

Queen Elizabeth's School

The Elizabethan

NEWSLETTER TO PARENTS

AUTUMN 2019



LEADERS: QE is the top-ranked state school nationwide for the second year running in the *Sunday Times Parent Power* survey, thanks to another set of extremely strong GCSE and A-level results.

From the Headmaster

Dear Parents,

The Autumn Term started with Queen Elizabeth's School in good heart following another set of exceptional exam results.

QE has subsequently been named the country's leading state school for the second consecutive year by the *Sunday Times's* respected Parent Power survey, a position we have now held for five of the past seven years. In fact, Parent Power revealed that not only were we the top state school, but were among a mere handful of top-performing schools of any stripe, selective or comprehensive,

state or fee-paying. Nationwide, just four independent schools matched QE's 95.7% figure for the proportion of A-levels passed at A*-B. Remarkable as our boys' performance this summer certainly was, there is a further aspect that is not apparent from the league tables, and that is the extraordinary long-term consistency in our A-level results: 2019 was the 14th consecutive year in which the A*-B figure has remained above the 95% threshold.

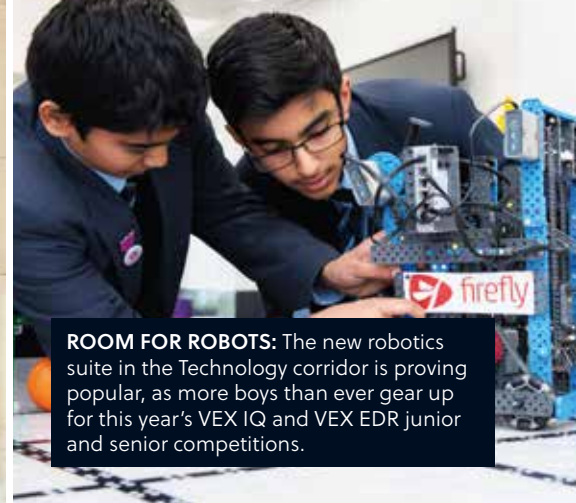
This extended record of achievement thus goes back to the headmastership of my immediate predecessor, Dr John Marincowitz. But John would, I am sure, agree with me that the platform for our

exceptional results was built under the leadership of his predecessor, Eamonn Harris (Headmaster 1984-1999), the sad news of whose passing we received last month. Through a combination of clear-sighted vision and indefatigable resolve, Eamonn and his team utterly transformed this School, as the separate article on p3 sets out. All of us at QE today owe him an immense debt of gratitude. The School is planning a service of remembrance in the spring.

The ongoing programme of improvement to our facilities begun during Eamonn's tenure continues. Our project to build a new Music School is on track, with the



TOP TEAM: Ivin Jose, centre, is the 2020 School Captain, pictured with his senior team. They are among a record 114 new School Officials.



ROOM FOR ROBOTS: The new robotics suite in the Technology corridor is proving popular, as more boys than ever gear up for this year's VEX IQ and VEX EDR junior and senior competitions.

demolition of the Mayes Building to clear the site completed successfully over the summer. We are currently working on plans to fit out the building, including consideration of interior design. A full tender process for the project will be launched in the spring so that work can start in July next year, once public examinations are over.

This has been a busy term for Music, and for the arts in general, with a full programme of concerts and performances. The boys participated very successfully in the Shakespeare Schools Festival, performing *The Merchant of Venice*. Such events are tremendously important not only in enhancing School life in general but also in the development of confident, rounded individuals.

I was recently honoured to be invited to give a speech at the Girls' Schools Association's Annual Conference for Heads, where I explained our emphasis on creating a culture that nurtures free-thinking scholarship. Of course, if we are to sustain such a culture, we must not rest on our laurels. This term's

consultation survey among parents was carried out with the future very much in mind. I can reveal that 924 families responded – 69% of the total. I am told by RSAcademics, the independent company who ran the survey and who are widely experienced in such schools consultations, that this is an excellent response rate. My thanks go to all who took part. RSAcademics are working on their analysis and will present their findings to me and

the Senior Leadership Team at the end of term. The School will then be in a position to share the outcomes in the New Year. These will inform our thinking as we move into establishing priorities for 2020–2024. That period includes the 450th anniversary of the School, which we celebrate in 2023, and is personally significant for me, since within this time I will mark a decade of my headship and two decades since I first began working at QE.

