



Archbishop Tenison's

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

DANIEL SPARGO-MABBS

On Monday, 20th January, we learnt that Daniel Spargo-Mabbs, one of our Year 12 students, had died at King's College Hospital after being taken ill over the weekend.

Daniel was a much loved and much appreciated member of our school community. This has been a particularly hard week for us as a school as we have had to come to terms with such a great loss.

Daniel joined us in Year 7 in September 2008, following in the footsteps of his brother Jacob, who was already at the school. He quickly made his mark as a bright, articulate and talented pupil with interests ranging from football to drama and a notable academic ability.

Through Years 7-11 he also became known for his quirky sense of humour, his capacity for making others laugh, his sociable nature, his insights into the way the world worked and his innate sense of justice and fairness. He challenged the system with his one man campaign to retain a particular haircut, researching his case in the Charter of Human Rights. He developed into a talented performer on stage, trying his hand at Macbeth and taking a solo part in *Those Canaan Days* in the school production of *Joseph*. His academic progress was marked, too: his Year 11 report noted his talents in several subjects and his increased maturity and focus; he took his teachers' advice; in his GCSEs he gained 3 grades at A* and 3 at A as well as a grade C in an AS Level in Religious Studies taken early.

In the Sixth Form Daniel was studying English Literature, History, Politics and Economics. He was the classic Sixth former: he contributed so much by his presence that one student wrote that there was always something missing from the lessons when he was not there. His lively interest in thinking and reading extended to his ambition to become an English teacher himself one day. One of his English teachers here was his "role model". Outgoing when he wanted to be, he was reserved and thoughtful when he needed to be, a boy who wanted to understand the world as well as live in it.

In his contribution to the Year 11 Yearbook Daniel cited "the many trips where we got to know each other and our teachers" as the highlight of his time at Tenison's so far. At the Year 11 Eucharist before study leave he was one of those who stood up and spoke of his memories and reflections. He did so with pathos and good humour. At the Year 11 Prom he was overwhelmingly voted Prom King: he was a young man with style as well as intelligence.

For his teachers Daniel was a pupil who both tested their ingenuity with his questions and made them laugh with his funny comments. One describes how she came to like him through the detentions which he had to do. Another recalls how "maddening, clever ... talented and, above all immensely lovable" he was. His former Head of Year spoke of a boy "who had a real glint in his eye", of how he "would shout 'Good afternoon, Sir' in the most charming and friendly way", of his performance on a guitar with friends at a showcase concert, of his individuality and of how he appeared at a mufti day in a camel suit.

For other students, Daniel was “one of the kindest, most good-hearted members of the school community”; he is remembered for his “funny, courageous, articulate, adventurous, cheeky spirit”; For one his was “a face that brought a smile to my own every school day”; another recalls that “we shed many tears of laughter together”. His girlfriend of two years sees “so many lives which you have touched, whether it was for a minute, an hour, a week, a month or many years”.

Daniel’s death was in every way untimely. We have known them well as a family for a long time. So many of us at the school have admired the honesty, Christian compassion and courage with which his parents have spoken about Daniel and about what happened to him. The Daniel we knew was and is an inspiration to us, but we, too, have to acknowledge a sad truth: one drug cost him his life.

The real Daniel is to be seen in the remarkable response of the school community this week to our unbearable loss. Stubborn, quiet normality has given way to a dignified, determined grief. The calm courage of the students who spoke about him at the short service we held on Wednesday was unforgettable. Jack Barton’s photograph from the Year 11 Yearbook on the front of a national newspaper has unintentionally become the unmistakable face of the school as it enters 2014. There is none better.

Richard Parrish
Headteacher