



CHAIR OF GOVERNORS SPEECH  
SUMMER MEETING  
02 July 2011

Good morning and welcome to the Summer Meeting at Claremont Fan Court School! This is one of the most important events of the year and I am deeply honoured and privileged to present this very fine school to you on this day of great significance for all our pupils. Today is the day for **celebrating the successes** of the school, and, especially, the successes of your children who you – the parents and sometimes grandparents - have given into our care.

I am Addi Kather, the Chair of Governors and a former parent.

In my other – non Claremont Fan Court - life, I am an international Business Consultant, an Executive and Leadership Coach, and I run an Institute for Business Competence, Language and Cross Cultural Learning.

Just a week ago I had the great pleasure of watching the Upper Junior School production 'What a Knight'. The joy, commitment, dedication, excellence and potential which were very visible and expressed by the children, staff, parents and everybody involved with that production was really fantastic.

Not very long ago, the Senior School production 'The King and I' absolutely enthralled many people.

And then, just a couple of days ago, we celebrated the graduation of our Sixth Formers. It was so encouraging to see the joy and enthusiasm of these very fine young people who will be leaving our school soon to embark on their new life's journey.

That is what Claremont Fan Court School is all about. Potential, excellence, joy and commitment being brought to light!



Obviously, there is far more going on at our school beyond these kinds of very visible events, and you will see and hear more about them today.

For a few moments, however, I would like to share some thoughts with you about

**the Significance of Values in Education**

... and its implications for Claremont Fan Court School.

What do I actually mean?

Let me give you a practical example from my consultancy business.

A little while ago, for one of our internationally operating clients, we designed and conducted a training and development programme for their young, high potential professionals. One of the topics we included was on BUSINESS ETHICS.

The reactions we got when addressing this topic were extremely interesting – if not alarming. About 50% of each group we worked with saw absolutely no relevance at all of such a topic in their business life. The other 50% felt very relieved that we had included this topic in their development programme as it clearly met their needs.

All of them were very nice, highly intelligent young professionals, experts in their fields, specifically chosen for this high profile programme.

What was missing?

A solid foundation based on core values that provided direction, strength, confidence and stability beyond their expert knowledge in a very dynamic and continuously changing world.

We are living in a knowledge age. One often says we are a knowledge society. Our knowledge in many fields of life is growing with increasing tendency. On the other hand, the so-called effective half-life of knowledge – to use a technical term – is becoming shorter and shorter.

As a result, and thanks to modern Information Technology, we are faced with an abundance of data, with an increasing pace of life, with growing stress and tension at home and at work. People's lives often seem to be very materially driven.



How can we cope with such a development?

Are courses on time management, conflict resolving or emotional and social competencies sufficient to enable us to lead a happier and more peaceful life? I recently discovered that even a whole Department for 'Emotions Economy' was established at Cologne University.

All these activities cannot really provide the answer to the challenges outlined above!

The **Dalai Lama**, one of the most renowned political and religious leaders worldwide and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in his book 'Ancient Wisdom, Modern World – Ethics for the New Millennium' points out: "... ethical discipline, wholesome conduct and careful discernment are crucial ingredients for a meaningful, happy life." ... and he pleads that we should "...develop a sense of universal responsibility". (p. 167 ff).

Will that happen automatically or is his statement only relevant for Buddhists? Of course not!

Any educational institution cannot and must not just be a knowledge factory, focused on producing brilliant academic results, important as those may be. The example of the high potential professionals showed that the lack of a strong value base often goes hand in hand with disorientation, instability, frustration and critical conflicts.

Knowledge – if missing – we can buy. ... But can we buy values?

Knowledge is interchangeable. ... But can we - should we - change our values?

Providing knowledge, and more importantly, teaching how to acquire knowledge, should be one of the prime focus points of any educational organisation. However, **knowledge without values is vain**. Only a clear set of values will enable us, and our children, to transform knowledge into a meaningful, successful and happy life.

