



**Encomium for Mr David Summerscale upon his retirement as Chairman of  
Governors at Kensington Wade**

Given by Professor Hugo de Burgh at the meeting of the Board of Governors on  
26<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Today we have celebrated the school's academic achievements, the immersion approach to bilingual teaching pioneered by Mrs Wallace and Wang Jing Laoshu. They have developed an effective teaching model which ensures that our youngsters are both prepared for 11+ and use spoken and written Chinese as well as English. We learnt today that first places have been taken in 5 categories of the UK's national version of the International Chinese Language Competition 2023-4 and it is one of our pupils who has been selected to go onto the global finals in Beijing, representing the UK.

Today is a very important day for another reason, that one of the foundations of these and all the school's other successes, the first ever chairman of governors of Kensington Wade, is retiring. I don't know quite why he is retiring, because he is as vigorous as he was when I first asked him to be chairman of governors in 2017, but I think he wants to make sure that the job goes to Rodney Harris, another great teacher with a distinguished record at Westminster, and whom we are all delighted to welcome.

When I went on the website of the Assam Valley School, of which David Summerscale is also a governor, I was awed to see its grandeur. Upon arrival, he is escorted by mounted cavalry in orange turbans and cricket blazers, bearing lances. Unfortunately, mounted cavalry is not something we have been able to provide at Kensington Wade. Yet.

When I think back to 2017, I cannot really understand how I had the brass neck to invite such an eminent educationist and the head of what is often described as the best school in Britain, following a distinguished career in Asia and at home. Our school barely existed. Kensington Wade had few pupils and less money, was starting from scratch with – for England - an experimental curriculum, and to say the least, a potentially dicky future. We did not know that Mrs Wallace would turn out to be a force of nature and able to recruit teachers who could lay golden eggs. We did not know that the Laing family would, in generous recognition of

an ancient service, be prepared to be our main sponsor and philanthropist through thick and thin.

Despite all this and the absence of cavalry, David did accept the chalice and the fact that he did that is indicative of the kind of man he is.

Great schools, like enterprises, cannot succeed without money, but that is not a sufficient condition. Many other investments: intellectual, managerial and moral are needed to create an enterprise such as this.

David Summerscale has made his investment as Chairman of Governors over the last 6 years. He agreed because he belongs to that moral universe, in which teachers give as much as they can give without any thoughts of payback, in a great tradition of service to others, a moral universe to which I can only hope to aspire.

We have had our Matthew Arnolds, but this heroic tradition of teaching is even more Chinese than it is English, in the sense that it has been the standard since the Chinese Enlightenment of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Recently I have been reading the diaries of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese teacher, Liu Dapeng, and DMS came to mind as I read of that Chinese teacher confronting the great issues of his time.

Is schooling about social mobility or moral inculcation? Is education about the transmission of the best that has been thought and written by our predecessors or is a matter of introducing children to the latest ideological fads and cultural fashions? Is it to tell children that they are wonderful or to teach them the skills that they may become wonderful?

All these questions and many others, often only too practical, loomed before us in 2017. The moment I met David I knew that he would know how to help us navigate them, despite a commercial and deconstructive environment, because of his foundation in Christian ethics and that Anglican tolerance and understanding which he expresses in his every action.

I knew nothing at all about teaching children or running a school and had been dependent upon Adrian Richardson, who passed away just as Kensington Wade opened. David Summerscale's presence became only too necessary. Both Mrs Wallace and I needed him in the background, and sometimes out front.

He held at least three roles. First, he guided and pulled together the governors, showing them how such a committee should operate and how it might contribute. Second, he attended activities of the school and often opened them with a welcoming speech and words of appreciation for the teachers. His very presence made clear to our parents and visitors what our expectations for the school are, where we wished to position it in the complicated firmament of English education, a school which would be uncompromising for the moral, cultural and intellectual development of its pupils.

Thirdly, he was behind Mrs Wallace and me, with that wealth of experience and civilised approach to life and to schooling, upon which we could draw for counsel. We did look to him for advice, and we always knew that we would get a reasoned and humane analysis and suggestions. Even when we did not go and speak to him, he was there guiding us, because we knew by osmosis, enough about the man to know what his view would be, so powerful was the life force emanating from him.

His last, and most important, service as chairman, has been to guide the selection committee in the recruitment of a new headmaster.

So, thank you David. Thank you for all that you have done for Kensington Wade and particularly for Jo Wallace and me over the last years. We are sorry to see you go as Chairman, but happy that you will remain as a Governor of the school for which you have done so much to create.