

Headteacher's Proposed address to Parents

Open Evening 2020

Welcome to Cardinal Wiseman and thank you for coming, particularly those of you in Year 6.

As you visit different areas of the school this evening you will see fantastic learning and performance facilities. We have added to these over the last 18 months, building an all-weather flood lit playing field behind the school, and creating a large recreation area by the river – allowing outdoor sports and activities to take place during and after school - all year round.

But, of course, buildings and recreation spaces, while important, will not determine our children's futures nor will this be your first priority in choosing a school – so I'd like to focus on the areas that will shape those futures..... and why Cardinal Wiseman should be seriously considered as your school choice.

As I address these areas – please be assured that I speak not just as Headteacher here, but also as a parent.

A parent who grew up in Hanwell, attended Ealing schools, studied and worked abroad – returned and lives in a local parish and whose children have attended Ealing schools.

A parent whose expectations and concerns for my children are the same as your own – and I bring that perspective to work here each day – to ensure that every child at Cardinal Wiseman is given the attention, support, challenge and opportunities that I expect for my own children.

This outlook has directed a number of necessary changes we have made here in recent years, and those that we will continue to make in the future.

Cardinal Wiseman is a school of the local parishes, and we are fully conscious of our responsibility in supporting the spiritual growth of our children. Our chapel is placed in the centre of the school as the base to support this work.....but more importantly we have created an outstanding chaplaincy team – helped by local priests – who are supporting, influencing and inspiring our children in their faith development.

Cardinal Wiseman is a school with modern buildings – but traditional values and expectations, such as non-negotiable smart uniform and good manners – helping to provide the platform for the outstanding teaching and learning experienced by our students.

We are outward looking and work with other schools whether private, academies or comprehensives to benchmark our standards against theirs – to continue improving the provision we offer to our students. In addition, we have developed partnerships with global blue chip companies in banking, professional building services and television to enrich our curriculum – and to provide high quality work experience – as well as employment opportunities for our Year 13 students.

And – Cardinal Wiseman understands that examination grades are more important than ever – and certainly more rigorous than for many years. Examination grades are vital – but we know that we must prepare our children for life beyond education where leadership, team and communication skills, a strong work ethic and a profile that demonstrates a willingness to ‘get involved’ are just as important.

These features of the school are closely linked to the 5 areas where almost all of our work and resources are directed.

These are:

- **the ethos of the school - what we stand for.**
- **Pupil care and academic support.**
- **Academic standards**
- **Wider learning and extra-curricular opportunities**
- **And leadership**

Our ethos is simple, consistent and lived out every day. We are a catholic school community rooted in our motto “All things for Christ” on school blazers since 1959.

Since then we have seen the school develop through decades of migration to London.

Each wave of migration has been for the same reason – families seeking a better life for their children, as my parents did coming from Ireland in the 1950’s.....families from a variety of cultures and social backgrounds.....but firmly united through shared experiences, values, ambition for their children and above all by our shared faith.

So, by definition, we are an inclusive catholic school. If you go to mass each week, however quietly – and your parish priest agrees, you will rank high on our entry criteria. But however inclusive we wish to be, there were over 1300 applications for places last year. There have to be tie breakers in offering the places available.

Please read the entry criteria carefully – very carefully. Based on last year we were unable to place all students in category 3. If you are place in category 4 there is a risk attached to your application being successful. Below category 4 it is highly unlikely that we would be able to offer you a place.

I believe that the two greatest concerns for families moving to high school are the care and guidance that their children will experience – and academic standards.

Our priorities are the same as yours, and are the foundation for academic achievement. It is to ensure that our children are safe and happy – nurtured and challenged.

Work to ensure this starts in Year 6 when we liaise with primary schools and families to ensure a smooth transition for September's Year 7.

Those children will move into an outstanding atmosphere for learning where expectations are clear and disruption to lessons is extremely rare. Their integration to high school is handled with sensitivity as the children, and they are still children, adjust to the organisational demands of 12 teachers in different locations - and equipment for a much wider range of subjects. This sensitivity is necessary.....

because anxious children are not good learners – we're not a boot camp or an examination factory.

However strong the learning framework and no matter how well adjusted your children are – as they move through High school, they will at times need support, understanding, patience and love.... as they navigate difficult teenage years where new challenges and anxieties emerge ranging from peer pressure to online safety.

They will get that care here and we will love them. Our teachers have a fantastic record of working in partnership with families. Our online FROG facility has strengthened that partnership as parents can track their children's punctuality, homework and progress – and contact teachers immediately should concerns arise.

