

## Christmas Dinner Speech - James Larkin - Head Boy - December 2018

On behalf of the student body, I would like to welcome you all here tonight. In Villiers, Christmas is always a great time of the year. Every year everyone's Christmas spirit shines bright, but never as bright as Ms Sexton's Christmas jumpers. With so many events and activities happening at Villiers it would be difficult to pick a favourite, but there is no denying that the Villiers Christmas Dinner is certainly a contender.

It's great that Day Boarders, boarders, student council members, prefects, staff board of management, board of governors and guests can sit together and enjoy the festivities, and of course cosy in, for an amazing speech from our very debatably talented Head Boy. I would like to remark at this point on how great Ms Murray Dillion and Ella Donlan are both looking. It's such a shame they didn't wear the same outfit again this year.

Since I started school here in Villiers, I have been given so many opportunities. I feel that I have really learnt a lot about myself and it has shaped me into who I am today. I remember coming in on my first day and feeling intimidated and scared. I realise now, that was just Mr Griffin smiling. There's a great sense of friendship here in Villiers. We were never alone as there was always a friendly face, or someone who was willing to give me a copy of their homework, or help me out in the café when I was short fifty cents.

Without a doubt, Transition Year was one of the best years of my life. The amount of activities that I got to do made it such an enjoyable year. I still remember those endless hikes along the Lough Derg way. It was unreal the amount of people who would fake a twisted ankle just so they'd get a lift in the car.

Another event in the school calendar that I took part in was the TY Drama. Through this, we made so many friends and we really learned to enjoy ourselves, even when acting the maggot, or the chicken in my case. Most Maths teachers say that a pyramid has a strong base but, I can tell you that our one ended up quite unstable due to Josh Biggs's inappropriately timed jokes throughout the rehearsals.

While some of us have been lucky to go on sports and ski trips, I had the privilege to go on a trip to Spain and walk a section of the Camino de Santiago. It was without doubt the best trip I ever went on. There were those embarrassing moments of falling into a stream on my first day, something which I don't think I can ever live down, to playing card games on the roof terraces of our hostels, and watching Mr McCrohan dye his hair red to look like Rumpel Stiltskin.

Overall, the blisters were worth it though, especially when considering I was a first-hand witness to Gearóid, accidentally getting himself hung by the shorts off a bunkbed one night. I'll never get that image, or the look on his face, out of my head. However when I reflect on the entire trip, in spite of the blisters, I felt a sense of achievement.

In Fifth Year we started to prepare for the Leaving Cert. As I moved up into fifth year my studies were meant to be my priority, but as many teachers will tell you, my results may not have reflected this. Slowly, but surely, everything started getting much harder. We always had the love, and support from our kind and caring teachers, like Mr Sadlier for telling us he would "rather teach blocks of wood than us". I will always remember the beginning of Ms Kelly's French classes when we are introduced with a new "L'Objective" and how time and time again, we are reminded that we are supposed to be a prefect class. I was also asked by Mr Jones to share his undying love for Tipperary. I agree Mr Jones, it is a beautiful county. I would like to make a joke about Rory Jackson but I feel that if I did it might cause another controversial argument.

As I have been, like some people here, getting dragged through the Leaving Cert almost backwards. It would be fair to say that my motivation to study, has been as real, as a successful physics experiment with Mr Fennel. Let's just say that rarely happens, but you got to love his effort.

The Leaving Cert has been a struggle for the most part, but it will be worth it. For example, we acquired some theatrical skills from Ms McQuade. We would learn her songs about detention, as well as the no phone policy, and dance a waltz, in the hope that we might finally, as a class, be able to recite the ER verbs the day of our dreaded French exam.

While we might not always admit it, we really do appreciate all that our teachers have done for us. And I would personally like to thank you all for putting up with us students.

I think that I speak for all when I say that Villiers School has instilled upon us a zest for education both inside and outside the classroom, as well as a sense of community throughout the years, but above all, a value for friendship that will, live on in our memories, and I am genuinely thankful for those memories.

I would really like to take this opportunity to thank all the non-teaching staff. I know that sometimes these people are not in the foreground but they are the backbone to this school and we wouldn't be here without you.

I would firstly like to thank Ms Storey obviously for being an amazing headmistress but also for staying out of the way of that bird during the fire drill, unfortunately we all know how that ended for the bird. Now guys, guys, guys, guys, guys I would also like to thank Ms Quinn for always being there on a Friday afternoon to give back our phones. We are all very grateful to you Ms for always being on the frontline to deal with us on a day to day basis.

I would personally like to thank Esther, Michelle and Susan for keeping the office running so well! You should appreciate that people are coming to you first when an issue arises and in turn, all of you do an amazing job resolving issues when they arise.

I would also like to thank Mrs Calendar and Ms Fitzpatrick. I know some of us have called in to see you more than others over the years and you always had a strepsil to keep us going.

A special thank you to Amir and George for their contribution to hockey in this school on behalf of the hockey community. We really appreciate all the work you guys do.

Two people I certainly have to thank are Gordon and Val for the five star quality food. They're always there in the morning for the chats when everyone else is feeling tired and grumpy. A special thank you to Ian for always making sure we're paying the school enough. I would also like to thank Viv, Mr Carroll, Ms Yeoman, Ms Gillespie and Ms Halpin on behalf of the boarding students for all the late pizza nights and midnight chats and fights. I would also really like to thank Julia. She always makes my day when five minutes before class ends she says "You can go now guys". I would also like to thank Damian, Mike and Dimitri for the hard work you do maintaining our school. You may think no one notices your work, but we do. And you don't even charge us for the sarcasm.

A special thanks to all the cleaners for all the cleaning work you do in the school. You have kept our school so clean and tidy. I don't know what we would do without you guys we really are a messy bunch. Now finally I would like to thank Suzie, Mike and all the kitchen staff for the amazing food and for all they have done to make this evening possible. We are very grateful for all the work you guys have put in and for all the meals you make for us every day. I think they all deserve another round of applause. On a final note I would like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you as your Head Boy this year. It has been both a privilege and an honour one, and one that I will reflect positively on for years to come.