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Die Erfolgsgeschichte von Eton College

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It is a pleasure to be standing here before you to share some thoughts and ideas about how we make our schools successful. As independent schools we have some greater freedom to shape our schools' philosophy and their daily practice in ways often denied to government-run schools. We also have the challenge of controlling costs and raising the money to sustain and develop our schools. In this next 40 minutes or so, I will say something about why I believe Eton is a successful educational institution and also something about finances.

Eton College is a school rich in tradition. In the modern age there are those people, certainly in the UK, who decry tradition and claim that being connected to history means being shackled to the past. There is danger for any society or community in paying too great a reverence to the way things were in the past at the expense of valuing the present and preparing for the future, but it is my belief that a community such as a school can take great strength from its ethos and educational philosophy refined over many years and, at the same time, be dynamic and active in facing the future. This is our aim at Eton. I aim to explain something about the Eton mentality which has led to the development of a successful system of education, but I would like to stress that there is no one solution, no single approach to education that will work for all young people around the world. At Eton we always seek to learn from the achievements of others. What follows is an analysis of a philosophy of education that has grown and thrived for 568 years and which has flourished because it has stayed faithful to core principles while changing with the times.

1. Eton's history

In the year 1440 King Henry VI founded "The King's College of Our Lady of Eton beside Windsor". Over the years this title has been contracted to the simple "Eton College". The original name of the school is important because it reflects the religious motivation behind the foundation. In many ways King Henry was a weak man and a poor ruler, but he was a devout Christian and saw his foundation of the school at Eton and also of King's College at Cambridge University in 1441 as his lasting achievement and legacy – and so it has proved.

Attitudes to religion have changed over the centuries and the School's position has altered, too, in part reflecting changes in society. Founded in the Roman Catholic tradition, the School became Anglican during the Protestant Reformation in England in the mid 16th Century. The Anglican tradition remains at the heart of school life, but these days the School also has chaplains and tutors for Catholic, Jewish, Moslem and Hindu boys. While happily recognising and supporting different religious faiths, it is the significance of spiritual life that remains central to the Eton philosophy of education. Eton does not see itself as a factory production line, turning out large numbers of units for employment, but rather as a place where a boy can learn to be himself, but also to be more than he thought

he could be. We want each boy to have that true sense of self worth which will enable him to stand up for himself and for a purpose greater than himself and, in doing so, to be of value to society.

King Henry intended that the school at Eton should be part of a large community of priests, together with 70 poor scholars who would be educated at his own expense. To that end, he endowed his new school with lands which would provide a substantial income, as well as holy relics. The so-called holy relics (for example, pieces of wood claimed to be parts of the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified) have long since disappeared, but the lands and the income have remained, enabling Eton to continue to offer places at the school to boys from poor or less advantaged families. Today, about 20% of the boys at Eton are in receipt of a scholarship or bursary. Some of these scholarships continue to be funded by King Henry's money, but others have been the result of occasional, generous benefactions by well-wishers of the school over the centuries.

From the very early days boys also came to Eton whose parents paid for their boarding and tuition. Thus it was Eton created an interesting social cocktail of boys from poor and rich families – a mix that continues to this day. While many boys come from comfortable, and wealthy, families, it is the case that we have boys who come from homes in inner city tower blocks as well as castles. Eton offers an elite education, encouraging pupils to strive for excellence in everything they do, but as far as it is possible to do so, we want an open elite, a school in which we welcome boys from different social backgrounds, religions and nations. This, we believe, is a modern interpretation of the intentions of our Founder and we have now begun seriously to raise money in an organised way to pay for more scholarships and bursaries, a subject to which I shall return later. This is an important issue for us: we have no interest in providing education only for a narrow band of wealthy families.

2. Principles of Education

Times change, and each generation must interpret for itself the educational values in which it believes and which are relevant in bringing forward the young people who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

I started my own career as a student at Eton some 40 years ago, and returned as Head Master in September 2002. After such a period of absence, it was most interesting to identify the changes that had taken place during that period of time. Eton now has many wonderful, modern facilities and buildings; the range of academic subjects available to boys has dramatically increased, for example, 11 foreign languages are now taught; the work ethic is stronger than it used to be (boys are now much more aware of the competitive world into which they will go). All this is positive: Eton is a better place than it was in my day. But not all is for the better: changing social attitudes in the country as a whole are reflected at Eton – respect for authority is less assured, relationships are more casual, cynicism is an easy retreat, belief in anything is less readily stated than ever it was. The challenge to me and my colleagues is to continue to develop the range of modern skills and flexibility our boys will need, while reinforcing those traditional values which we believe underpin good education and which properly prepare young people to face their future.