The boys have also been giving their views this term, with 962 pupils taking part in a voluntary pupil survey – a 76% response rate. Analysis of the results shows they gave, as we would hope, a very positive endorsement of what they experience in School. We have, though, also been able to identify themes for further exploration, with conversations taking place at our pupil conferences with peer representatives from each

form group to tease out further details useful to us in developing the QE experience still further.

We are now in the last year of the current School plan, covering 2016–2020. It is still proving highly relevant; we continue to actively pursue its aims. For example, it was with *Enhancing future prospects* in mind – one of the plan's four priority areas – that we launched our inaugural university mock interview evening. This was well received by pupils and incredibly well supported by alumni, who also held their own reunion event at the School

on the same night. The pressure of an interview situation is useful, since the boys have to formulate their ideas and then articulate them, just as they do at our regular academic symposia with leading girls' schools, where participants are exposed to the cut and thrust of informed debate.

QE Connect, our new online community for Old Elizabethans, has been launched as part of our strategy to harness all the good work done by alumni. There has been a good initial response and we have many plans to develop it. People from across the wider Elizabethan community also seem to be enjoying interacting with our new QE Instagram and Facebook accounts.

Our new catering arrangements have met with widespread approval from the boys, who appreciate the additional choice and better presentation, the theme days and food demonstrations. The food served now has improved environmental credentials in response to feedback: there is reduced packaging and improved sorting of waste, while our new caterers, Holroyd Howe, are diligently making ethical choices with regards to their own suppliers and the food products that they sell here.

My best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas holiday and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Neil Enright
Headmaster



Redoubtable: Eamonn Harris, Headmaster 1984–1999

*QE's remarkable successes in the 21st century, such as its **Sunday Times Parent Power** triumphs, simply would not have been possible without the huge contribution of reforming Headmaster Eamonn Harris, says current Head Neil Enright. Mr Harris died last month at the age of 76.*

In fact, without Mr Harris, the School may not have survived at all, for, as he learned soon after being appointed, QE, then a failing comprehensive, was slated for closure by the local authority.

Undaunted, he set about transforming the School in almost every aspect, from staff training to standards of uniform. Determined that QE win control of its own finances and admissions, he fought tenaciously to take advantage of new freedoms for schools: in 1989, QE gained Grant-Maintained Status, wresting its funding from the council, and in 1994, it won the right to apply a selective admissions policy once again.

Awards and an 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted followed. When Mr Harris retired in 1999, he left behind him a thriving grammar school with strong examination results and a rapidly growing national reputation.

UK's best-performing school – again!

Queen Elizabeth's topped the national tables in the 2019 *Sunday Times Parent Power* survey to rank as the UK's leading state school for the second consecutive year.

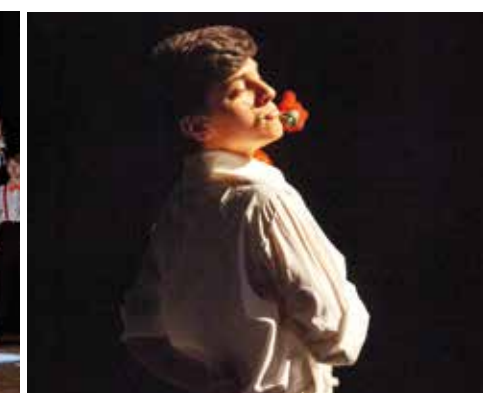
QE faced tough competition, but came in ahead of Wilson's School in Wallington, and local girls' school, The Henrietta Barnett School, in third place. The influential survey is based on A-level and GCSE results. One statistic which illustrates the extent of the School's progress, even by its own high standards, is that this summer, 79.4% of GCSEs taken at QE were awarded A* (or the numerical equivalent), a figure which is a new School record and is exactly 30% higher than the proportion recorded ten years ago.

Congratulating both boys and staff, Headmaster Neil Enright said: "This is a quite remarkable achievement and I feel tremendously proud to have the privilege of leading this School." Although several new schools in the capital did well, *Parent Power's* editor, Alistair McCall, noted that for QE, founded in 1573, "age is no barrier to success". News of the achievement quickly sparked huge interest online, with tens of thousands of views recorded for the School's social media accounts.

Shakespeare: shocking...and relevant

QE's cast tackled the "shocking and relevant" anti-Semitic storyline of *The Merchant of Venice* head-on in this year's Shakespeare Schools Festival, reports Assistant Head Crispin Bonham-Carter.

