



OLD CATERHAMIAN'S  
ASSOCIATION

## **OLD CATERHAMIAN'S ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Monday 1 March 2021**

### **HEADMASTER'S REPORT**

It has been a remarkable year in all respects. I wonder what future generations of Old Caterhamians, or indeed future leaders of the School, will make of the observation that, for large periods of the past twelve months we have been an incredibly successful virtual school.

For the entirety of the summer term 2020 and the majority of the spring term 2021 we have had no pupils physically in school (except for the children of key workers and some boarders). We have taught our pupils virtually across a range of time zones and to great effect.

As challenging as the past twelve months have been for all of us, the School has flourished. Our pupil numbers increased at the start of the academic year and the year ahead looks even stronger. Our pupils have continued to find academic and co-curricular success and our Sixth Form leavers all achieved the grades and destinations they wanted, even if their first year of Higher Education has been significantly disrupted. Individual pupils have continued to find elite representation, success and involvement in academic and co-curricular pursuits.

At the beginning of the pandemic our aim as a school was threefold – to ensure that our pupils continued their education uninterrupted, that we provided a focal point for the entirety of the Caterham community at a time of great dislocation and that we did all we could to keep as many families with us at the School through the economic challenges of the pandemic. We have achieved all three of these things.

Our prowess as a digitally innovative and confident school has really come to the fore during the pandemic. We have used our expertise not only to support and sustain our own pupils but also to support pupils in local primary and secondary schools – helping to close the digital divide that has so clearly opened up over the past year. The pandemic has shone a harsh light on the inequalities that exist within educational provision in the UK and the school is working hard to support those

whose life chances will have been irreparably harmed by the pandemic. In collaboration with local maintained schools we have created the East Surrey Learning Partnership to support the ambition and achievement of pupils in all local schools. This has involved Caterham School supporting pupils, parents and teachers in local schools through teaching, training and resources.

It has been one of the great sources of pride to me that our community has, in all respects, looked outwards during this pandemic. Our community has come together to support our local Primary Care Network in the early days of the pandemic through the provision of PPE, local NHS charities through fundraising activities, volunteering as part of the vaccination programme and much more. This speaks to the fundamental and foundational values of this school and our strong belief in the power of active community.

We have also made great strides this year with regard to Diversity and Inclusion at the School. Our pupil population is increasingly (and excitingly) diverse – the benefits of having different perspectives in our classrooms can only be of value to our pupils in an increasingly interconnected and global community. Our Transformational Bursary campaign is a key aspect of this – and I am grateful to the OCA for the support it is giving to this initiative. We are delighted that, for the first time ever we have a Looked After Child at the school as a result of the campaign. Over the past two years we have admitted an additional five pupils into the School who, due to their backgrounds and not their ability, would never have had the opportunity of a Caterham education. Together we are changing lives. There is much more to do and I would ask that, in addition to the support of the OCA, we all work to increase the pool of supporters for this campaign.

The OCA has also been at the forefront of our creation of a Shadow Board to inform the thinking of the School from a different perspective. The Shadow Board comprises young members of the OCA (between the ages of 18 and 30) who will help the Trustees of the School as they map out the strategic direction of the School over the next five to ten years. We are the first school in the UK to have a Shadow Board and I am hugely grateful to the OCA Committee in particular for supporting and driving this initiative.

I was also very grateful to a number of active and engaged OCs who made contact with me during the summer in relation to the Black Lives Matter campaign. These former pupils were great advocates for diversity in its' widest sense and have since helped our thinking about how our school should respond. Diversity and inclusion is a key strategic priority for the School.

Academically the School remains as one of the top co-educational schools in the country with our A level results at 70% A\*-A at A level last summer and the 'average' pupil in the Fifth Year achieving ten GCSEs at grade 8. More importantly, we also are leading the way in the development of a curriculum which genuinely prepares pupils for life beyond school, and in demonstrating the power of integrating technology successfully into the classroom.

Lockdown has provided the context and opportunity for the School to develop a much more innovative classroom experience for our pupils. The ability to bring diverse voices and perspectives into a classroom virtually has enriched the learning

experience for our pupils – whether that be our Family Philosophy Friday with parents and pupils discussing moral and ethical issues or sharing our virtual classrooms with pupils from the London Academy of Excellence. The opportunity for pupils to engage with and develop their learning in creative ways has also been a huge bonus throughout lockdown. We will be building on this learning culture in the year ahead. We have a once in a generation opportunity to rethink the learning experience of our pupils and shape the classroom experience of the future. Our national leadership in Wellbeing was recognised last year with Sarah Griffiths, our Deputy Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing) being shortlisted for the i25 awards, as one of the top 25 innovators in UK education.

An unexpected but welcome consequence of lockdown and virtual schooling has been the way in which we have been able to connect with our wider community like never before. We have worked hard to create a virtual (rather than remote) community and our 'Caterham Connected' programme has drawn together Old Cats, pupils and parents from all over the globe for webinars, quizzes, wine tastings and all the usual school celebrations such as the Carol Service and Remembrance Sunday. We intend to continue with this virtual programme even when we are able to meet physically. One of the highlights of the year for me was seeing our Sixth Form pupils reach out to Old Cats who are over 80 and make weekly phone calls to them to ensure that no-one became isolated.

I would also like to thank the OCA for their support of the Innovation Award (which has links to our school curriculum). We are now entering the third year of this award in which pupils at the school are invited to submit innovative solutions to real world problems. The winners last year were two Upper Sixth pupils who created an algorithm linked to charitable purposes. It was an incredible feat of design and technical ability and may well have commercial relevance for the pupils.

My thanks to the OCA also for the support they showed to Andrew Patterson earlier this year. I am delighted that Andrew will be beginning to spend more of his time focusing on Old Cat issues next year. I have asked him to build and develop a more regular diet of OCA sport. We have a strong presence through the OCSC and the rugby club and the alumni golf association is making strong progress but I would like us to compete more regularly in some of the more regular alumni competitions that other schools compete in.

Finally, my thanks as ever to the Committee. This has been an incredibly challenging year for all. It would have been understandable for members of the Committee to have focused elsewhere. However, the Committee has remained committed to supporting the School, supporting the wider OCA network and supporting our pupils. I am very grateful indeed to the President, the Vice-Presidents and the wider committee for all that they do and all the time they give to the school. I would also like to record my thanks to Annie Hebden, our Alumni Officer, for the fantastic work she has done this year developing our OCA engagement.