



## OPEN EVENING 2017 - HEADTEACHER'S SPEECH

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and a very warm welcome to Holmer Green Senior School.

My name is Michael Jones and it is my privilege to be the Headteacher.

This is the start of my ninth year as Head and before that I was on my predecessor's Leadership Team for five years. So I suppose there must be something special about this school that's made me so proud to be a part of it for the past 13 years!

I am here this evening to explain what I believe makes Holmer Green distinct from other schools and why I believe it is such a wonderful place to work and be educated.

Holmer Green was graded in 2016 by Ofsted as a Good school. They recognised our work "to promote pupils' personal development and well-being" as "outstanding". They commented that "Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain." And they wrote that I have "successfully raised everyone's aspirations so that the school is ensuring "Achievement and opportunity for all". Now, Headteachers will take any compliment that's going, particularly from Ofsted, although I am the first to say that last point has been a real TEAM effort and I am extremely proud to lead a body of staff who are not simply satisfied with a Good judgement but are determined to ensure that on their next visit, Ofsted will grade us as "Outstanding". Indeed, if you look carefully at last year's results in your pack – and I will be expanding on these in a short while – you will see that we have outcomes this year that give us a loud shout for Outstanding right NOW.

So why may we be the right school for you?

Let's start with some context... Your children are entering the biggest period of change in secondary education since the 1980s. There is new GCSE content in all subjects, new grading criteria and we have seen exams over the past three years getting harder and harder.

NATIONAL averages (particularly with the top grades) have FALLEN. Yet here at Holmer Green, our grades, including the top grades, have gone UP and UP.

This shows the first distinctive feature about my school - we are **adaptable!**

Staff here have seen these changes coming and prepared our students so that over the past three years they have achieved results far ahead of their peers. I invest in high quality teachers with experts in English, Maths and Science and also in Modern Foreign Languages, Humanities, The Visual and Performance Arts, Music, ICT, Business, Sport and Technology.

Judge for yourselves as you walk about this evening or on any future visit. Teachers here love their subjects and believe that every child can achieve well and deserves the very best opportunity to do so.

Yes we have a setting system, but in every set ALL children are challenged to strive for the very top grades. A simple pass is never enough at HGSS.

The second important feature that makes us distinct is the quality of the **relationships** between the staff and pupils at Holmer Green. We are a **small** school. That may strike you as strange after you walk about but there is a big difference between having 150 students in a year group and having over 200 as in many other local schools. It means we can give our students more **time and attention** and push them to the top grades.

But it also goes for our work with parents. We invest time and resources in supporting you to support your children from home.

My staff share work email addresses so you can contact them directly. Homework, curriculum, examination, assessment and behaviour reports are all available with assessment updates four times in the year.

The information we share is not just where your children are at, but what they need to do for that next step, AND what you can do to help and support your children to succeed.

Our pastoral care is second to none and you will see from our guides tonight, our pupils come from great homes and hit the ground running from the very start of Year 7.

I have asked Antony (White), one of our new Year 7 students to say a few words .....

*Thank you Mr Jones.*

*Good evening everyone, my name is Antony White and I'm standing right here right now to share with you the challenging yet exciting big step from primary to secondary school. I know if there are any year 6's in the crowd that you're probably worrying about homework or getting to class on time? Well don't!*

*For me, it was the biggest step of my life, I was looking forward to it so much, I was trying so hard to remember everything like stationery, homework and getting to class on time and believe me, you don't want to turn up to a Science lesson and then 5 minutes later realise you should have maths and not Science!*

*Coming up from primary school to here is very exciting with the introduction of new subjects to explore and love. My favourite subject is Art because of my lovely teacher, Miss Eames. Art is one of my passions and the teachers put me out of my comfort zone and I admire that because it helped me a lot in the long run.*

*All the clubs are fun and enjoyable, so please, please join at least one club and if you're worrying about friends, it's a great way to make them.*

*Although it's baffling at times, the school is a great school and there is always someone to help you, no matter what the problem is. I wouldn't suggest any other school from Holmer Green Senior School and if you do come to Holmer, I'll be looking forward to seeing you and remember, I'll always try to help you.*

*Thank you for listening and have a good night.*

Thank you Antony

**High attainment** is the third feature that makes us distinct. Let me spell out for you what high attainment looks like at Holmer Green.