Led by Year 13's Rivu Chowdhury, as Shylock, and Sathujan Manmatharajah, as Antonio, the mixed-age cast won praise from SSF organisers at Finchley's Arts Depot.





Richest of repertoires

Music at QE, from the hits of indie band Saint Motel to the beauty of Bach...

This year's news that QE's new £3.5m Music School will go ahead following a successful bid for Government funding was greeted with joy throughout the Elizabethan community – and with some relief in the Music department!



Composer & sound designer

Sergio Ronchetti (OE 2004-2011), who delivered a careers lecture to senior boys, first worked for four years as a professional musician, only then going to Goldsmiths, where he took a First in Music. Fascinated by the gaming scene, he is now a freelance composer and sound designer.

Extra-curricular Music is booming at the School, and it can sometimes be a challenge to find rehearsal space for the ensembles or the 160-strong School Choir. The two-storey centre will solve that problem.

Yet while the strength of extra-curricular Music at QE is quite evident, what is perhaps less widely known is its sheer variety. There are more than 20 different ensembles, playing almost every conceivable genre, from jazz and rock to classical music in both the western and Indian traditions. Of this term's four major music events, the first two alone involved 14 ensembles and more than a dozen solos and duets.

Headmaster Neil Enright said: "Although we offer Music at GCSE

and A-level, we recognise that many keen and talented musicians do not pursue it as a curriculum subject in the Upper School or at university.

"Therefore, we are committed to offering exciting extra-curricular Music opportunities open to all year groups: through these, boys deepen their appreciation of Music and learn 'soft skills' such as time-management, creative thinking and team-working. What's more, they have a lot of fun, while acquiring an ability that can serve them throughout their lives."

Special events broaden boys' horizons. During a body percussion workshop last summer led by visiting experts, the whole of Year 7 found out what exciting sounds they could produce simply by stamping their feet on the floor,



Ruth Partington

Director of Music

Miss Partington joined QE this term from Canford School, Dorset. Before that, she was Head of Music at St Stephen's International School, Thailand. She has a first in Music from Manchester, a professional performance qualification from the Royal Northern College of Music and is a clarinettist and saxophonist, who also plays the piano and loves conducting. She has performed with ensembles including the Hallé Orchestra and Royal Shakespeare Company.

clapping hands and patting their chests. Pupils benefit by learning from industry-leading figures, such as composer Sir George Benjamin, who recently led performance and composition workshops for senior musicians. The guest organist at the Carol Service and at the Founder's Day Service is Richard Morrison, *The Times'* chief music critic.

QE has a strong record of leavers pursuing Music in higher education and professionally, but here again the paths followed differ. Old Elizabethan, Mike Ajayi (OE 1998-2005) runs his own indie music record label, AMF Records, part of the global Universal Music Group. By contrast, sixth-former Drew Sellis has won a highly sought-after place as an Organ Scholar at Jesus College, Cambridge, for next year.



From the archives: 'unswerving loyalty to the School'



The Heard Building, opened in 1998, was one of the very first to be funded by FQE. Built as a Sixth Form centre, it was remodelled and extended for the English department in 2016-2017.

Important as it is, the man after whom it was named, Luxton Robert 'George' Heard, is more important still. An alumnus (1927-1936) who in the mid-1980s was President of the Old Elizabethans Association,

he served from 1988-1998 as Chairman of Governors, working closely with Headmaster Eamonn Harris. In a hugely transformative period of the School's history, they strove together to achieve Grant-Maintained (GM) Status and re-establish QE as a grammar school.

The 1936 School Captain, Mr Heard was a First XV rugby player, editor of the *Elizabethan* magazine and leading light in the Dramatic Society. A local newspaper reviewed his appearance in a female role thus: "Heard...acted with an easy naturalness, which was entirely convincing."

He was described by his Headmaster, E H Jenkins, as "an excellent school skipper... [who]...carried nearly all School offices... on his shoulders extremely competently".

After a successful career in engineering, he was brought on to the Governing Body as one of the businesspeople required for the governance of 'opted-out' GM schools. Always resolute, he could be combative, telling Barnet's Conservative councillors to resign if they supported a report critical of QE's GM plans, pointing out that "opting out is a central plank of [national] Conservative education policy".

Like Mr Jenkins before him, Mr Harris quickly recognised his qualities and wrote at the time of "his huge capacity for work and his unswerving loyalty to the School".

Mr Heard died in 2009. He is immortalised in a bust by then Head of Art Ashley West, displayed in the Heard Building.