To this end, I invited the 160 Masters (teachers) of Eton College to join with me in re-evaluating an Eton education. The exercise was stimulating and prompted fresh debate. We also involved parents and boys. The result was a distillation, a refining of our core principles. We re-stated our belief that Eton will remain a fully residential school for boys, accepting as students only those young people

who wish to live as part of a residential community. We also affirmed our commitment to five key principles that we are committed to;

- promoting the best habits of independent thought and learning in the pursuit of excellence;
- providing a broadly-based education designed to enable all boys to discover their strengths, and to make the most of their talents within Eton and beyond;
- engendering respect for individuality, difference, the importance of teamwork and the contribution that each boy makes to the life of the school and community;
- supporting pastoral care that nurtures physical health, emotional maturity and spiritual richness; and
- fostering self confidence, enthusiasm, perseverance, tolerance, and integrity.

3. Survey of employers

Having described Eton's core principles, it is instructive to place them in the UK environment. There have been numerous attempts to identify failings in the British education system which, some believe, have led to failures in the management of the British economy and the success of UK plc.

Some years ago I decided, as someone involved in the education of the young, that it was important to have a clear picture for myself and my school. At that time I was Headmaster of a school called Oakham School, a co-educational day and boarding school of 1000 pupils situated in the middle of England. With the help of some industrial companies, I established a project known as Oakham 20:20, which investigated relationships between schools and the adult workplace. As part of this project we engaged in a survey of employers of graduates in the UK. The response to our survey was very high, indicating the level of concern. The survey showed that the principal failings of well-qualified graduates presenting themselves for employment in leading UK companies were:

- lack of initiative,
- low ability to work effectively in teams and
- poor oral communication.

In conversation with a highly successful British business leader as part of the project, he described the particular virtues most likely to lead to success in the business world as enthusiasm, energy and endurance. Academic ability and technical skill he took as the base line, the starting position – no more than that.

We took these findings into account when we re-evaluated our educational principles at Eton. There are those who argue that education for a fulfilled, creative adult life is at odds with education for success in the commercial world of business. I disagree. Well-rounded, confident, determined, articulate young people are capable of success in whichever sphere of activity they wish to engage.

Statements of intent or mission are all very well, but the real challenge is translating them into a practical reality, into the currency of everyday school life. In doing so at Eton, we stress two key areas; the pastoral and the broad curriculum. Eton has a reputation for academic success and there is no doubt that this reputation is attractive to parents, so it might seem strange that I should stress the pastoral and the broad curriculum comprising the physical, cultural, aesthetic and spiritual aspects. It is our

firm belief that an all-embracing approach to education, in which pastoral structures are secure and in which all pupils are expected to be fully involved in a wide range of activities, produces the best results academically and in other ways. We want our leavers to be self-confident, adaptable, purposeful young men who will strive hard for their own benefit and for the benefit of the society around them.

4. Total Pastoral Care

When I visit schools around the world, including boarding schools, I often come across institutions that are efficient providers of academic courses, sometimes with a good games or arts programme in addition, but seldom do I see a really effective pastoral community. In my view, effective pastoral care is the foundation stone of an excellent school. All other aspirations that the school may have for its pupils follow from the care, guidance and active support of the professional adults who create the atmosphere in which young people will flourish. By "pastoral care" I do not just mean the provision of basic necessities and a system of discipline, but an all-embracing concern for each pupil in every aspect of their personal development. I call this Total Pastoral Care.

