

Speech to the Graduating Class of Maryland Primary School 2017

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Honoured guests, Head teacher, teachers and assistants, parents and carers, boys and girls of Maryland Primary school, today is a **very special day**.

The graduation day of the class of Y6 2017 is finally here!

I would like to begin by addressing your first teachers. No, I don't mean your nursery or reception teachers. Your **first** teachers were your parents and carers.

Parents and carers, for the past 10 or 11 years you have pushed buggies, practised phonics, checked homework and raced against the clock to be here or there on time with your child. You have been a key partner in your child's education. Your positive attitude towards learning has influenced and encouraged your child to achieve his or her best at Maryland school.

If this is your first child who is going to secondary school, you will find that there are additional expectations of both of you. Your son or daughter is no longer going to be referred to as a **pupil**, but as a **student**.

Students are not only **taught** by teachers, but they have to do **independent study** to learn things for themselves, more so than they have done at primary school.

So it will be important that your child has the right environment at home to cope with these expectations. Sometimes if there are smaller brothers and sisters at home, it is difficult to give your son or daughter the study space and quiet they need, but this will be necessary in order to do their best at secondary school.

This does not mean that you allow them to twist your arm to let them have a computer in their bedroom, because that is the last place to put a computer as you will need to continue to monitor **what** or **whom** your child has access to on the computer. At this many children will be asking for mobile phones, if they do not already have one. Do they really need to have smart phones in their bedrooms at night? Be vigilant for that the eerie glow of light coming from your child's room at 2 in the morning. Use of mobile phones, as well as the computer, needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that your child has

enough sleep and maintains healthy contacts. I cannot underestimate how important this is.

I have three further points of advice which I hope will be useful as your child begins secondary school:

- 1. Listen to your child.** If you don't do this already, aim to extend the time that you spend having **conversations**. Remember, conversations are two-way. This is a time to share your values and hear your child's opinions. It is also a time to build your child's confidence. So many parents have no idea about the daily stresses and worries that their children are experiencing. Has your child made friends? Do you know who his / her best friend is? Have you met their parents? School is not just for academic development; friendships are important for social development and positive mental health. Isolated, unhappy children just cannot learn effectively.
- 2. Increase your child's independence and responsibilities.** Transition to secondary school is an ideal time to introduce your child to the safe working of the washing machine, the making of simple meals and proper completion of appropriate chores. These are essential life skills and praise for a job well done will boost your child's self esteem. This is also a great opportunity to reinforce time-management skills.
- 3. Value experiences over things.** I cannot underestimate the value of new experiences in helping your child increase his or her knowledge, vocabulary and comprehension. When faced with the choice of gift-giving, do consider a day out and not just the latest electronic games which have fake experiences. Childhood is brief so build lasting memories with your children whilst they still want to visit places with you.

Graduating class of 2017, I would like you to say thank you to your parents by giving them a round of applause for all they have done for you.

(Round of applause by pupils)

Now teachers and teaching assistants, your years of planning, teaching, marking, encouraging, modelling and explaining have come to fruition. How **proud** you must be to see your pupils here today! You have touched the lives of these young people forever- and when you think about it, not just their lives but even the lives of their future children. Such is the impact of a teacher's role. Through difficult, changing times in education, **you have adapted, evolved and ensured** that every child has developed and achieved to the best of their ability at this stage. As teachers you know that a child's performance at 11 does not determine who or what they will become in life. In this room we could have the doctors, engineers, designers of the future as well as workers in careers that have not even been dreamed of yet.

Graduating class of 2017, I would like you to say thank you to your teachers by giving them a round of applause for all they have done for you.

Now I would like to address the graduating class of 2017

Six years of primary education have whizzed by and now it's time for you to fly the nest of your primary school off into a much bigger school. Some of you will be leaving behind friends and starting in a school where you know no one at all. In a few short weeks, you will be meeting new friends and teachers who will affect your lives for years to come.

Wherever you are off to, I have some advice for you so listen carefully.

Everyone will tell you that you must work hard and do your best. But I also want you to be aware of something that is every bit as important as academic success - and that is your character and reputation. As you know, your character is the type of person you are and your reputation is the opinions that people hold about you----whether they are true or not!

At secondary school, the friends you choose will have a lot of influence on your character and reputation. There is a saying that "Birds of a feather flock together". So you have to choose your new friends carefully. Do not be

tempted to join in when you hear of other people texting or saying negative things about another child just so that you fit in. Always think for yourself and ask yourself,

- Is it true?
- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?

You see, words have **power**. The old adage “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me” is simply **not true**. Words and name calling can be extremely damaging. **Never** accidentally or deliberately find yourself involved in verbal or any other kind of bullying. Words can build up a person or break a person. Develop a positive character and reputation and use words that build, not damage others.

If you should find yourself in the company of people who want to tempt you to do things that you are not sure about, always remember these words,

“When in doubt, do the right thing”.

What do you do when you are in doubt? (Response: the right thing)

How do you know if it’s the right thing? The right thing is the thing that will make you **proud of yourself** and your parents and teachers **proud of you** even if they can’t see you.

But sometimes you will make mistakes. **Everyone** makes mistakes sometimes, even your parents and teachers. If you do, there are two things to do:

1. Be of good character and **apologise**.
2. Secondly, don’t beat yourself up because you made a mistake. Every mistake is an opportunity to learn and grow, so get into the habit of asking yourself, as Mrs Simisaiye would advise,

“Hhhmmm, now what did I learn from that mistake?”

The lesson that you learn will be very important and will save you from making that mistake again.

So remember that words are powerful, and knowing that, strive your best to be a master of English words. Read widely, collect words and develop a love of using them effectively.

With bags of good character, care for how you make others feel and sack loads of vocabulary, you will have the foundations to do your best at secondary school and throughout your future lives.

Maryland Primary School, Class of 2017, have an AMAZING life!