Town & country

GCSE geographers enjoyed the chance to get their hands dirty in Epping Forest while Year 13 took in the colourful urban cool of Brick Lane and Spitalfields on their own field trip. Year 11 made measurements in Loughton Brook, while the A-level Geography students, including Kieran Dhrona, pictured here, explored how life is changing in East London.

Future planning



Old Elizabethans turned out in force for two major School events to help pupils plan their futures.

First came the inaugural University Mock Interview Evening, at which almost 40 alumni and friends of the School put Year 13 boys on the spot, with most conducting four half-hour interviews on their own areas of expertise during the event.

As well as the 35 different companies and organisations represented on the main floor of the Careers Convention, this year's event had an increased number of talks – with standing room only in many of them.

Time to perform!

Welcoming some 50 Year 13 pupils for a joint academic symposium with North London Collegiate School, Assistant Head Crispin Bonham-Carter stressed the importance of performance at such

events. Afterwards, Nisha Mayer, Head of Academic Enrichment, said: "The students were highly engaged and articulate, the discussions constructive and purposeful."

Broughton triumph

Battling it out in front of an audience of 800, Broughton House saw off tough competition from fellow finalists Underne to retain their title as QIQE champions. For the *University Challenge*-style quiz, the teams, drawn from Years 7-10, had to be quick with their 'starters for ten'. They could then confer on their bonus questions to rapidly amass a score.

Faith ambassadors win praise

Following presentations to Barnet's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, Faith Ambassadors Sena Lai-Fujiwara and Vignesh Rajiv, of Year 9, and Saifullah Shah, of Year 13, were congratulated by the Mayor, Councillor Caroline Stock, and praised afterwards in a letter to the Headmaster from Barnet SACRE Chair Kevin McSharry and consultant Dr Anna Sallnow.



Dylan's drawing on display

A sketch that Year 10 pupil Dylan Domb started in his Art class and completed at home won him a prize in a competition run by the Henry Moore Foundation. Dylan's drawing of his own Moore-inspired sculpture was displayed at the Moore visitor centre in Perry Green, Hertfordshire.

Student Problems? No problem!

Year 12 Further Mathematics student James Tan has become the first QE pupil for many years – and possibly ever – to win a prize from the prestigious Mathematical Association, after submitting solutions to the *Student Problems* in the association's journal.

Politics in practice

A-level Politics students braved Brexit demonstrators – for and against – and tried their hand at law-making during an education workshop on a visit to the Houses of Parliament. They also saw PM Theresa May make her first Commons speech since stepping down.



Fund-raising ride

Madhi Dhirani, of Year 13, joined 35 other cyclists from the Stanmore Jafferys community group on a hilly 56-mile London-to-Brighton ride, raising more than £31,000 for WF-Aid – a charity providing clean water for families in developing countries.



Centenary rugby

QE took on St Albans in a special match marking 100 years since the first encounter between the two schools. The game in 1919, which QE won, was St Albans' very first fixture, while QE had itself only been playing the sport for a few years. At the centenary match, which St Albans won 36-19, the Headmaster presented St Albans with this photo of the Elizabethan team from the following season, the earliest rugby team photo that either school possesses.

Courting favour

A Sixth Form team won both plaudits and votes from judges in the Empire Mock Trial – a legal competition in New York for pupils from leading schools worldwide.

The nine boys had to grapple with the US legal system – including adapting to the use of objections – but rose to the challenge well, reports their coach, Jack Robertson, Head of Philosophy, Religion and Society. "Judges and observers were impressed with the professional manner in which they conducted themselves,



the persuasive force and clarity of their speeches, and the incisive manner of their examinations." Saifullah Shah, of Year 13, added: "Beyond its academic rigour, the entire Empire experience was unforgettable, largely due to the remarkable kindness of our fellow competitors."

Herzlich willkommen!

Twenty-seven Year 10 boys welcomed their partners from Friedrich von Bodelschwingh Gymnasium (grammar school), in Bielefeld on the return leg of the German exchange.

The visitors took part in specially tailored lessons alongside their hosts and enjoyed activities including a barn dance, a boat trip to Greenwich and a quiz devised for them by QE sixth-formers.



Joshua's just perfect

Although only in Year 8, Joshua John won QE's Years 8-11 Chess Tournament with a perfect score. Teacher in charge of chess, Geoff Roberts, said: "This is a very rare feat, so Joshua is an especially worthy champion, having won all six of his games against a high-quality field."



Queen
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School

FOUNDED IN 1573

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