

Ben Vessey's Speech
Martin Marriott Year Reunion and launch of
Martin Marriott Foundation, London, 6th December 2016

Creating greater access – why bother?

- The school's vision is *'To inspire young people to embrace learning in all its forms and to use their educational experience to make a real and positive difference to their own lives, and to the lives of others.'*
- So much of true substance sits behind these words which does change lives and it's something we should and must open up to as many as we can across society
- My life has been a fortunate one – not a wealthy but comfortable lifestyle, loving and supportive parents who instilled both ambition and aspiration in a nurturing fashion – and educational opportunities which have opened a variety of exciting pathways in life
- My six years at Christ's Hospital, a boarding school - many pupils are drawn from the lower end of the socio economic scale, often with challenging home lives – was a transformational experience for the pupils I worked with but also for me
- Seen first-hand the tremendous life changing impact which access to a high quality independent education can have on those young people where a bursary has opened up this land of opportunity.
- We are working on establishing several partnerships and programmes which will open access to a Canford education for a greater pool of deserving and talented young applicants both from the UK and further afield who could otherwise not afford to come.
- We need assistance to ensure such opportunities can become a reality for these young people with the lifetime benefits this will bring to them, their families and others whose lives they will touch in a positive way thereafter.'

I think a few stories will add some colour

- One boy at Christ's Hospital who I worked closely with – one parent dead, the other in jail, - he lived with his aunt who didn't want him. He had raw intellect but zero aspiration and his home environment was not likely to change that

- He arrived at Christ's Hospital with dodgy grades and was suspended twice. However, he learned the trumpet, joined the band and ended up as Head Boy and Band Major – marching in the Lord Mayors Show. He achieved good GCSEs & A Levels, went on to Bristol Uni and now runs his own business and, with a group of others, now supports two pupils currently at Christ's Hospital.

What about Canford? - some insights from Canfordians, boys and girls, who have come from very different environments to many of our pupils and who benefitted from bursary support might add further weight to the cause

1. *"Since joining Canford in 2015 I definitely feel that I have grown in confidence. My lessons are 'full-on' but I am learning so much. I feel that there are far more opportunities available to me now. When I first started I thought that my future might be in sport but I am now interested in becoming a psychiatrist – something that I wouldn't have considered a year ago."*
2. *"Canford really changed our attitude to work ... we had to work very hard to keep up but we did and we enjoyed it ... I would never have achieved the GCSEs that I got let alone 'A' Levels without the drive to get to Canford and then the support I received once I was here. Teachers were always available. You could always email them. We were so well prepared for Uni. I don't think I would have gone to Uni if I hadn't come to Canford and certainly not the Uni that I'm at. Canford showed me that I can achieve more and it 'raised my game' considerably. I'd come back in a heartbeat."*
3. *"My self-confidence increased considerably. I felt able to let other pupils know that children from different backgrounds can achieve and I was able to help them to understand that we are not inferior and we can contribute to society - just look at what I have achieved! I cannot imagine what my life would be like now if I hadn't attended Canford. I would like to go on to do something useful in society and perhaps work for a not-for-profit organisation. It is so important that other children are given the opportunity that I received at Canford."*
4. *"If I could sum up what Canford gave me, I would say that it gave me the confidence to aim high. Without it, I'm not sure I would have applied for Medicine at Oxbridge, never mind succeed in my application. I am extremely grateful for the scholarship and bursary that I received from Canford, and believe I wouldn't be where I am today without it. I am delighted that there is a continuing drive to raise funds to provide the opportunities which made such a difference to my life."*
5. *"A full bursary allowed me not just to go to Canford, but to take part in the full range of activities the school was able to offer. I took my sport to new levels, went on the Partnership Trip to Argentina, and was phenomenally well prepared for Oxbridge"*

entrance. Having people from all backgrounds at Canford makes it special, and giving young people like myself a chance to come can change their lives forever.”

6. *Letter from a parent of a bursary recipient pupil*

Dear Headmaster,

It is hard to believe that our daughter's Canford days have come to end – it seems only yesterday that, to our astonishment, she had applied to the school, and then to our even greater astonishment she had been offered a place thanks to a scholarship and an extremely generous bursary. Regardless of what her results may be, she has been privileged to enjoy the very best tutelage in all subjects, unparalleled support and truly magnificent surroundings. She has also made many friendships that will certainly endure for many years to come.

I know that she has had a wonderful time. It goes without saying that the Ghana trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity. She loved every second of it and it was an experience that she still bubbles with enthusiasm about. It is another fine example of the school's ethos of supporting education for those less fortunate than many of its own pupils, an ethos from which she has so greatly benefited. She has hugely enjoyed the Heretic Society debates, visiting speakers, school plays and the regular trips to hear lectures at other educational establishments – and much more. I think her only regret has been that having been a great sports fan, training regularly with Wimborne Athletic club, injury prevented her taking advantage of the excellent sporting facilities to the full. But here again, Canford was able to provide the physiotherapy that helped immensely.

My wife and I would like to thank you and the school for giving our daughter the best possible means of fulfilling her potential. – all the teaching and support staff have her greatest respect and gratitude.

We now have a nervous wait for the exam results but, thanks to the help and preparation Canford has provided, we can already be confident that she will have done well and is destined for a place at one of her preferred universities.

Isn't it tokenism I hear some say?

I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples. – Mother Teresa

- Canford is actively looking to widen accessibility to **deserving** applicants who could not otherwise attend.

- Essentially we want to provide the opportunity to add structure, substance and reality to the dreams and ambitions of eligible young people whose life chances are likely to preclude this, whether that be due to general socio-economic factors or specific difficulties and hardship within the family or locality where they live.
- This will be very much a partnership as not only will pupils accessing a bursary benefit greatly, but their presence within the Canford Community will add breadth and richness to the educational and life experience of all within it – and those they touch beyond throughout their lives

Finding the Right Pupils is important and not always easy

- Canford works with partner organisations who themselves work to find genuinely needy and deserving pupils and connect them with the right independent schools – Spring Board is one example
- To add some context - Rugby School, Arnold Foundation (who have a significant number of pupils supported by bursaries), use this model to find the pupils and support them by working with the school 365 days/ year in a very different environment so it works positively for all involved including the community the pupil comes from where they commit to giving back in various ways

Our first Springboard pupil has started this term – fully supported by the school – this is a letter from his mother to his Tutor

Hello Mr Jeffery,

I am so happy with how my son is doing at Canford. He has come home a mature young man as opposed to how he was a few weeks ago. He is better behaved and more sensible.

On Friday, when he was going to come home, he said he had been to the end of the tunnel and had seen the "light". He said, "I used to pretend to be good, now I will rather be good than pretend.

Mr Jeffery, I do not know what Canford is doing to my son, but it is yielding positive results and I pray this continues as he has truly turned a new leaf.

Thank you for giving my son a new lease of life.

- **So What Next?**

- While we are able to provide some financial assistance for around 40 pupils per year, we are still only able to provide full financial assistance for a handful at any one time

- We feel that many more young people should have the opportunities and experiences that a Canford education provides. This is what our drive to Increase Accessibility is all about and we are pleased to announce that we will be formally launching The Martin Marriott Foundation in January to support bursaries at Canford.
- Any help you can give in spreading the word or in any other ways would be wonderful.
- Thank you so much for coming tonight and I hope to see you all soon at Canford or at an OC event.