I am regularly asked whether this has been a good year, and this year I have struggled to answer the question, because I want to say that it has been the most extraordinary, inspiring, exceptional year I have ever known – but I don’t want Welbeck to boast or tempt fate. So I shall say this, I could not be more proud of all that our students and staff have achieved and the manner in which they have done so.

I suspect that the Prize Giving and the Annual General Inspection are still at the forefront of the minds of many – a celebration of the outstanding achievements of your sons and daughters. This started with a wonderful concert on the Friday evening where nearly 200 visitors were treated to a demonstration of the considerable musical talent within the College.

The day was principally about the students, and the presence of a significant number of high ranking military, civilian and academic guests was a clear demonstration of the role that Welbeck – The Defence Sixth Form College has in developing the future Defence capability of our country.

We were honoured by the presence of The Rev’d (Gp Capt) John Ellis RAF, Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief, who contextualised the importance of values within leadership. The Chair of Governors, Vice-Admiral Duncan Potts, considered the courses 15 Entry might chart as they navigate their way in the world as they bring to bear their Scientific, Technical, Engineering and Mathematical skills within the armed forces and civil service. The Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP gave a wonderfully personal speech about Welbeck ‘past and present’ and the importance of our students to Defence; she then kindly presented the Prizes.

Several new major awards were made this year. The Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) Academic Scholar’s Award was presented by Miss Soubry to Lewis Ackroyd; Mr Simon Cowl, Director Interserve Defence UK, presented the Interserve Prize for Contribution to the College Working Environment to Luke Laine and Nathaniel Olson. Other major Prizes were awarded as follows: The Chairman of Minerva, Mr Steve Mallion, presented the Minerva Prize for Wisdom and Endeavour to Oliver Dalziel; the Defence Equipment and Support Prize for Technical Innovation was presented by Air Marshal Julian Young to Harry Shilley. The Royal Society of St George Performance Challenge Cup was presented to Annabel Ford and The Quorn Royal British Legion
Farnham Challenge Cup was awarded by Mr John Hutchinson to Jake Ellis. The Old Welbexian Fujitsu Prize was awarded to Steven Worsley by the Old Welbexian Governor, Col Paul Mitchell. The Head of College, Harriet Pearsall, gave a superb speech in the morning and then expertly led the Parade in the afternoon. Her professionalism, commitment and personal touch are hallmarks of everything that she has achieved this year.

The afternoon commenced with a further display of the breadth and depth of talent that is constantly so evident in many areas of the College. The Corps of Drums and Military Band illustrated once again just how capable the College musicians are as they treated those present to an outstanding performance; the Drill Team, also organised and rehearsed by students, added further a demonstration of the commitment that our students make to the College; Commodore Paul Marshall, Governor and Type 26 Project Leader, took the salute.

The outstanding Annual General Inspection Parade in the afternoon was taken by Major General Robert Nitsch who, as Director Personnel for the Army, was ideally placed to reflect upon the future career paths of the students and the crucial roles that they will play as STEM graduates. Parents and VIPs were treated to a military parade by over 300 cadets, accompanied by The National Marching Band of the RAF Air Cadets. Gen Nitsch awarded The Prince Philip Medal to Rebekah Fox and presented the Welbeck Sword to Jake Finesilver. Other highlights of the day included a flypast by a Lancaster from The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Photographs and transcripts of speeches can be found on the College website.

At Prize Giving, I paid tribute to a number of members of staff who are leaving the College at the end of this academic year: Mr Paul Derbyshire - the College Sergeant Major; Lt Edd Lawrence - the Training Officer; Lt Alex Olsson - the College Adjutant; and the College Padre – Rev Duncan Weaver DACG. Ma’am Johnston is stepping down from her role as Deputy Housemistress in Nelson House; and Mr Jim Crookes, the Vice Principal Pastoral, will hand over this role in January 2018 – the Director General’s Commendation was a fitting way to acknowledge his enormous service to the College and our students. Further information on the invaluable contributions of all these members of staff is contained within the published Prize Giving speeches which are available on the Parent Portal; Ma’am Exley will succeed Ma’am Johnston as Deputy Housemistress in September. The final day of the academic year culminated in a first-rate AGI Ball for 15 Entry. It was good to see that the majority of Upper Sixth parents were present and hopefully nearly all parents of the Leavers will be able to attend next year; my thanks to the Adjutant and Ball Committee for their significant investment in this excellent event.

