

End of term reflections

As we reach the end of the spring term, it's a pleasure to reflect on the achievements, adventures, and milestones of our Exeter School community. After many years here, it's always inspiring to see the energy and creativity of our pupils, and whilst serving as Acting Head, it feels especially poignant to celebrate all they have accomplished.

This year I can say with even more confidence that Exeter School remains true to its core principles, remains firmly rooted in our proud tradition while also being humble, ambitious and forward-looking. Above all, we are a deeply human school: a place where staff, pupils and parents work in close partnership, and where pupils are at the centre of every decision we make. As many of the stories in this edition show, an Exeter School education is about far more than grades alone. Alumni remember friendships, challenges overcome, opportunities discovered and the confidence gained from trying something new.

We have always been a school of great character; but today we are more deliberate in how we celebrate and nurture this aspect of school life. Inside and outside of the classroom, in lessons and through our rich co-curricular programme in sport, music, drama, outdoor education, academic societies, the CCF and community partnerships, we aim to help every pupil discover and develop their individual strengths.

OE Major Rebecca Glover (2004-2013) returned to the school recently to talk about her experience rowing the Atlantic. She spoke of the importance of being able to stretch oneself further to achieve incredible, inspirational things, but how this was only possible because her team, her community had a culture that allowed them to fall back safely when they failed. To pick themselves up and go again. This is exactly what we culture at the school today.

Alongside our character education, we continue to innovate thoughtfully in the classroom through initiatives including careful integration of technology, including AI, and our 'shape of the week' project. This multi-year endeavour is now complete and come September 2026 we will have a new shape to the school day and a revised curriculum fit for the next decade. The main change to the day is the move to hour long lessons providing more focused learning time and fewer interruptions for teachers and pupils alike. This is not simply to help pupils succeed in examinations, though we are confident they will continue to do that very well, but to prepare them for an increasingly complex world. We want them to leave us not only qualified but equipped for the varied challenges of life beyond the school gates.

In my Acting Head role, I am also, of course, something of a warm-up act for Dr Adrian Rainbow, who will take up his headship this September. Adrian and I are in regular contact, and I know he is keen to get to know our alumni community. He looks forward to meeting many of you at school events in the years ahead and to becoming part of the continuing Exeter School story. Exeter School is a very strong position and yet, like all independent schools, we are navigating a changing landscape. Given the additional pressures some families are under, strengthening our bursary provision remains a key priority in the coming years. Bursaries have also been central to our mission and history. They enrich our community and change lives. I know personally how transformative education can be, and during my time at Exeter School I have seen first-hand the impact an Exeter School education can have on bursary-supported pupils. Many of you will have

heard the deeply sad news that Exeter Cathedral School, former school to many of you reading this and right on our doorstep, is closing its doors in its current form at the end of this academic year. We are pleased to be able to continue the rich choral tradition of musical excellence in Exeter through our support of the cathedral chorister programme, but the closure of a neighbouring community is not something we are celebrating.

One of the great pleasures of this role is seeing how quickly Old Exonians feel at home when they return to the school site. Buildings evolve, fashions change, but the sense of belonging endures. We are, as I write this, in the middle of the school prefect selection process. Here we ask all pupils applying a number of questions including: 'what does being an Exonian mean to you?'. I want to share one response.

For me the word Exonian means 'family' as we may not be related by blood, however we all have something in common tying us together...

Being an Exonian does not end at 4pm at the school gates; it means being a role model always and to be an upstanding member of society that anyone should be proud of, and for the school to be proud to call one of their own, whether still in uniform or not.

I could not have put it better myself, and I hope you feel this connection as you read through this edition. Thank you, as ever, for your continued support of the school and for remaining such an important part of the Exeter School family. Once an Exonian, always an Exonian.

- *Graham Bone*