

Pershore Prize Giving

I am sure that most people here are well aware of what my connection is to Pershore High. I was only a parent here for a very short time but the relationship formed with the teachers and pupils here as a result of our shared trauma I hope will be a long lasting one. From the very first moments after I lost Felix Pershore High have been steadfast supporters and friends to my family and me and for that I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

I spent many hours after Felix died thinking about what had happened to him in his very short life and what had made him feel that he could never be happy. The term I kept coming back to time and time again was Kindness.

Kindness seems to be disappearing from our vocabulary. It is seen as a weakness not a strength. People are applauded for being harsh and cruel and those who complain about it are labeled as 'snowflakes' and told to 'man up'. In the media more airtime is given to those who seek to humiliate and hurt others particularly on reality television. We have fewer and fewer role models for our children who display warm giving characteristics.

Social media has provided an outlet for a huge amount of negativity and hate behind the anonymity of a keyboard. This, plus all the other pressures they are facing now, has had a huge effect on young people with anxiety and depression becoming commonplace. There isn't a switch that we can flick to reverse the negative effects of modern so called progress. But I do believe that there is a positive way forward. Education is key to this in my view and we all have a collective responsibility to turn the tide.

Children need to be taught that its “Cool to be Kind” They need to understand that positive behaviour reaps rewards both for them and the people they show Kindness and compassion to. Acts of kindness actually release endorphins, which give a sense of wellbeing. Natures own Prozac! They need to be encouraged to stand up to bullying and unkind behaviour and they need to understand that actions have consequences. Children are after all our future and can lead the way to a more positive kinder world.

The students here at Pershore High will always hold a special place in my heart, as this was where Felix found friends for the first time. To the leavers in Year 13 I thank you for this and wish you all every success in your future endeavours.

The ‘Supreme Kindness’ prize is a wonderful positive move towards this vision of a new world. The prizes name combines both mine and Felix’s passions, mine of a kinder, happier world and Felix’s one of edgy skateboard clothing! Recognition of positive behaviour is so important and I am so pleased to be able to congratulate its recipients tonight.

I am sad also tonight to say goodbye to Clive Corbett who has been such a good friend to my family these past few months. I hope that retirement will bring some relaxation for him but I suspect he will be pretty busy still. I have found solace in my garden in darker moments and understand that Clive gains pleasure from his too. A tree was planted here at the school for Felix; I also have one, as does my brother in Spain and my mother. I was reminded a few days ago of a poem by Rupert Brooke that had some resonance with me especially as we approach the 100th year anniversary of the end of WW1.

The first lines read

If I should die ,think only this of me;

That there is some corner of a foreign field

That is forever England

In my head I substitute Felix for England but like to think of small reminders of him in gardens all over the countryside. So Clive, here is a small one for your garden – A Felix Crousse peony which I hope will give you pleasure.

Thank you Pershore High for all your Kindness to The Alexander family. We will remember it always.