Early in the term was an excellent opportunity for the College to welcome students from other cadet units to take part in the Welbeck Cadet STEM Leadership Challenge. This weekend saw large numbers of students supporting the organisation and execution of the event and they all learned much in the process. Exercise CENTURION’S SPEAR, which took place 16th - 18th June, saw the Lower Sixth deploy to the Royal Naval Leadership Academy at HMS Collingwood and were accommodated on HMS Bristol. The students all completed a range of physical and mental challenges which tested their leadership, mental and physical fortitude. The superb weather and a visit to HMS Victory for the naval students rounded off a thoroughly enjoyable Exercise.
Exercise TRAIL took place in the Yorkshire Dales between 25th – 29th June and focused on adventurous training. Luxury accommodation at MOD Halton near Lancaster provided the ideal launching pad for four days of action-packed challenge and fun. Hill walking over and around the Yorkshire Three Peaks, gorge walking, caving, climbing and abseiling were the order of the day. Superb weather on the opening day set the scene with ‘shirt sleeve order’ on the top of Ingleborough, but the weather deteriorated for the rest of the week and was as tough as the VPM had seen. Despite the weather this was a superb Exercise which the majority of students enjoyed and will have benefitted from significantly. At the end of term 30 students deployed on Exercise FULL CHARGE with the Royal Signals. Looking ahead next term, the Upper Sixth will deploy on a patrol Exercise which will involve aspects of walking, living in the field and leadership exercises over a three day period in and around the Yorkshire three peaks.

This term 3 students have been busy working on their entry for the national Aerospace Challenge Competition which is run by the RAF - students from a range of schools, cadet units and youth groups present solutions to a brief set by the RAF. This year students were asked to design a UAV that was capable of delivering a one ton payload anywhere in the world within 12 hours! They had to consider many factors, such as the compatibility with existing ATC systems and air readiness, not to mention creating a unique design to catch the judges’ attention. If that wasn’t challenging enough it also had to be capable of landing on an aircraft carrier! The students worked hard on a design and submitted the work in early June; they have subsequently been selected as one of twelve teams to complete at the National Finals at Cranfield University where they will undertake multiple engineering tasks including in flight testing. During the week they will be constantly assessed and at the end one team will be awarded the title National Champions. We wish the team of Ollie Estridge, Matt Ryan and Captain, Millie Wallace, every success.

Next term will see the introduction of Microsoft Hololens at the College as part of a global pilot education programme being developed by Pearson TQ and Microsoft. Hololens headsets overlay holograms in real world settings, helping students develop a deeper understanding of complex theories in science and engineering. Pearson TQ has already been trialling these concepts in schools in Australia and the US and you can have a quick preview of this [here](#).

This year we have had more students than ever before involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. We also have over 50 students involved with the Sail Training Ship the Lord Nelson and the Tenacious. Welbeck has now developed an excellent relationship with the Jubilee Sailing Trust with our students cruising the Canary Islands over the New Year with injured service personnel. Over the summer 14 students will tour the East Coast Islands of Canada to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation. They will join over 40 tall ships which will mark this milestone in Canada’s history. Later in the summer 52 of our students fly over to Auckland, New Zealand and around the North Island. These opportunities enable students to work alongside injured service personnel and all students are encouraged to give serious consideration to this. Earlier this term students went on the joint Exercise with the Army Foundation College to
Madagascar. Last week the College cemented its new relationship with the French equivalent of Welbeck – l’École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr. Students from Saint-Cyr joined the Lower Sixth on Exercise TRAIL and there will be a return visit by Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth groups in the Autumn.

