

Chair of the Board, Mr Sandelin, Lady Shiela, MP for Epsom Hon David Seymour '97, Hon Paul Goldsmith '84, members of the Board, invited guests, our young men, staff and parents, it is my pleasure and privilege to present the 2023 Headmaster's report.

The 2023 School year could be characterised by our shared experiences, including the Auckland weather events that wreaked havoc causing significant flooding or the cyclones that followed in February, the associated Ministry of Education's new level of minutiae style management even determining schools could no longer read weather reports, the detrimental impact strike action had on schooling, a general election that has thus far stopped the introduction of inane new curricular that will drop the country to new educational lows – and introduces the innovative banning of mobile phones across all schools.

I would rather think that 2023 has been defined by what hasn't been published and is less news worthy: the intangibles associated with a high functioning self-governed educational community.

In our case, it is the type of support that is only visible now, because of the completion of 150th legacy facilities. But, this is not a commentary about bricks and mortar, rather, the symbolism associated with it. Symbols of a united self-governing education-based community.

J. W. Tibbs, our 4th Headmaster (1893 - 1922) was an active guardian of the School - he called upon the Grammar community to fund and build an Honours Board for the new School to be built on Mountain Rd.

That community left us with the magnificent centre panel on the stage that dominates the Great Hall. That community set the tone for celebrating student academic achievement, that remains in place today.

Earlier this year, Sir Ron Carter '48, told me, *"Education is a unifying factor upon which communities can be, and should be, built. Communities should be proud of their local school, and they should be part of its structure. Education is the most fundamental element in the creation of a successful society. The quality of that education and its scope prepares student for their future role as a citizen."*

Past guardians of Grammar, like Sir Ron Carter have been active contributors, making courageous decisions to future-proof and protect our style of education from the interference of ineffective government departments. Instead, the success of education here lies within the current Grammar community. The choice to be an active rather than passive guardians determines our future. The 150th Projects symbolise that the challenge has been accepted.

Owen Eastwood's, "Belonging" records what I'm attempting to describe like this: *"I have come to understand whakapapa this way: Each of us are part of an unbreakable chain of people going back and forward in time. Each of us in this chain of people have our arms interlocked with those on either side of us. We are unbreakable."*

The sun shone in the east and shone on our first ancestor. Here is the origin of our story. Each of us will have our time in the sun. But the sun is always moving. When the sun shines on us we are alive, we are strong. For we have had passed down to us a culture that immerses us in deep belonging."

In order to be an active part of any community we need to understand what we belong to. Through time, our guardians have actively set those standards, the tone and the expectations for all of us.

Examples include: In 1954 the 8th Headmaster, Sir Henry Cooper told the Grammar community this:

“The School seeks to graduate boys with valuable gifts of temperament and character who have received an enormous amount of education, incidental as it were, from the general life of the School. They have not been narrowed or brought up to believe that they are finished products, but they have developed a healthy attitude to life and they go out into the world anxious to roll up their sleeves and learn all the extra things they need to know for their particular job.

The Grammar Way.

In 1986, the 9th Headmaster, Sir John Graham said: *“The School is ultimately a place for boys. A place where they can learn worthwhile, demanding subjects and experience the pleasures of involvement in sport, music, and other activities. A place where they can learn social skills in a secure environment and moral and ethical values that will equip them to face challenges.*

A place to learn personal assurance and confidence to come to grips with their strengths and weaknesses. A place where lasting friendships are made and where pride in self, pride in nation and in the School are nurtured. A place where respect for others, whatever their background, and compassion for all people is seen as crucial for their future lives.”

The Grammar Way.

In 2023, let me add this: *“We ask young men to be contributors. It is in their responses to this request where we see their potential - a turn of phrase, a quality response when challenged, the willingness to recognise others successes and winning with humility or losing with dignity.*

It is through contributions of this nature that our young men learn respect, including of our past and they can begin to understand their part in the Grammar of today, and the legacy they leave for the community of tomorrow.

The mystique of The Grammar Way is woven into the fabric of this transition – a young man understanding he belongs, and that what he belongs to is far greater than himself. Then, understanding the responsibilities and sacrifices that come with that.”

The Grammar Way. It is what supports and endorses our unbreakable chain.

Rather than an Auckland Grammar School being an outlier in the Ministry of Education’s eyes, and an outlier in New Zealand education sector, this could instead be an exemplar of self-governance reinforcing the positive influence of effective, active guardianship.

Auckland Grammar School and The Grammar Way has only been as good as its people. Thank you to our highly effective Grammar masters. That is those who are respected by the boys because they are demanding of them. They work hard for the boys and are involved outside the classroom and are loyal to the School. It is these contributions that help to set the tone on a daily base and in turn reinforce the School’s vision, mission and values.

One such master was Mr Aliaga '93, who passed away at the end of Term 3 after his courageous battle with serious illness. He was a loyal and dedicated teacher of Chemistry, who will be missed. As an avid competitor in the Staff / Prefects Football match, it's appropriate from 2024 these fixtures typically won by staff will recorded on 'The Aliaga Boot'.

The Leadership Team, including Mr McNaughton who was Acting Headmaster during my absence in Term 3, thank you for your professionalism and the able support you provide me and the School.

Thanks also to Mr Askew, Deputy Headmaster who stepped into the Associate Headmaster's role and Mrs Adrienne Birtwistle who joined the Leadership team as Acting Deputy Headmaster. Thank you to our Faculty and Department Heads, Directors and the student support network - their professionalism adds considerable value.

And to self-governance - our School continues to be overseen by a highly professional, competent board who willingly donate their time and expertise to protect, secure and advance the education and care of young men in challenging financial times and an unstable national educational climate.

Mr Mark Sandelin, Chairman of the Board, continues to provide stable, and considered leadership. His status as an Old Boy of '75, and contributions on the board since Term 2, 2009 have again influenced through qualification, experience, institutional knowledge, a dose of good sense and good humour. His leadership has competently drawn together our skilled board.

To the wider School, congratulations on a successful year. We look forward to sharing in and celebrating your successes today.

Congratulations to those who have actively led in a variety of roles, most ably including the Head Prefect, Quinlan Te Tamaki and Deputy Head Prefect, Jamie Mora, along with Senior Prefects Angus Baker, Robbie Ready, Monty Parkinson and Preston Morunga. Strong personalities, leadership through example and a preparedness to have some fun along the way. Thank you.

My genuine thanks are also extended to parents who have not only supported their son's Grammar education, but have supported the School's clear educational philosophies and standards, including the application of these whether personally favourable or not.

Finally, to the leaving cohort, the class of 2019, the third form of our 150th year, you started in a year celebrating our past, and you have accepted the challenges and opportunities presented to you as will be evident as the prize list is read.

The Owen Eastwood quote I shared earlier finishes:

"We share beliefs and a sense of identity with those around us and this anchors us. We share a purpose with them. We share a vision of the future. Rituals and traditions tie us together. The experiences and the wisdom of those who walked in the light before our time are passed on to us. You will not be judged by your money or celebrity or sense of self pride... you will be judged by what you did for our tribe."

You have to date played your part as a member of the Grammar community well. But a new challenge awaits you, as laid out in my toast to the School in 2019, your 3rd form year, and our sesquicentenary:

“It is in the process of cultivating the Grammar Way that we may teach our young men to stand at the level of our eyes, in the hope that they will see further than we can, and do better than we have ever done before.”

I wish you and the entire Grammar community a safe and relaxing holiday, a Merry Christmas with friends and family and a happy and prosperous new year.

Per Angusta Ad Augusta