And parents will acknowledge that boundaries are important. Here that means adhering to our Code of Conduct. It sets out clear expectations around behaviour and uniform, and its consistent application is a major factor in the outstanding progress made by students here.

We know that young people will make mistakes, and we apply patience and understanding. But this has limits

and these are immediate if a student is bullied or deliberately hurt – or if a student prevents others from learning.

And if one of our students comes through the gates with either an illegal substance or potential object of harm it is their last day at Cardinal Wiseman. It is their last day.

You will be anxious for your child to attend a school where expectations are high and students achieve.

Our curriculum is planned carefully to develop enthusiastic, inquisitive and eventually independent learners – without disregarding the important foundation of facts and subject knowledge – particularly in English, Maths and the Sciences. **However, unlike an increasing number of schools we are determined not to slash teaching time in the Arts, Music, Drama and Physical Education. These are not headline English Baccalaureate subjects – but the cultural and health benefits they provide are invaluable - and those benefits will last a lifetime.**

In all subject's high academic standards rely upon high quality teaching. We are careful and selective in the colleagues we employ, through a rigorous and challenging recruitment process. All have degrees in their subject area and are fully qualified teachers. Once employed, we invest heavily in their training and development. If concerns around the quality of teaching arise they are acted upon immediately.

The children starting high school next September will begin at very different stages of their academic development, with a variety of talents and potential. In core academic subject's students are placed in sets based upon key stage 2 performance. From week one this allows us to nurture and extend the least able – and to stretch and challenge all other students at the appropriate level.

To maximise students' progress, a central budget priority is to make classes as small as possible. Last year the average class size across the school was 21 comparing favourably with any school.

To support their classwork students, have a homework timetable, with work set to develop their independence as they move towards public examinations. The marking of work is developmental, regular and focussed upon improving student's skills and understanding.

The level of progress made by each student is assessed and reported to parents regularly through the year. Any student not making expected progress, or underachieving, appears in red on the school data system – intervention is immediate and will range from pastoral support to after school or Saturday 'catch-up' depending on the reasons for lack of progress. Parents are fully informed of our actions to address the situation. This system is applied to Set 1 students who may be coasting (however briefly) to those in Set 6 who may need additional learning support.

The quality of this learning framework is, of course, tested each summer and yet again we are very proud of our student's achievements.

In Year 11 our 3-year average shows:

- 85% of students achieved 5+ level 4-9 including English and Mathematics
- 90% of students achieved a level 4-9 in English- the same in Maths.
- The most prestigious GCSE qualification is the English Baccalaureate – high grade passes in English, Mathematics, Science, a Foreign Language and either History or Geography. 62% of our students achieved this – placing the school amongst the top 100 state schools for EBacc performance.

For those who measure a school through academic achievement Cardinal Wiseman is in the top 5% of school nationally.

And when the performance tables are published again and have meaning the Progress Grade – that is how much progress students made between KS2 SATS and GCSE will again see the school ranked in the top 3% nationally.

For those who measure a school through academic achievement and the progress made by their children the fact is – the fact is that Cardinal Wiseman is one of the best schools in the country at this time.

And in the Sixth Form we will see over 160 students starting at University next week, including for the twelfth year running to Oxford or Cambridge. In the last two years 8 students have been awarded paid degree apprenticeships from a global bank as we acknowledge that not all students can take on the expense of University – and we have enabled a number of other students to enter a range of high quality apprenticeships – in a variety of occupations.

High quality on the back of outstanding results at A Level.

29 students achieved A* or A in every subject in 2019.

There is no achievement ceiling at Cardinal Wiseman for any student prepared to work hard.

So, as I said and the evidence confirms, we nurture and stretch our less able students – and ensure those with academic ability are driven to achieve outstanding results. Expectations are high and students achieve extremely well.

I spoke earlier about leadership, team and communication skills, as well as the importance of demonstrating a willingness to get involved. Opportunities outside of the classroom helps build this profile, and the self confidence that comes with it.

All students here have the opportunity to apply for Duke of Edinburgh courses, Army Cadet Corps in partnership with St Benedict's School, Metropolitan Police Cadets, Debating and Public Speaking Club, Film Making club, chess club – along with a wide variety of sports, music and drama activities. Teams representing these clubs have won a number of trophies – but far more rewarding when I walk the site after school is seeing large numbers of students taking part, working together and simply having fun. (These opportunities will be limited during the 2020 Autumn Term).

