensong at both Salisbury Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral Oxford in the past year. Other key public events include fundraising concerts for the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice held in conjunction with the Salesian College, the choir taking part in the Secondary schools Music Evening in Fleet, and the swing band performing at Jagz Nightclub in Ascot. This alongside the excellent and beautiful work of performing at all school events, masses, plays, open days and so forth.

The level of pupil involvement is great and varied – 16 pupils achieved distinction in their ABRSM or equivalent exams last year – from oboe to saxophone and flute to trumpet – the musical life of the school is rich. Special mention goes to Bethany Daniels, she has been awarded an Associate Diploma in Musical Theatre Performance from the London College of Music.

Drama

The huge participation in extra-curricular drama is wonderful both in terms of the level of engagement and the sheer numbers of girls participating. This was most telling in the fact that the school performed, not one but two full scale productions last year. Barnum and Wind in the Willows. Barnum was the Senior School Production, and the show presented the audience with a hugely talented cast, jazz band and crew. The show provided a dazzling spectacle of high class singing, ballet and tap dancing, juggling and tightrope walking to name just a few. The show was double cast to ensure as many girls as possible were involved. Olivia Pockett and Isobel Walter played the lead role and deserve particular mention.

Other wonderful productions include the A level creative adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's The Giant's Necklace. This performance was physically dramatic, exciting yet tragic – a most moving piece of drama. Year 11 drama students performed six GCSE devised pieces, each was sensitively developed and engaging; thought-provoking in their unique ways.

Drama at Farnborough Hill is further nurtured through pupil participation in the Trinity Drama examination programme. We take great pride in the fact that all 57 girls entering for Trinity examinations achieved Distinctions.

Charity Events

House competitions allow the girls to shine in various ways. Talents and gifts that could sometimes go unnoticed are brought to the fore through fun and healthy competitive attitudes. The brainpower exerted in the revamped house quiz is one such example while so too is the talent show; where the school was entertained through acting, dancing, shadow wizardry and movie making. Master Chef, Farnborough Hill style was another not to be missed event – as was the Winnie the Pooh themed Fashion Show; in the end Becket were the overall victors. All these events and more build house spirit, unity, participation and a cohesion of which the school is justly proud.

We take charity and compassion very seriously, and work to support a variety of worthwhile causes. Everything from SHINE to supporting orphans in Sierra Leone to Book Aid International and CAFOD to Step by Step will be enthusiastically supported. In total, over £10,000 has been raised through the good works, enthusiasm and compassion of school members.

Not for charity, in the traditional sense but very much in aid of a good cause, I am delighted to report on the Young Enterprise initiative that goes from strength to strength at Farnborough Hill. Last year, Year 10 pupils established three companies, with 32 girls taking part. Laetus, Luna and Edition all sourced or produced gift items that were well-thought out and good sellers. The companies all achieved success, in terms of sales, product manufacturing, marketing themselves effectively and presenting well at trade-fairs. A particular highlight was that Laetus was awarded the runner-up trophy for the best trade stand at a fair held in Farnborough. While Edition was awarded the Best Company Report and Best Financial Management at the Young Enterprise Final held in Basingstoke, they also went on to scoop the winner's award in the Hampshire County Final.

Staff Leavers and New Staff

2015-16 undoubtedly was a fine year for the school, but sadly and inevitably for the school several members of staff reached the end of their professional life with the school. We acknowledge and thank Mrs Cathy Dales (Assistant Head – Head of Sixth Form), Mrs Helena Rix (Head of RE), Mrs Susan Gregory (Teacher of French), Mrs Davina Robinson (Director of Drama), Mr Philip Butler (Teacher of French & Classics), Mr Steven Roy (Part-Time Teacher of Latin), Mrs Suzanne Cahalane (Examinations Officer), Mrs Christine Wilding (Matron), Mrs Danielle Robinson (Admissions Assistant) and Mrs Julie Poulain and Mrs Elisa Fashola (MFL Assistants) for their tireless commitment to the school; with Sarah Buckle deserving of particular mention and my personal thanks for leaving the school in such good order and for inducting me with such integrity and wisdom.

We welcomed a new band of teaching staff; in April Mrs Maria Davy (RE) and Mr Craig McCready (Assistant Head - Head of Sixth Form) and in September - Mr Tinu Kurian (Maths), Mr Emanuele Maccherini (Classics), Mrs Ludivine Fitzwater (French), Mrs Claire Peilow (Drama), Mr Taylor Thompson (Music), Mr Nicholas White (Business), Mrs Jane Nash (Economics). On the support staff team Mrs Nicola Walker and Mrs Frances Clark (Matrons), Mrs Charlotte Barlow (Examinations Officer), Miss Charlotte Considine (Admissions & Marketing Assistant), Mrs Paulina Bravo de Amnesti (MFL Assistant) and Mrs Melanie Mitchell (Administration Assistant).

To conclude, I have reported on the successes and achievements of our pupils last year. I have given you a taste of life at Farnborough Hill – this is not the definitive list, rather a flavour of the level of dedication, academic rigour and verve for life that is witnessed daily here.

The energy and ambition shown is derived from personal qualities but also by the encouragement and support given from family and staff. This really is a team effort and I thank every one of our guests and staff for the work and support you give, as we all together engage in this most important of tasks – educating the next generations. The staff are tireless in their ambitions and commitment to the girls in our care – I give my heartfelt thanks for their passion.

As the Sisters of Christian Education prepare to celebrate the 200th year of their foundation, we consider their order's special charism – to educate the whole person. I hope you will agree that this still is very much the order of the day in 2016. Our future at Farnborough Hill is tied fundamentally to our strong heritage and the wonderful example we have been given by the sisters. As we turn next week to celebrate Community Feast Day and recognise the fact that the order is 199 years in existence we remember the unstinting devotion to service and the utter focus on educating the whole person that the sisters have had both in the past and today, their and indeed our belief in the gifts and talents of all remains, as does our joy in playing our part in fostering achievement, compassion and integrity in the young people of our school.

Alexandra Neil
Head, Farnborough Hill
November 2016