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At the Graduation Ceremony a couple of days ago we heard our Head Girl talk about “Character is Destiny”. How does that relate to Claremont Fan Court School?

As you know, the core values of Claremont Fan Court School are based on Christian Science principles. These core values are universal and stretch beyond religious, cultural, social and economic boundaries. **Mary Baker Eddy**, the founder of Christian Science pointed out: “All education should contribute to moral and physical strength and freedom” (MBE MiscWrit 240:11).

Our Character Qualities Programme is an integral part of the school’s curriculum. On a two-year cycle, each month a different Character Quality is promoted and discussed. For example, in June the Character Quality of the month was ‘Humility’ with focus on gratitude, selflessness, grace and inner strength. Such qualities are not just some kind of fuzzy and idealistic topic. **Jim Collins**, a worldwide recognised researcher in the business world, for example, describes in his bestselling book ‘Good to Great’ that **personal humility** is one of the most important qualities of top level, successful executives.

Humility also includes the ability and strength to be open and to listen to others, and to acknowledge the competence that is around us. As Governors and Leaders we have not always been good at doing so, but we are committed to applying a more open approach as we move forward and make progress. Practically speaking, we have started to introduce dialogue meetings both with staff and parents on an individual level as well as in teams in order to foster a better exchange of ideas, and we are intending to seek for additional opportunities to make better use of our joint competencies and experience.

I have also recently been asked what kind of school Claremont Fan Court will be in the future, and whether the ethos of the school is going to change.

Our **Mission** focuses on firm core values and high expectations, and it is our clear objective to create a culture where diversity, individual difference and achievements are celebrated in a caring and supportive environment. We are dedicated to developing the God given potential of each individual as it is stated in our Mission Statement. This ensures stability and continuity in times of change.



Let us also have a brief look at our **Vision** of the school that was jointly developed by the Key Leaders and Governors. In it we highlight that *Claremont Fan Court will be acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally for developing outstanding individuals who contribute positively to global society. And we continue that we will achieve this by being a high quality school of choice for those seeking to realise their potential as outlined in our mission statement.*

Of course, we will continue to further develop our values based education vision for the school.

Does that sound ambitious? Yes, it does.

Can we achieve it? Yes we certainly can!

... and how?

We are learning from our mistakes and we will recruit people with the best matching competencies and experience, and, of course, with a strong affinity to the Christian Science ethos and principles. For Deputy Head positions in the Senior and Junior School we have already successfully begun with such an improved process.

We will also better focus on providing direction, training and development opportunities for the staff in order to retain and promote the talents we have at our school.

All of this is not rocket science, but it is essential for providing the best education and leadership at Claremont Fan Court School. However, we can only achieve this if we are united in strength and work together, and so I would therefore like to invite you to join us on an exciting journey.

**Barack Obama**, the President of the United States, said in his speech to the UK Parliament in Westminster Hall on the 25<sup>th</sup> March of this year: *“... the example of our two nations says it is possible for people to be united by their ideals, instead of divided by their differences.”* The same clearly applies to us as well!



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Before I hand over, I would like to say THANK YOU ...

First of all to you, the **parents and grandparents**, for the trust and confidence you have shown to us by giving your children into our care. Without you, our school would not exist.

I would also like to thank all the members of the **PTA** for the effort and constructive support you have given and give to the school!

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to our **staff**, teachers, teaching assistants and to all those of you who work behind the scenes. It is your competence, commitment and compassion that makes Claremont Fan Court School a very special place.

A very special thanks goes to our **key leadership team** that is sitting behind me. Your tremendous loyalty, dedication and commitment to the school is truly outstanding. It is a joy and honour to work with you.

Finally, my dear **Fellow Governors and Council Members**. Thank you for giving up so much of your private time to support this very fine school. Thank you also so much for your kind support in helping me in my role as Chair of Governors.

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And now, let's celebrate the great accomplishments of the children!

Thank you very much!