

Head Boy Christmas Dinner Speech 2019 - Adam O'Leary

I'd like to start by welcoming our: Headmistress, Ms. Storey, Deputy Headmistress, Ms. Quinn, Board of Management, Board of Governors, Staff and students to the Annual Villiers Christmas dinner.

I think I speak for everyone in thanking and congratulating all those involved in the preparation of our wonderful meal tonight. I hope you enjoyed it and the evening so far because it's all downhill from here.

I came into this school six short years ago, finding it hard to think that one day I would be like these sixth years that towered over my head, but my time here has passed faster than I ever could have imagined and soon enough I'll be leaving this place. I thought I'd take this speech as an opportunity to make sense of the amazing whirlwind of hockey matches, Saturday study and sausage rolls that is the Villiers experience and the impact it has on those who spend their time here.

The jump from primary school to secondary isn't an easy one to make as I'm sure we've all discovered. I remember how scary it was not really knowing anyone in the school and having to make new friends, the shock of doing what I thought was "real study" for "important exams" and the huge task of picking my best polo shirt and freshest pair of chinos for hockey discos.

As you work your way up the junior years and your seat in the bus slowly moves further and further back, these difficulties become a lot more manageable. We make friendships that prove to be unbreakable, we learn that hard work can pay off, whether that's in the classroom, on the hockey pitch or making it to your class on the third floor of the art block without passing out. Not to mention that Val in the junior cafe will make sure you never forget to say please or thank you for as long as you live.

For me however, and I don't think I'm the only one, a real highlight of my time in Villiers was Transition Year. I got so many opportunities to grow as a person and see my friends do the same. For example, Amin Agoro... He came into Villiers as a quiet young man and is leaving... a little less quiet. In TY, he perfected the iconic "What Did I Do?" to make any teacher think he was innocent no matter what. It's just as well because he needed it after his talent show performance that year.

Kieran Cunningham and I had the opportunity to set up our own business in TY through the enterprise module and managed to have a staggering total of one sale, the purchase being made by none other than the generous Gordan Shire. We were sure not to let the truth get in our way though and bluffed our way

through the Limerick finals and ended up coming fourth but to be honest I still feel cheated.

I was lucky enough to participate in Model United Nations in TY as well, travelling to Prague and to be honest, without that public speaking experience, I probably would have fainted by now... I better not speak too soon. I continued on to do MUN twice more after TY, travelling to Barcelona and London. I got to see new countries and have new experiences every trip but Barry insisting on asking the waitress if there's peanuts in his meal never seems to stop no matter where we go. In all seriousness, a big thank you to Ms. Woods and Ms. Gowing, without whom those trips would not be possible.

Our week in Achill was one that brought us together and helped to further the friendships that had been deepening throughout the year. We got to camp out with our friends, try a range of outdoor activities and eat an unholy amount of green soup with white bread. Despite the difficulties of the terrifying Cavan accents, Pearce McGrath literally falling off of a cliff and the controversy of the gentlemen's club, the week was a thorough success and an amazing memory to have.

Unfortunately, like all great things, our transition year had to come to an end and before we knew it, we were back in study and had to actually do this thing called homework.

Making it through Fifth year had its struggles, losing the senior B hockey final after our long, intense hard work is something I don't think any of us are over just yet. But we're lucky enough in Villiers to have a strong support system for students composed of good friends and sausage rolls from Gordon.

Now we're in sixth form and are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We have some new faces in our year that have only joined recently but it feels like they've been here forever... they've really been gettin' it done. It's not going to be easy leaving Villiers for the real world and not seeing the people that feel like family everyday. I know that sounds like a nice sentiment but I actually called Ms. Moloney "mom" once by accident... I'm just trying to play that off.

The transition into our new beginnings outside of second level education, will undoubtedly be helped immeasurably by the life skills we learned as we worked through the years here in the school. I feel so fortunate to have availed of the opportunities that presented themselves to me in Villiers and to be able to call so many people in this room, my friends. I'd like to thank my teachers, friends and all the other staff of the school for an unforgettable six years and wish you all a happy Christmas.