

Graduation Ceremony 2024 - Speech on behalf of the Graduates

A friend of mine reminded me recently of Mr. Emerson's words that he shared with us at the beginning of our first year. "You are going to wink, and it is all going to be over".

We winked, and we find ourselves at the end of this journey. A journey of nearly 6 years.

My father has always said that "Journey is the destination". And wow, what a journey has this been.

Today, under these optimal weather conditions, is a day of celebration, a day of reflection, and a day of new beginnings. As we stand on the cusp of the future, ready to embark on the next chapter of our lives, we take a moment to look back at the journey that brought us here. So now you LI-STEN.

It's safe to say that this road has had a lot of twists and turns, hills and valleys, metaphorically and also literally. Like when during the Y2 induction trip Mr. Bale dragged us up three different hills, because he couldn't read the route off the map, and wouldn't let us help him.

In Y1, we were the test subjects to *Thinking Science*, and *Applied Technology*, where we discovered what hat colour reflected our personalities.

In Y3, the school steered the wheel again, and exchanged geography and history, for Changing World, and Changing Times, which students often used as time for online shopping and sharpening their mariokart skills.

In Y6, we moved to a different school building, reducing our diets to McDonald's and baked goods from Billa. And to end it all, our integrity was tested as we unwillingly became a part of a social experiment called the "IB exam leaks".

Along the way we met some incredible and inspiring people, friends for life and the Sultan of the Ying Yang Island. A plethora of people that spans in many different directions. For instance those who come to school an hour early, Petr, those who come late, Aneta, or those who do not come at all, Tomas.

Let's admit, in Y1 we were all children who were stressed about completing our experience books on time, or coming to Madam Ogden's French lessons, afraid that she was going to throw

a marker at us if we didn't know how to conjugate the verb "to be" correctly. Now, do not worry, nobody was harmed in that process, and we all managed to learn the conjugation.

It's incredible to think that all of us have made it up to this point. Even the ones that made themselves pass out on purpose during the Y1 induction trip. Right Robert?

As I look into the audience at my fellow classmates, I see grown adults that are uniquely talented individuals, eager to make a mark in the world.

Now, I want you to take a look in front of you. You are looking at the future doctors, lawyers, psychologists, politicians, businessmen and businesswomen, diplomats, historians but also mothers and fathers who will raise the future generation. And potentially future trophy wives, because that idea has become so much sweeter in the duration of the IB.

I can't count the number of times that we've been told that we are the "*elite of the nation*", so much so that it became a running joke. Though it made us laugh, it admittedly tickled our egos, and certainly pushed us through the toughest of times.

In the last two years, we have been under great amounts of pressure to successfully complete the IB diploma, and to get accepted into our dream universities. Through all of our complaints about being overwhelmed or feeling anxious not a single time did I hear a student say that they wanted to give up. After all "*diamonds are made under pressure*". This shows just how resilient and driven we are as a collective. But we mustn't forget that under extreme pressures even diamonds shatter, so do not push yourself over the edge of your own limits.

Most of us have spent the majority of our lives at international schools, having been provided with an education in English, allowing us to have a wider perception of the world. It is easy to take the opportunities such education has given us for granted, so I urge you to, at some point in your lives, dissociate yourself from this sense of comfort, just for a brief moment, and experience the world from the perspective of those less fortunate, to recognize the privilege that we have.

We must also acknowledge the collective effort that brought us to this point. To our teachers, who not only imparted their knowledge but also inspired us to think critically, we owe a debt of gratitude. To our senior tutors and the upper school team, we thank you for your guidance. To our parents and families, your unwavering support and belief in our potential, have been our anchor.

As we move forward, let us remember that success is not defined by the destination but by the journey. It is about setting goals, facing challenges head-on, and always striving to be the best version of ourselves. Though it might be terrifying, it is necessary to make, as Ms. Sartain would say, Boo Boos in life, learn from them, and grow.

Though this journey has been rocky, I can confidently say that this experiment was indeed successful.

Thank you.

DofE → tent full of people

Julie Jonková