The College ran its annual Familiarisation Day for over two hundred prospective students who are hoping to achieve the GCSE grades this Summer that will enable them to start at Welbeck as 17 Entry in September. The day consisted of an Opening Address to students and to parents before 17 Entry had the chance to try out their preferred sport, experience two A level taster sessions and try out some of the military activities they will undertake as part of Welbeck CCF. During lunch prospective students mixed with staff and visited study bedrooms and found out what it is like to board. There were a large number of current parents who were on hand to offer advice, support and reassurance to the parents and prospective students. The day finished with an Open Forum session where prospective students asked the Senior College Prefects their remaining questions. Fantastic weather helped make the day a great success with new friendships formed and 17 Entry much more familiar of what life at Welbeck will be like.

Throughout the summer term, physical training, fitness tests and sports have continued and many students have represented the College in a range of activities, reaching impressive standards. Colours were awarded to the most deserving students in athletics, rowing, cricket, triathlon and swimming in the end of term assembly. 55 students have excelled in the Welbeck Fitness Assessment achieving the standard required for the Gold, Silver or Bronze Award with 14 of these reaching the elite 300 Club standard. Many more students have managed to record personal bests. All students are encouraged to remember the 'reversibility' rule from the Principles of Training and to ensure that they maintain their training and fitness levels over the Summer break.

In Cricket, the boys’ team have played fixtures against Ratcliffe College (twice), the Royal Signals and Regent College. The most exciting was against Ratcliffe where a thrilling finish saw Ratcliffe win with 3 balls to spare with only 1 wicket left to fall. This has been a good term and all should be congratulated on the progress that they have made. The Boat Club has been very active this term, and students have competed at a number of regattas. Our first regatta was at Shrewsbury where Ed Wilkinson won the Junior 17 single sculls. Bridgenorth was unfortunately cancelled due to dangerous river conditions following heavy rain. At York, Welbeck sent two Senior Men’s Fours and two Novice Single Scullers, Ben Jenkins and Kyle Franklin, there was some good racing and the two novice scullers should be congratulated for competing at a regatta so early in the their rowing careers. The final regatta of the term was Ironbridge, which proved to be a splendid day - three girls, Francesca Keenlyside, Sian Welsh and Mia Richardson competed in a senior Women’s Eight with the ladies from Devil’s Elbow Rowing Club; they beat City of Oxford in the semi-finals, but despite leading the favourites Minerva, Bath, for much of the race they experienced rudder failure and were unfortunate not to register a win. There were other very good performances in a composite Women’s Four, also with Devil’s Elbow Rowing Club, and the Boys’ Fours. The boys excelled themselves in the Senior Men’s Eights and narrowly lost to Huntingdon Rowing Club in the final. There were other good performances by the single scullers, and Wilkinson showed his class gaining hard fought victories in both Senior Men’s Single Sculls and the Junior 17 events.
The **Athletics** squad competed at Bromsgrove, Birmingham and Worksop and there has been some impressive performances. Tegan Morley and Lewis Ackroyd also raced in an open event at Loughborough University in the 100m and 200m - both achieved a podium position in one of their events, with a victory in the heat of the 200m and a bronze in the 100m heat. These were fantastic results, especially given the fierce competition and that it was in the middle of examinations. Seven students were selected to take part in the Leicestershire County Athletics Event. The strength and depth of the students’ talent showed as there were strong performances which ensured that every competitor brought home a medal. Congratulations to Tegan Morley (County 200m Champion, 2nd in 100m, 3rd place Long Jump), Lewis Ackroyd (County Relay Champion, 2nd place 100m and 3rd in 200m), Tom Richardson (County Champion 200m, 400m and Relay), Matt Cross (2nd place Javelin), Joe Palmer (2nd place 3000m) and Joe Cross (3rd place Long Jump). 20 athletes also volunteered to support the Loughborough University International Athletics event in May where they meet Martyn Rooney.

The annual Army Foundation College, **Harrogate v Welbeck** DSFC Sports fixture took place at College on 21st June. Students competed in Athletics, Swimming and Rugby Sevens and it was typically an excellent afternoon of sport with some fierce competition but also a fine display of the core values and standards - Welbeck were the overall winners.

