



### From the Headmaster

As the school year reaches its conclusion, it is necessarily a time for reflection. This time last year in my final communication with you, I started with this quote: *"A bird gets up every morning and sings its song. It does not wait to hear what other birds are singing, nor does it look to see if another bird is getting more notice. This is nature: knowing your own song."* Like so many aspects of our daily lives, the events of recent months have put a different complexion on our interpretation of, and reaction to, a whole host of things. Our appreciation of nature has been one of the unexpected positives. The lack of planes in our skies or traffic on the roads, the benefit of time and glorious weather (until, of course, July arrived and the summer holidays were imminent!), and the bursting into life of the natural world have opened our eyes to so many things all too frequently in our busy lives we just ignored or took for granted. Indeed, it has been widely remarked that the beginning and end of our days, in particular, are marked by the soundtrack of birds; the quote above seems strangely apt in what is now a very different world.

Summer terms usually conjure up idyllic images of beautifully prepared wickets, the distinctive sounds of a cricket match in progress or tennis, the buzz of athletics, the traditional school Sports Day and, of course, strawberries and cream! The lockdown period has presented many challenges to schools but one of those most acutely felt has been the lack of the physical community, the camaraderie, the humour, the chat, those rites of passage which are synonymous with a summer term. Self-isolation and lockdown necessary focus on individuals and, on one level, we rightly celebrate the individual, nurturing an environment where each individual absolutely has the confidence to know their own song. The self-esteem and self-confidence of each individual – stemming from the foundations of a supportive, nurturing environment – mean the boys are happy and at ease with themselves. This, in turn, allows them to express themselves with honesty and integrity, and with a smile on their faces. And yet equally recent months have reminded us just how powerful our collective sense of community is and how profoundly we have felt the absence of physical interaction.

As we break-up today for a very well-deserved rest, I would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to you, the parents, as well as the staff, the governors and all those who have contributed so much to our community, especially during the challenges of the last few months. Every single one of your words of support, kindness and positivity has meant so much and has energised us to keep doing the very best we can despite the obstacles. I would also, in keeping with the words of wisdom imparted above by Michele Oka Doner, urge all the boys to continue to know their own song, celebrate their individuality, and have confidence in themselves, and yet also at the same time to appreciate that friends, family and community define so much of who we are. We look forward to re-uniting physically in September.

I often talk of what an extraordinary twelve months it has been – and the last few months have certainly lived up to the billing of being extra-ordinary. I sincerely hope that, in the best possible sense, the next twelve months are as ordinary as possible! I wish you all the very best for a relaxing, enjoyable and most of all safe and healthy summer when it comes.