



Speech for the Opening of The Scott Padel Court

Mrs Anna Paul – Head of South Hampstead High School

June 12th 2024

Today is a very special celebration of strong partnerships. As a member of the Girl's Day School Trust, South Hampstead is blessed to be part of a sisterhood of schools who are all brought together under one umbrella and it is thanks to the GDST's commitment to our sporting education that we have been able to complete this new Padel Court. I want to thank everyone who has been involved from the GDST but in particular, **Jordan Potter** for his tireless work in getting the whole project literally 'off the ground'.

The other partnership we celebrate today is with the Cumberland Lawn Tennis and Hampstead Cricket Club. For over 30 years we have enjoyed the benefit of working together and sharing and developing the facilities at Lymington Road. It has been a very happy union with many members of our community having a close association with both the school and the clubs.

It is thanks to the vision and support of the club committee that, what started out in 2016 as a proposal for a hitting wall with some tarmac and netball posts, has evolved into this wonderful, state of the art, all weather Padel Court! We hope that this will be yet another example of how together, we are making the very most out of our joint facilities. So, our thanks goes to everyone at the club and in particular to **Simon, Steve and Pip** who help to make the day to day logistics of our partnership run so smoothly.

I am very excited today to welcome one of the key initiators of this partnership, former Headmistress - **Jean Scott**. Jean joined South Hampstead High School in 1993 from St George's in Edinburgh. She had worked in the chemical industry before embarking on a career in education as a Biology Teacher and she brought a modern, can-do attitude to the school.

I was very amused to see the word 'stamina' appearing in lots of your valedictories, Jean. Looking at your achievements, I am sure that stamina was a key requirement as it is a very long list; the expansion of the Junior school to Number 5 Netherhall Gardens; your tireless promotion of the Minerva Bursary Appeal; the complete overhaul of the ICT facilities; the launch of the language laboratory and the complete refurbishment of the science block. AND you still seemed to find time to be with everyone and everywhere on school trips, in the choir, and of course on the sporting field. Not only that, but you did seem to love a party – whether presiding over our 120th Birthday, or marking the Millenium you were always at the centre of the celebrations and there always seemed to be cake ready to be shared with the pupils!

But of course, one of your most lasting legacies has been this sports ground and the huge expansion to the sporting life of the school that it has enabled. We are currently in our Sports for All week and by Friday, pupils will have sampled more than 20 different sports alongside the broad offering we have everyday thanks to the tireless efforts of our PE staff.

Just like you Jean, I am passionate about the importance of physical activity and the need to help ALL our pupils develop healthy habits and stay interested in sport throughout their lives. We all know the huge benefits that fitness and the outdoors can have on mental health. In the modern world, sport is no longer an 'extra activity', it is integral and central to a good academic education.

The wonderful thing about Padel tennis is that it is a truly universal sport. It can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities. It is a great way for young players to get involved with racket sports and it is fun and sociable. I hesitate to say that it is easy to learn, as I am definitely going to have a go after this formal celebration, and I may be dreadful, but we have a wonderful coach to take us all through our paces and I want to say a huge thank you to **Mrs Gentzel** who has joined us today to demonstrate the game and initiate our pupils.

So Jean, the Lymington Road sports facilities may be just one of your many legacies to the school, but it is a legacy that has enabled so many really healthy and positive developments in our education and we hope it will be the stage for many more.

At the start I talked about partnerships, but of course there is one more partnership in the spotlight today and that is between Jean and the President of the Club, Donald Macloed. Back in 1997 as negotiations were being finalised for the purchase and lease of these grounds, it seems that some other negotiations were also underway and in January 2000 it was announced in a school assembly that Miss Scott would be entering into her very own personal partnership with Mr Macloed. The school choir sang at their wedding and everyone at the school received another slice of wedding cake.

So of course, we thought it was only appropriate that we should ask Jean and Donald to cut another celebratory cake to share with all of you here today as we mark friendships, partnerships and a fruitful sporting future.

But before we do that, I would like to invite you all to gather around as I ask Jean to step forward and cut the ribbon to officially open The Scott Padel Court.