



# Bishop Wordsworth's School

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Dear Parents and Year 13 students

The rather sudden end to the school year towards the end of last week made for a very strange and wholly unsatisfactory conclusion to a school career for all of the boys. Ordinarily we would have had a day of celebration, enabling boys and teachers to share the memories accumulated over the years as well as future plans and dreams. Usually I get all of the boys together for a celebratory photo that then graces the back cover of the BWS Prize Giving Programme; over the years there is an archive of pictures, serried ranks of boys in high spirits as they suddenly realise that they have reached the very brink of adult independence. Alas it was not to be in summer 2020.

At the Year 13 summer barbeque on the No11 lawn I invariably speak to the assembled group of boys briefly as they consume their burgers. My aim is of course to give them a send-off, to wish them all the luck in the World and to thank them all for making their school so special. But, at the same time, I want to refocus their minds on what should be most important for them as they make their way beyond Bishop's. I think that this part of the message is even more critical this year, when their world has suddenly come to a halt and nothing seems to work anymore. Perspective is important for them, and I almost always use the short reading below to try to get them to think beyond school, beyond exams and (this year) beyond the current temporary crisis. The text was originally written by Malcolm Muggeridge, theologian and broadcaster, and is entitled 'Response to Life'. I hope that you like it.

### **Response to life**

*At its highest level ... happiness is the ecstasy which mystics have inadequately described. At more humdrum levels it is human love, the delights and beauties of our dear earth, its colours and shapes and sounds; the enchantment of understanding and laughing, and all other exercise of such faculties as we possess; the marvel of the meaning of everything, fitfully glimpsed, inadequately expounded, but ever-present.*

*Such is happiness; not compressible into a pill; not translatable into a sensation; lost to whoever would grasp it to himself alone; not to be gorged out of a trough, or torn out of another's body, or paid into a bank, or driven along an autoroute, or fired in gun-salutes, or discovered in the stratosphere. Existing, intangible, in every true response to life, and absent in every false one; propounded through the centuries in every noteworthy word and deed and thought; expressed in art and literature and music; in vast cathedral and tiny melodies; in everything that is harmonious, and in the unending heroism of imperfect men reaching after perfection.*

Year 13 2020 – go well, take care, be inspired and keep in touch via all of the usual means, digital and otherwise. You are the future – and it is in good hands.

Best wishes

Stuart Smallwood  
Head Master