

Graduation Ceremony 2026 - Denis Keefe's speech

Good evening everyone. Welcome to the ECP 2026 Graduation on behalf of the Governors.

The Headmaster raised a question in his speech. He said, people ask if this Year is a good Year. There is only one possible answer - yes!

But there's another word I would like to use. That word is "Resilient".

You have been a unique year because of what you have experienced on the way to tonight's celebration. When you first came through the Blue Doors, you might have expected - you had a right to expect - that you would spend your school years there. Instead you faced COVID and had to learn how to work remotely. Then there was the shock of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which you responded to with solidarity and generosity. And as you reached the higher years, your Governors decided to fulfil a dream of 30 years and rebuild the school. You had to learn to work in a school based at Elektra and in the Annexe. Now finally you have had a year back in Sokolovska - though you will have to leave it to others to experience the new extension. Do come back and visit it.

That experience has shown your resilience. Resilience that you are going to need in a world that faces many challenges: Ukraine, the Middle East, AI, what is happening in the USA. I am not saying previous generations did not face challenges. Sir Nick Gibb alluded to his own experience of one of them in his speech when he talked about the Soviet Union. But these are challenges you will face, and some of them are new. They will be your challenges.

I have talked about your resilience. But think about the resilience your wonderful teachers have shown as they grappled with the changes of the last few years and helped you to your achievements today. And think about the resilience your parents have shown in backing you all the way. And I am conscious of how much is owed to my fine body of Governors through the complexities of the last few years.

All of this puts me in the happy position of being able to congratulate everyone in the room. Our graduates. Our teachers and staff. Parents and carers. Governors too.

Well done and thank you!