There are 1300 boys at Eton aged 13 – 18. College is the name of the boarding house for the 70 scholars King Henry had originally prescribed. All the other boys are divided into 24 residential units known as boarding Houses with about 50 boys in each House. There are thus 10 boys aged 13, 10 boys aged 14 and so on in each house. Each House is the personal responsibility of a House Master (a teacher of experience and wisdom) who lives with his own family together with the boys. In addition each House also has a residential Dame, an accomplished person who runs the domestic side of the House. There are other Masters and support staff attached to each House, but it is the House Master and Dame who are the focal point of the boys' lives at school. It is important that the House Master feels a very strong personal responsibility to his boys and it takes exceptional people to fulfil the exacting demands of this role well. It is one of Eton's defining strengths that the House Masters have complete responsibility for their boys; they are expected to know them very well and to be the principal point of contact with parents. At Eton, the boarding Houses are semi-autonomous – ships in the flotilla each with its own captain. Boys usually feel a strong loyalty to their House. From this you can see that appointing first-rate House Masters is one of my principal challenges and tasks as Head Master.

5. Total Curriculum

In the same way that the totality of pastoral care is essential, so, too, is the need for a curriculum that embraces all facets of a boy's development. Etonians are expected to work hard and achieve good academic results, but they are also expected to be fully and purposefully involved in a wide range of activities. As I have already indicated, I believe that the lasting skills that make young people successful well into their adult lives are learnt and developed *at least as much* outside the classroom as inside it.

For this reason we continue to stress the virtues of purposeful activity outside the classroom, in particular regular involvement in sports which develops good health, leadership, and team spirit. Six days each week we make time over for sport, although not all boys will be playing sport every day. As a small footnote, I might add that the Duke of Wellington is famously supposed to have said that "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" – not in the classroom.

Emphasis is also given to music, creative arts, cadet force, community service, society meetings, addresses by visiting speakers and many other events and activities. If a boy suggests an activity which the School does not offer, we do our best to introduce it – our motivation is to support each boy’s enthusiasm; to use the language of tailoring, we try to make each boy’s education “bespoke”.

With a strong, pastoral framework and a genuine commitment to breadth of activity in the curriculum, I believe academic and intellectual life flourishes most freely. Education in school should be an holistic experience, developing the whole person. For a variety of reasons, the independent sector in the UK is better equipped to offer this vision and practice than the government-run schools. It is a quality of experience for which parents are prepared to pay.

6. Boarding Schools

As I have already explained, Eton is a fully residential boarding school. Most schools in the UK are non-residential, day schools, but the English boarding school tradition is distinctive and offers particular qualities in education: Boarding schools are able to give more time through the day and the week to develop a full programme. In order to operate effectively, boarding schools stress the value of community. Good boarding schools stimulate social awareness. In an effective boarding system, students learn to take responsibility. They learn that the way they behave every day is what brings them the respect of other people. They learn that respect is not automatic, that it has to be earned. In short, they learn how to show leadership. As a result of the close connections made over five or six years in a boarding community, relationships are created which can last for life. It has been said that boarding school students know each other better than anyone else they are likely to meet, outside their families. These friendships often also continue with their teachers. The modern world experiences many social tensions and problems. I believe good boarding schools have the potential to help create solutions for these problems, by using their unique residential environment to develop balanced young people who have a social conscience and the ability to take a lead. Indeed, it can be argued that boarding schools are more relevant to social progress now than they have ever been.

7. The need for fund-raising

I have shown something of the Eton approach to education. Whether or not it is attractive to people, Eton has a clear philosophy, if you like, a strong “sense of itself”. I have been particularly asked to talk to you about fund-raising. It may be an obvious point, but there will be no successful fund-raising without the strong foundation of a clearly understood idea of education. Putting it bluntly, get the school right and the fund-raising will prove relatively straightforward.

That said, it may come as a surprise to you that Eton has very little history of organised fund-raising. In fact for 560 years there was almost no attempt to raise money from well-wishers for the benefit of the school. In retrospect it seems strange that there was never a coherent strategy, but there were two reasons why this situation obtained. Firstly, from time to time over the years very generous individual benefactors made substantial gifts to the school. Secondly, and more importantly, the prevailing culture found it difficult to do something as demeaning and, frankly, socially rude as to hint or suggest that money might be given to a school.