The **Triathletes** have demonstrated a high level of ability across the three disciplines of cycling, running and swimming. They have trained effectively and made significant progress particularly in their transitions from one section to the next (such as from cycling to running). The students enjoyed preparing for the open water swimming by training at nearby Six Hills, where there is a purpose built triathlon centre. 13 students competed in the Nottingham Triathlon, which took place at the National Watersports Centre. This comprised a 750m open water swim, a 20k cycle and a 5k run - with 960 competitors and being held at a national venue this was a daunting experience for our students. All of our students completed the race in creditable times. There were some outstanding performances from Sam Clegg and Matt Ryan, who came first and second, respectively, in the male 15-19 age category, and Emily Attfield who was 3rd in the equivalent female category.

The **Sailing Club** have benefitted from refurbishment of the Laser 2 fleet, and enabled greater water time, boat performance and the ability to race in stronger winds. Weekly races showed our dinghies were being sailed with increasing skill as their relative performance increased. The increased ability to race regularly is excellent news for the sailors and this will continue at Staunton Harold reservoir next term.

During the Easter holidays 35 students and 4 staff took part in the College Dive expedition on the Island of Cozumel, Mexico. Once named by Jacques Cousteau as one of the top 10 diving locations in the world, the Meso-American barrier reef gave the Welbeck divers wonderful coral gardens and drift dives along deep walls covered with sponges, fans and macro life. There were regular sightings of exotic fish, turtles, lobsters, crabs and even the occasional shark! All students returned having achieved qualifications as either PADI open water diver, or PADI advanced open water diver. Students also had the chance to soak up some of the local culture, with visits to Mayan ruins, markets and restaurants. A video of the expedition can be seen on YouTube by searching ‘DSFC Cozumel 2017’.

Naturally **Boarding** life has been dominated by the examination season and the need to maximise the support given to our students through this particularly challenging time of year. The first week in May saw our inaugural Emotional Wellbeing Awareness Week which included group discussions on 10 key ways to promote personal mental health and emotional wellbeing. At the same time the College Counsellor, Linda Williams, ran weekly Mindfulness sessions throughout the month of May.
In the final week of term 12 members of staff joined a Mental Health First Aid course bringing the number of qualified staff to 20 who are well equipped to support our students’ mental health needs.

Trenchard and Portland enjoyed their House dinners at the Pumping Station in Cropston and Quorn Country Hotel respectively at the end of April. Although socials are inevitably curtailed by the exams, the occasional Saturday theme night with a drink (beer, wine and cider being on offer) provided a welcome break from the revision treadmill. We are very grateful to the Catering Staff for the excellent Indian and Mexican fayre which featured on these evenings. The end of the A2 exams for the U6th was also marked by an American-themed meal followed by the live band ‘Reverb’ entertaining the students in the Quorum. ‘Reverb’, partly made up of the College music staff and our own musicians, also added to the superb entertainment on that evening.

The Inter-House competitions also gave a break from revision - Portland won both the Athletics and the Tennis and Alanbrooke topped the Welbeck Fitness Assessment (WFA) ranking. At the close of the year Alanbrooke were the winners of the Sporting Events and Portland the Non-Sporting events. The overall totals for the year are: Portland 775 points, Alanbrooke 715 points, Stirling 675 points, Nelson 715 points and Trenchard 515 points. Congratulations to Portland!

Major General Mitch Mitchell MBE (Late RE), 57 Entry, presided over The President’s Dinner. This was an excellent occasion that was enhanced by talks from a number of recent Old Welbexians. The Old Welbexian Association continues to play an integral part of the College and central to enabling Old Welbexians to support not only one another, but also current and future students.

And so, finally to our leaving students – 15 Entry. Now is the moment when our work begins …. as you leave Welbeck, our collective work is continued through you. The astronaut Jim Lovell, Commander of Apollo 13, made the following observation:

“There are three types of people in this world; people that make things happen, people that watch things happen and people that just wonder what happened.”

You have not been educated to become bystanders, but rather to make things happen and we expect you to shoulder that responsibility. Make no mistake, responsibility is a burden but it is also the greatest privilege to have the skills to shape events in your own lives and the lives of others around you. I hope that you are all equipped to enable you to flourish in the world you inherit and to be of good character: to be young men and women who possess compassion, curiosity, resilience, responsibility, integrity and independence. Thank you for what you have contributed to Welbeck and I hope that you will always feel part of this community, wherever your own unique journey takes you. So, we wish you luck, we wish you success and we wish you every happiness.

JPM
13.07.17