



Eaton Square Schools



Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear all,

This morning, Eaton Square pupils gathered together in their schools to take part in assemblies to mark the incredibly sad news of Queen Elizabeth II's death. Moments such as these are difficult to fully absorb and the enormity of her passing will begin to unfold over the ensuing days, weeks and months.

All of us in our lives require constants in order to have stability; threads of continuity and strength which tether us and act as anchors in the rough waters which can sometimes occur. For some, there may be more than one person or place which allows such feelings of security to grow from within. For many, it often revolves around family; a figurehead who has been there for many years; or perhaps a setting which has always brought calmness and a feeling of 'home'. Rarely does this feeling grow in relation to, for the majority of world, someone who has never been met.

Queen Elizabeth was, for me, such a person. For the vast majority of the population of the nation, the Commonwealth and for many other countries around the world, the Queen was the only monarch they have known throughout their lifetimes. Prime Ministers, Presidents, Popes, governments and even countries have come and gone during her reign, but she has been there, steadfast and true, throughout. The outpouring of sorrow at her passing from the nations and leaders of the world are testament to this, as can be seen by the countless references to her character, her sense of purpose, her unshakeable belief in duty and, above all else, her mission of service.

In her first speech to the world, at the age of 21, four years before she ascended to the throne, she dedicated herself, publicly, to a life of service. It is unquestionably true that she, of all the world leaders and those who have been in the public eye, fulfilled this ideal with a remarkable dedication and fortitude throughout her 70 years on the throne. In her last communication to the people, her letter of thanks at the culmination of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, she ended with the words, 'Your servant, Elizabeth'.

We have all seen over the years how difficult and challenging it is for anyone in the public eye to live a life which is constantly being observed, critically analysed and appraised



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without fault lines appearing and weaknesses manifesting themselves. This is true today more than ever before. Yet the Queen, to my knowledge, never faltered, even at times of the most intense scrutiny. Her ability to remain outside of politics, to stay distant yet strong and highly respected by those leading the nations of the world, with her unparalleled wealth of experience, allowed her to be a reassuring sounding board for them all. Here at home this began with Winston Churchill and ended this week on Tuesday with the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss.

This sense of service however did not stop with those for whom she was Queen. Although she was known to have said that duty came before family, it is clear that she gave of her time to them all; her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Time together in Scotland when at Balmoral was hugely important to her; away from the glare of the public eye, time to reconnect and to be a family. It is this too perhaps which resonates with so many of us. That, although she was 'the Queen', she was also a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to a family she loved deeply and served fully.

For our pupils and students, the events of the next days of mourning and then the ascension to the throne of Charles III will inevitably take time to adjust to as we enter a new era; a time without the sovereign we have known for so long. An unknown period where we may feel as if the thread of constancy which we have known all of our lives has gone, and that we are no longer tethered and secure. As schools, we will do our utmost to support the children through this time, guiding and helping them to adjust as needed, and allowing them to come to terms with the new structure. It will be important that they feel they can talk to someone about their feelings should they need to, and please do support them and us in reminding them that there are staff within the schools who are there to listen.

The Queen has given us the finest example of how to serve. We must be grateful for her sovereignty and leadership, but above all else for her life of service. I am encouraged to know that our students perceive serving others as a crucial part of our values, and that we can remember Her Majesty's reign as the pinnacle of one who gave her life to fulfil this purpose.

Mrs Watt, Mrs Townshend and I, together with the Head Boy and Girl from the Prep. and the School Captains of the Senior School, were at Buckingham Palace this afternoon as King Charles III arrived. They witnessed the taking down of the Union flag at half-mast and the raising of the Royal Standard. A moment in history which they will never forget and the beginning of a new era for the monarchy: one in which we hope that service will remain at the forefront of all that they do.

Mr Hepher  
Principal Eaton Square Schools