Eton's endowment, first created from gifts from King Henry VI, has accumulated some £200m (around 260m Euros at current exchange rates) which is no mean sum, and some people would argue that it stands as proof that a school does not need an organised policy of fund-raising. Yet the financial demands on schools and the inexorable rise in costs, not least from ever-increasing legislation which is expensive to implement and also from the expectations of staff salaries especially in a demanding, fully residential environment, combine to exert considerable upward pressure on the fee we charge. Eton is fortunate in being heavily over-subscribed. I have no doubt that we could increase the fee significantly and still fill our places, however, in doing that we would dramatically change the nature and purpose of the school: it would be financially richer but a spiritually poorer place. Therefore it seems to me essential that Eton should have a coherent fund-raising strategy in order to contain increases of charges to parents, to continue to develop high quality facilities and stimulating educational programmes and also further to open up access to the school through scholarships and bursaries for families who could not afford the fee.

It is for these reasons that over the last 6 or 7 years we have seriously begun to look at the way we communicate with our well-wishers: parents, alumni (known as Old Boys or Old Etonians) and other people interested in supporting what we believe is a major educational institution with a distinctive contribution to make both to our country and to the development of educational principles. In short, what I am about to describe is work-in-progress. I suspect that there will be those of you here who are rather more advanced in this exercise than we are.

8. Friend-raising

To begin with, we had to recognise that we had been peculiarly bad at staying in regular contact with our Old Boys. I left Eton myself as a student some 35 years ago and as an Old Boy received one rather perfunctory newsletter each year. There was no other contact for 30 years until I came back as Head Master. In order to fill the vacuum of personal contact, we began to create a matrix of social engagements. What the Americans call "friend-raising". This is essential before any attempt is made to raise money: in other words, friend-raising comes before fund-raising. As an experiment some formal dinners were introduced for some of the oldest Old Etonians; with a little experience, these social events have developed a successful formula. The whole of one year group, those who left in 1955, for example, are invited to attend the school for an event which begins with a Chapel Service (which perhaps surprisingly means a great deal to many of those who attend) and a group photograph, followed by plenty of opportunity for mingling over drinks, then a formal and very good feast in College Hall by candlelight, the culmination of which is speeches given by one of the returning Old Boys (usually highly sentimental in tone!) and by myself as Head Master. I take the opportunity, in light-hearted vein, to talk about my own experiences as a boy at Eton but also about the modern Eton and our hopes and ambitions for the future. We take some trouble to make attendance at the event easy, for example by arranging transport to and from London. We do not ask directly for money.

9. Fund-raising

While this social network was being developed, we took the major step to create an American-style Development Office. We spent a considerable time looking for the right kind of person and eventu-

ally alighted on an American who had the twin advantages of having worked in the highly successful team at Yale University but also had experience of working in a British boarding school. The real trick, it seemed to us, was to harness the professional dynamism of an American approach to fund-raising with the cultural expectations of the British. This has not always been easy to achieve but we are learning.

With a Director of Development in place with two support staff, we set about organising ourselves methodically. Our approach to friend-raising was given greater direction. We have arrived at a plan which will give every former pupil of Eton the opportunity to come back for a formal dinner (for which there is no charge) on the 20th, 30th and 40th anniversaries of the year they left the school. On the 50th and subsequent anniversaries those events will be held at lunch-time in respect of the age of those attending. In order to sustain momentum, we have also introduced drinks parties held in a fashionable venue in London at the half-way points, that is to say at the 25th, 35th, 45th and so on anniversary of leaving the school. Thus from the 20th anniversary onwards, all former pupils are invited every five years to an enjoyable, lively, friendly social engagement for which they do not pay and at which there is no expectation they should contribute financially. It is an expensive way of establishing social contacts, but we believe it is essential. We have taken the view that the 20th anniversary (that is when men would typically be aged 38) is the right time to start these encounters. Experience suggests to us that it is around the age of 40, when our Old Boys have grown up and made their way in the world, that they are genuinely interested in re-connecting with their school.

At the same time we have also established special interest groups. There are burgeoning clubs for men who were rowers, who were tennis players, cricketers and so on. These sporting connections form their own bond and are often very strong.

The new Development Office also took over responsibility for ensuring that there was proper written communication with alumni and with pupils' parents. Gone is the rather half-hearted attempt at conveying some information: in its place, we now have regular, well presented, informative magazines. Key to the success of communication is having and sustaining an effective database. It has taken us three years to identify the best and most comprehensive system for us which will integrate well with our website which we are in the throes of completely overhauling: we have also created an Old Etonian website with a social networking facility. As I said, this is a work-in-progress.