In addition to the enjoyment, skills and confidence developed through this wider learning, your children will meet others with similar interests and passions, developing secure and lasting friendships – such an important part of our children's lives at secondary school.

The last of our priority areas is the leadership of the school. I have been Headteacher here for 12 years and we have been very fortunate in keeping a highly talented core of senior leaders – but our leadership group is sought after by other schools these days – and in the last 3 years 3 colleagues have moved on to Deputy Head posts in other schools. However, this

has enabled me to bring in new leaders who have shown exceptional promise at high performing schools.

The outstanding examination results over this period demonstrates the impact of their work and should give you complete confidence in the leadership of this school.....

As should the endorsement of the lead Ofsted Inspector – who at the last Ofsted inspection informed governors and diocesan representatives that she was in awe of the way in which the Headteacher was leading the school. The Ofsted report in your packs provides further evidence of the strong leadership at Cardinal Wiseman.

You may have visited other schools already – and nowhere in the country do parents have the luxury of state school choices enjoyed by Ealing families – particularly Ealing Catholic families. Visiting as parents we are bombarded by the achievements and claims of each school – as I am doing in this address (we are no different) - the only time that this was uncomfortable during parental visits was when I was informed that my daughter would do better in an ‘all girls’ environment because she would be more confident and assertive amongst other girls – try telling that to the girls you meet here who have worked **with** - and competed successfully **against** boys here for grades, roles of responsibility and acknowledgement of their work since Year 7 – just like in the real world – the one that between us we are preparing our children for.

Of course, the truth is that boys and girls will flourish in any school where they are encouraged and challenged to discover what they can become – within a culture of high expectations and an outstanding atmosphere for learning, supported by excellent teaching structures.

You will find this at Cardinal Wiseman – a school with a strong catholic ethos – allied to exceptional standards, care and wider learning opportunities.

Of course I would say that, it’s my job to do so. But, if you look at the parental feedback on the Ofsted website, it endorses everything I have said.

Other examples of parental endorsement are found in two letters sent to me from Mr & Mrs C and Mrs E

Alex, Mr & Mrs C's son, is a bright student and was expected to do well – the second letter is from Mrs E, a parent of one of our SEN students, Amy, who faced many challenges throughout school.

Mr & Mrs C wrote:

Dear Mr Kiely

As our son, Alex, begins the next stage of his school career at Wiseman 6th form, we really wanted to pass on our thanks to you and your team for such wonderful teaching and preparation for his GCSEs. We are very proud of Alex. His results were fantastic. We know that his hard work and commitment played a huge part in his success. However, the support that ALL of his teachers gave him was really quite exceptional. Alex often went in asking for extra work or to double check things - every single teacher was happy and willing to help. This, at a time when they were no doubt incredibly busy// is just one example of the great teachers you have at the school// and what they are prepared to do.

Mr Kiely, we know that, especially in a big school, so many factors contribute to a student's success //. We would like to thank you all not just for good exam results but for helping nurture Alex into the lovely young man that he has become. Our other son is in year 10 and we feel confident that the school will get the best out of him too going forward.

With sincere thanks,

Mr & Mrs C

Mrs E wrote:

Dear Mr Kiely

I would like to say a big thank you to you and the teachers who have supported Amy through her years at Cardinal Wiseman.

It was scary moving from primary to a large secondary school. We were so proud when Amy received an end of year award at Celebration Evening in the summer of Year 7. Throughout her time, the teachers have always encouraged and praised Amy and been there in times of trouble.

When Amy was in hospital for two months during Year 11 the school kept in contact and carefully planned her return to school. She was able to take her exams and has been given a place at Uxbridge College to study Health and Social Care.

I can honestly say if it wasn't for such a brilliant team of teachers I don't know where our family would be now. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for never giving up on Amy.

Mrs E

These are lovely letters ----- but so too was the feedback given to the school at the end of the last Ofsted inspection. A formidable Inspection Team of four secondary Headteacher's, led by a member of Her Majesty's Inspection Team sat down to give us their judgements.

The Team Leader started by saying that at the end of the first day of inspection, the Team sat down to share their thoughts. One of the Headteacher's said that in his view "this is as good as a school can get" – nobody on the Inspection Team disagreed.

Following the feedback (you have that in your packs), as the Team left, one of the Headteacher's took me aside and said "Mike, when I undertake inspections I have a very simply approach. I ask myself if I would want my children to come to this school. I'd love my children to come to Cardinal Wiseman.

I look forward to meeting many of you next September if not sooner.

Michael Kiely

Headteacher