



# Wales HIGH SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER: MR. G. DI'IASIO

27 April 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

I know a number of you will have heard about the passing of John Day, former Headteacher of Wales High School. Although John has not enjoyed good health for a while, the news of his death was nonetheless devastating, and our thoughts first of all turn to his family, Melanie and Hannah and Matt. All of them are in our hearts and our prayers.

It is very difficult to put into words John's essential importance in the life of our community at Wales, and his impact in the lives of so many of us. His loss finally breaks the link with the school's first staff roster, and perhaps we could take a moment to reflect on what he has given to us all.

John's core belief as a teacher, and then as Deputy Head and Headteacher, can be summed up in his own words: "If the children are just numbers to us, then that's all we'll ever be to them." He fostered a philosophy based on mutual respect and warmth, on consideration and pride in the school and our own personal standards. Many of us will remember him as an adored Deputy Head, reinforcing and supporting our efforts to teach less cooperative students, and there are hundreds of stories – and all of them are true – about how John won over naughty boys and girls, and their parents, through a mixture of charm and strength and kindness, with the odd confidence trick thrown in!

As Headteacher, we shared his joy and pride in the culmination of his career, and to see Wales through his eyes has always been a privilege. Many of us talk even now about the 'Wales Way', and John came to embody that combination of expectation and rigour, of community spirit and humanity. His desire to serve the school took him onto the governing body, where he continued to support and uphold the school's efforts and values.

In his first year as a teacher at Wales in 1971, John ran a small Summer Camp to North Wales, and he took part in another one hundred and fifty-odd ventures between then and his last Summer Camp in 2018. He once joked that the school owed him nearly five years of accrued holidays as a result! The camps were based on a cocktail of adventure and independence, and the modelling of decent and considerate group behaviour. And they were marvellous fun, as was John.

Perhaps it is this last point which is our greatest loss. John's warmth as a person meant that he was able to support many of his colleagues and friends through crisis and periods of weakness and need. Many of us cherish memories of his care and generosity, and it is no exaggeration to say he saved careers and perhaps even lives. His sense of humour was part of his legend, and his tall tales, shared with the students in 'full-school squash', were impish and hilarious.

Of course, lots of us would like to come together as a community to celebrate John, his friendship, his kindness and his larger-than-life role as 'Mister Wales' in so many of our lives, as soon as it is safe to do so, it will be a true priority for all of us. As a small, visible, token of our love and loss, our flag will fly at half-mast from today.

John – colleague, friend, leader and gentleman – has been a colossus in the story of Wales High School, and in the lives of many of us fortunate enough to teach here. We all hope that reflecting on the effect he had on so many of us may give his family some consolation in their loss.

Pepe D'lasio  
Headteacher  
Wales High School