This is all very well, but where does it lead? One has to hold one's nerve as the bills mount up for all the friend-raising without any apparent return from the fund-raising.

Received wisdom has it that a very considerable bulk of the money raised in any successful campaign (of the order of 80%) is raised from a small number of people. Our first step was to identify a good Chairman, someone who was a positive and influential Old Etonian and also in a position to give a significant sum of money himself. We have identified such a person and he is probably the single most effective part of the successful equation. As he himself expressed it: it is very difficult for the Head Master or anyone else associated with the school to ask a seriously wealthy individual for money; he said, "I know these people, I can do the asking and they will listen" - and this has proved to be the case. Around the Chairman we have built a group of some 8-10 individuals all of whom have been prepared to donate a significant sum of money (between £500,000 and £2m each). Not only are we appreciative of their generosity, but far more so of their willingness to expand the circle. They go and talk to people they can believe will help significantly.

While we intend to have a rolling approach to fund-raising rather than going for the more traditional British approach of the individual campaign for a targeted purpose, we have nonetheless set out an initial target in the belief that this help focus the mind. Our initial target is to raise £50m to add to our endowment. Over the last 18 months just around £25m has been given or pledged from a relatively small number of donors. Having reached this mark, we will now move on to the next phase which is to open up the opportunity to give. Now and only now will we approach those who have attended school reunion dinners, for example. We know that achieving a positive response from 50% of our Old Boys would be a major achievement. Even the most successful, long established American fund-raising operations would be very pleased to achieve that figure. Whatever the disappointments along the way, the prize is substantial and we are determined to make progress.

It makes good sense to enable interest parties to give to a variety of school activities. If one focuses all one's fund-raising on one specific object, for example building a new sports hall, one risks losing the interest of those who have no particular affinity for sport. What has been particularly interesting over this initial period has been that, despite the fact that a range of options has been advanced to those who have indicated they would give money, the dominating interest has been in giving money for scholarships and bursaries to enable boys whose families could not otherwise afford the fees to attend the school. I wonder if this is an interesting sign of the times. Twenty years ago, when I first started as a Head Master at another school, donors tended to be interested in material things: a building with their name on it, for example. At this particular time, donors seem to be more interested in helping people directly. I have stressed the argument that it is an axiom of education that young people teach each other far more than they are taught by adults and that a healthy school must have a diverse mix of talents and types. Our common theme is that we seek to recruit boys of character and ability from wherever they may come. Our fund-raising campaign helps make this a reality.

We constantly think about ways to improve our fund-raising operation. The most recent phase is to establish year group representatives across the age range from 18-80. In a sense we rely on the same underlying principle that informs our educational philosophy: in a vibrant environment, students teach each other. In a vibrant fund-raising campaign, donors encourage other donors. We aim to create a virtuous circle in which the school authorities are in the background: a light touch, if you like. It is certainly true in British culture, that a professional fund-raiser (especially if he has an American accent) is likely to put off prospective donors and not attract them: greater subtlety is required.

As I indicated earlier we constantly review what we do and the way we do it. Great institutions survive because they are based on sound principles; they thrive because they never become complacent and remain sensitive to the needs of the present and make a judgement about the demands of the future. For us at Eton, organised fund-raising is one additional way to respond to the needs of the present and the demands of the future.

10. Footnote: the purpose of it all

I would like to finish by returning to a theme at the outset of my talk. In doing so, I remind myself of the purpose of fund-raising and all the efforts we make to enhance a successful school.

At its best, tradition should influence our modern approach to education. I continue to find inspiration in the words of an Eton Master who wrote about education at Eton in 1869. His name was William Cory and he wrote that a boy may acquire a certain amount of knowledge at school, much of

which may be forgotten, although the shadow of lost knowledge at least will protect him from many illusions. More important than knowledge, however, is learning the arts and habits which will last for a lifetime “*for taste, discrimination and mental courage*”. Cory was describing a road to fulfilment and to self-knowledge. In the end, if we are to be successful, helping young people find that road must be our goal.