This summer 40% of all grades were A\* - B, 75% were A\*-C (or 9-4 in English and Maths) - NO OTHER non-selective school can touch us for that and nationally that puts us far above average. These grades came across all subject areas and all teaching sets.

Alicia Dawson (this is Alicia on my right) attained 12 A\*-A grades, Mike Salem attained 11 A\*-A grades. Nathan Holt and Daniel Whittaker attained 8 A\*-A grades, Simon Lansley attained 7 A\*-A grades, Haroon Kazi, Lauren Miller and Matt Waterhouse attained 6 A\*-As and Juvairia Ahmad, Elliot Britton and Katie Dwyer attained 5 A\*-A grades.

Our Sixth Form Results this summer were the best in the school's history. 58% of all grades were A\*-B with 87% being A\*-C and every student achieved at least a pass in their exams. Our vocational qualifications which are all Level 3 and thus A Level equivalent, saw 94% attaining a Distinction\* or Distinction. No wonder that every student was able to access their first choice of university – which included Birmingham to Southampton and Loughborough to Nottingham. Courses ranged from Accounting and Finance to Multi Media Journalism as well as Sport, coaching with physical education.

A number of our students had already secured unconditional offers and the fact that such prestigious universities would do so on such competitive courses shows the extremely high quality of the applications they receive from Holmer Green.

We've heard from Antony who is at the very start of his journey with us, now it's time to hear from Alicia (Dawson) who, having completed the first five years here, has embarked on the next two in our Sixth Form...

***Thank you Mr Jones.***

***Hello everyone, my name is Alicia Dawson, and I am a Sixth Former here at Holmer Green Senior School. I hope that so far, you have had a great evening at our brilliant school, and that you have been able to get a feeling for what HGSS is really about, even if this evening is only a small snippet of what happens here. When I made my first few steps in this school, as a Year 6 just like many of you sitting here tonight, I knew that this welcoming atmosphere and incredible hub of knowledge and contentment would be the right place for me. Since then, I have been a student here since Year 7 and have never regretted my decision.***

***From the start, this school has been a place where I have felt at home, and valued, no matter which year group I have been in. From the helpful people who showed me around when I was lost in Year 7, to the ease I felt when asking a teacher to repeat something I didn't quite understand the first time, this is a school where anyone can feel comfortable learning at the best of their ability.***

***The challenges we face, both from our teachers wanting the best for us, as well as the looming new GCSE and A level exams, do not sway our desire to achieve, which can be seen from the results in both A Level and GCSE last year, which show our school in its best light and proves us to be one of the best in the country.***

***Let me tell you a little bit about my story here at HGSS and why I have decided to stay for Sixth Form here, rather than go elsewhere.***

***In September 2012, when I started here, I was very excited, but I must admit I was a little scared. I knew that there would be tall, professional teenagers, knowing exactly where they are going in the corridors, many many subjects, a huge increase in homework and, worse of all, the complicated new timetable. All of these fears were taken away when I entered the building and a group of friendly prefects came and made sure that I knew where to go. Their optimism and helpful manner immediately made me feel at home and part of something special.***

***During those first few weeks, it was challenging and I sometimes felt I would rather simply go back to my wonderful Year 6 teacher. It didn't take me long to see how incredible the teaching was and how quickly I was managing to get myself around to lessons, as well as make sure that I was organised with all of my work. The teachers and the supportive peers who I had, helped me to keep***

*going and move on from any mistakes that I had made. Those first 3 years were truly vital in shaping me as a learner and as a person, which led me well from Year 9 to my GCSE years.*

