

## *From the Headmaster of Winchester College*

On 12 November 2010 Winchester College received its Registered Charity number 1139000 CC:01711756. With all ancient charities, including Oxford and Cambridge colleges, hitherto exempted by virtue of their existence long before modern charity law was invented, Winchester has been required to go through the process of registration.

What will change? Very little indeed. Winchester is one of the oldest charitable providers of education in the world. We have been charitable since 1382, when the founder, William of Wykeham, put up buildings in which seventy poor boys could live and learn, funded entirely out of the endowment he left. That principle has been in place ever since. True, the School has got larger over the centuries – in 1700 it was 300 strong, in 1900, 500, in 2000, 700 – so the endowment had to be stretched increasingly thinly; but even so, there was always a significant number of parents whose sons could benefit from the education the School offers because financial assistance was available. The School believes its long history of assisting parents who need help with fees speaks for itself and that we have nothing to prove; but Winchester has been happy to respond in a constructive way to the more exacting and systematic approach recently developed by the Charity Commission, which has been useful to us in causing us to look at ourselves again.

In an ideal world, of course, every boy could come regardless of his parents' financial circumstances, as was the case at the beginning, and perhaps one day we will achieve the ideal. The current policy of the Governing Body in respect of awarding grants is consistent with the furtherance of the Charity's objectives. Scholarships and most prizes and similar awards are awarded on the basis of merit and the individual's educational ability; but bursaries and other similar awards are determined on the basis of need. Naturally we need to ensure that the quality of our academic provision is not compromised by our reduction in scholarship awards, and we monitor that issue closely; but so far, the quality of our scholarship candidature is as strong as ever.

To adhere more closely to this intention and to widen access further, Winchester is pursuing a two-fold strategy, to redirect awards out of existing resources more towards bursaries and to increase the total value of awards available by building the endowment. We are appealing to our extensive alumnae network, past and current parents to help us with this ongoing work. We feel, nevertheless, that the many ways, other than bursary provision, in which charitable institutions like Winchester contribute to the public benefit, should receive more credit, and it is good to see signs that the Commission is to widen the scope of its analysis.

Having decided to reduce the value of scholarships from 50% to 25% in September 2005, the Governing Body took the decision in March 2008 that it would make further significant changes in respect of scholarships and bursaries. Funds awarded for scholarships have been reduced *per se* with a corresponding increase in needs-based bursaries. Scholars continue to be admitted by competitive examination, but the value of scholarships was reduced from 25% to 15% of the fee in 2009 and to 5% in 2010. Those levels of remission will pertain throughout the recipient's time. Since 2009 all parents seeking a scholarship for their son have been invited at the point of application to submit to a means test. From 2011 scholarships will attract no *prima facie* remission on the fee and all funds awarded from the endowment will be by way of a bursary to assist any shortfall in parents' ability to pay the full fee.

These modernisations of Winchester's procedures have, it is fair to say, been stimulated by the new requirements of the Charity Commissioners, but these reforms join a sequence stretching back hundreds of years. They are reforms consistent with Winchester's ancient pursuit not of elitism but of excellence. And this excellence is shared and broadened not only

in creating access to boys of ability who want to join our school, but also through our commitment to our partner academy in the maintained sector at Midhurst, and the Crown and Manor Boys' Club in Hoxton, North London. And that is not to mention the ancient buildings, grounds and water meadows we maintain for public use and benefit.

So we're pleased to have received our Registered Charity number, but while the number is new, what it signifies has been happening here for a very long time.

10 January 2011