

22nd June 2019 Prize Day
Mrs Connor-Earl

Good morning and welcome to you all. I would like to start by thanking the Year 6 Choir. Your voices have, once again, uplifted u all. We have been extremely lucky to have you as our choir this year and I know that Mrs Day has loved working with you. The way your voices blend together is a true reflection of how you work together as a year group: supporting each other, celebrating each other and truly living the St Mary's Way.

We have much to celebrate and will do so in a moment, but before we come onto your successes, I would like to reflect on the past year.

Life at St Mary's is always extremely busy and full to the rafters with opportunities. A St Mary's girl is resilient, reflective and above all, risk-taking. She is a girl who will make the most of the opportunities she is given and this has proved so this year.

The introduction of the Global Learning Centre has made a huge impact on how the girls learn and how they can travel the world while remaining in NW3. The Engineering Lab has been truly revolutionary in allowing us to prepare the girls for the world that lies ahead of them. They have access to true STEAM activities and this will help prepare the girls for their future careers.

Music and Drama continues to be a huge part of life at St Mary's. I have already mentioned how beautifully the Chapel Choir has sung for us and the introduction of bringing the Year 5 girls onto the altar has meant that the sound is exceptional during our weekly services and Masses.

We continue to share our love of music at the Carol Concert and over 35 girls have performed at the six Cake Concerts we have had this year. We have had over 40 girls sit their ABRSM music exams across the academic year. My thanks to Mrs Day and all the peripatetic teachers for their efforts. I am truly delighted that Mrs Day chose Joseph and His Technicolour Dreamcoat and the Year 6 girls agreed to perform such a wonderful musical. I cannot wait to see the girls in action in two weeks time.

The girls have continued to take part in many sporting fixtures. I am delighted that Mr Halsall has continued to increase the number of fixtures that we play. My thanks to the P.E. department: Mr Halsall, Mr Richardson, Mrs Rimini and Mrs Thompson for continuing to support the girls with all their sporting and gymnastic efforts.

The Art and Design Studio will continue to allow the children to produce amazing pieces of artwork with the guidance of Miss Fehmi. Now, with the introduction of the 3D printer, we will be able to produce digital artwork as well. The installation of the Art Gallery on the blue stairs has meant that art can be displayed all year round and I have been delighted to see all the wonderful pieces that have been submitted for the various competitions across the year. I am thrilled that we have two pieces of artwork being exhibited with the Young Artists' Summer Show at The Royal Academy of Art. I was also particularly delighted to visit the Year 3 girls' wonderful artwork displayed at the O2 Centre. My thanks to Miss Fehmi for all her hard work and dedication to art and design at St Mary's.

Over the course of the year, we have run a plethora of trips to support the academic curriculum and also hosted many visitors – both of which help make learning “real” and help the children learn in a different way. Trips and visits can be very powerful teaching aids not only in the academically, but also in many of the other skills that we teach at school. For instance, teamwork, friendship and leadership. Some trips go far and wide, some are closer to home. They support all aspects of the curriculum and range from visits to Pizza Express to skiing on the slopes of Crans-Montana. My thanks to everyone

and especially parent volunteers for helping with these trips. I would also like to thank our parents who have come into school to share their different cultures and religions which has a huge impact on the girls learning.

Before half-term, I witnessed 20 girls make their First Holy Communion. I am so pleased for them and their families. It was a very moving and special Mass. I'm sure that many of us remember making our First Holy Communions. It is a moment that the girls will treasure forever and I was so honoured to be part of their special day. My thanks to Mrs Sciacaluga, Mrs Edwards and Father Chris who had helped them prepare for the day.

Every week in assembly, I read the children a story. At the beginning of the year, I choose a book which will support the theme for the year ahead. This year I chose a book called "What to do with an idea?" and it is about a little boy who has an idea and spends time nurturing it before sharing it with others. I would like to read to you the last few pages of the book:

"Then, one day, something amazing happened. My idea changed right before my very eyes. It spread its wings, took flight, and burst into the sky. I don't know how to describe it, but it went from being here to being everywhere. It wasn't just a part of me anymore... it was now a part of everything. And then, I realised what you do with an idea... You change the world."

I asked the children to think of small ways in which they themselves could change the world. As a school, we had a desire to reduce our impact on our world and we have achieved this in many ways. Little changes such as moving from plastic to glass bottles for our milk delivery to composting our food waste and using public transport where we can for school trips and fixtures has meant that our environmental impact has significantly reduced.

I am so proud of all the children who have taken the message on board and have done so much to help those in the world around us. For instance, back in September, we raised money by donating unused foreign currency. We then took part in Brighten-Up Day for CAFOD where we raised over £750. The School community raised over £7,000 for the Cardinal Hume Centre, a charity which transforms the lives of young people living on the streets of Westminster. We have also donated money to help the work of The Royal Free Hospital and The Ocean Clean-Up.

The girls continued to raise money by taking part in Dress-Up Days, sponsored silences and my thanks to the Arrupe club – a group of girls in our school community who give up their spare time to think of ways that we can support those in our community. My thanks to the Year 6 Choir who visited The Royal Free Hospital to sing over Christmas.

Each and every one of you girls has changed the world in a small, but hugely significant way and I am truly proud of you and the efforts you have made to transform the lives of others. I believe that St Mary's is a true community school where all members support each other. I would especially like to thank the PTA for organising so many wonderful events across the year. I believe that living our faith as part of the community is what makes St Mary's such a unique and special school.

At St Mary's, we celebrate the unique and different qualities that the children possess. I believe that the quality of kindness and compassion is as important as academic intelligence which is, in turn, as important as sporting prowess and musical talent. Here at St Mary's, we believe that all children are created in God's image and should therefore be celebrated, loved and cherished. During our half-termly Celebration Assemblies, we recognise the unique achievements of every child. I do not believe that any one of these achievements warrants more pride than others. I believe that what makes a St Mary's girl so special is that they show genuine compassion for others and the world around us.

Now I move on to the Year 6 girls. I am delighted that you have all gained places at a remarkable list of Senior Schools. Schools that will help you continue to thrive and to flourish and to grow into remarkable young ladies.

However, before you start on the next path I would like to take some time to reflect on your journey at St Mary's. A journey that may have started when you were in Nursery or more recently. During your time at St Mary's, you have learnt so many skills both in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, you have learnt to be passionate about books, to have a desire to solve mathematical problems, to be scientifically curious and explore the world around you. In computing, you have learnt how to code robots and to create your own apps.

However, more importantly, I believe, outside of the classroom, you have learnt how to engage with others, how to discuss problems amongst your peers. You are young ladies who have a desire to help others. I am always so proud of how confident you are when discussing your thoughts and ideas with others. You have learnt that you need to encourage those around you for a team to complete a task. The skills that you have mastered you will take forward into your Senior Schools, but also University and then your careers. Each one of you has so much to offer the world and, like the little boy in our story, to change the world in a wonderful way. Each and every one of you is special and possess wonderful gifts to share and to change the world.

You are a unique set of girls who will be very much missed, but it is time to start the next stage of your journey. Remember that every step forward makes you into the person you are. Enjoy your journey and every so often you should reflect on how far you have come.

Congratulations Year 6 and all there is left for me to say is "Go Change the World".