*Personally, I am more of an all-rounder, so for my GCSEs I opted for a mixture of both academic and artistic subjects (with the core subjects, these included triple Science, History as well as two languages, Music, Resistant Materials and Art and Design). In the summer, I was humbled and amazed that I had received 12 A\*-A grades, including a 9 in English Language and 100% A\* in Art and Design. This really made me think, why had this happened? It is never only one component when it comes to success. I came to the conclusion that it was the teachers' encouragement, and the opportunities that they gave me to better myself, as well as the determination and perseverance that I have grown over my time at this school that really made me achieve this well. I believe that I am a voice for every Sixth Former when I say that the teachers here will only ever do their best in making sure that every piece of knowledge is passed on, and every student is able to understand, or feels comfortable asking again.*

*I chose to stay at HGSS last summer for my A levels, as I knew this would be where I could reach my full potential, rather than a grammar school, which had been suggested by a few people. Here's why: All the departments are valued as equal and each student is seen as an equal spark of creativity and brilliance. I knew that whichever subjects I chose, I could trust that the teaching would be excellent in every single one, and that I would feel confident when learning.*

*Whether it was the Art Department, Humanities or Mathematics, I knew that my teachers would push me and though it may not always be the most exciting topic or assignment, I would still get the best understanding, and that all the work would be meaningful, just as it had been when I was in Year 11.*

*However, it is not only these reasons. This school has an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities, as well as pastoral care and leadership opportunities at all ages. I know from experience that this has made us more confident and unafraid of taking a leap into the unknown, be it inside or outside of school. So, whether you are playing in the School Band, helping in the Student Commission, or being a member of one of our fantastic sports teams, you will be growing in confidence all the time and developing your all-round personality.*

*I hope that I have been able to give you an insight to the school and what we are about. I would like to finish with a message for all of the Year 6s and 5s here tonight. Whichever school you attend in September 2018 or 2019, be it here or any other school, make sure that you are content and getting the best out of your education and other experiences that are provided for you. The name of a school, or the label it has, will not stick onto you, it is what you make of yourself in your time there and how hard you try to achieve the goals to get to the next level.*

*I really would love to see all of your sparky faces very soon. I wish you all the best of luck with the end of Year 6 and have a lovely evening onwards. Thank you very much.*

Thank you Alicia

I think you can see why, with students like Alicia and Antony, I feel so proud of this school.

I'd like to end tonight by highlighting what really makes Holmer Green distinct as a school and that is **our mission**.

It's closing the gap. The gap that opens up at age 11 between what children have achieved at the end of their primary school. On average our students start secondary at least a whole level if not more behind their peers who go to the Grammar Schools. All those A\* and A and B grades last summer, and indeed the past three summers, were not achieved only by students who had high prior attainment in Primary School. Many had achieved a level 4 – which is average attainment – in English or Maths. They should have attained C grades but they didn't. Indeed, the average attainment of this year group was significantly below the national average on entry and yet five years later their attainment is significantly better. It's not just about those with the best scores at the end of Primary School. I am so proud to be the Headteacher of a school that can boast that the progress of our disadvantaged as well as our non-disadvantaged students is positive showing that we really add value for all children and nobody gets left behind.

At Holmer Green we prove that results are not pre-ordained by an IQ test but are born of attitude, perseverance and the belief from dependable and dedicated teachers and parents that every child can succeed.

I will let you continue your own assessment of Holmer Green Senior School as you tour the classrooms. We are also open tomorrow morning from 9.20am if you would like to see the school in action.

If you have any questions for Mrs Hawkins, our SENCo, will be in our dedicated Learning Support Area which is located above our Drama Studio and will be able to answer any questions you may have. As you have seen and heard I have also been ably supported by our Head of Music, Miss Baddeley who would be happy to answer any questions regarding her Department or about instrumental lessons if you care to wait in here.

My Deputy, Mr Tang, and I will also be available here should you have any questions for us.

Thank you for visiting us this evening and I hope you like what you see.

**(Michael Jones, Headteacher  
5 October 2017)**