

## *Head Girl Graduation Speech 2020 – Amy O’Leary*

Graduation Speech 2020

A chomhdhaltaí, a thuimithoirí, a mhúinteoirí agus a chairde,  
dia dhaoibh go léir agus fáilte uí Cheallaigh romhaibh uile anseo inniu  
Bhíomar le chéile ar feadh sé bliana fada, iad go léir inotach speisialta.  
Ba bhreá liom, le bhur gcead agus bhur foighne, féachaint siar ar na cuimhní  
áille a bheidh linn go deo ónár laethanta scoile i Villiers.

It’s a weird thought to think that in these past six years we have only formally gathered together twice before. The first of these was of course our first day of first year. We were packed together wearing the red and navy of Villiers for the very first time and following the formal introductions we were divided into our forms; M for magnificent, N for nice, P for perfect an Q for quality... or so we told people. The second occasion marked the end of TY and the beginning to our end in Villiers.

First year began the beginning of many new and shocking things for us; we were no longer the oldest in school, our fellow students were practically adults and had beards, we had to quickly learn how to use lockers, avoid falling books and hockey sticks, some of us moved out of home to share our living space with complete strangers too. We took up new sports and languages and joined clubs to meet friends. Having long lunchtimes with games like tag, 45 and bulldog being replaced by the sharing of scary stories about the half people coming back. It’s crazy to think how all the relationships we established in first year have developed and blossomed into lifelong connections to some truly special people.

We finished first year to grow into what we thought were confident, cool people who were not as bad as the new 1st years who followed us. We had opportunities to bond and get to really know one another on trips such as the girl’s hockey trip to Dublin where the bus was filled by the noise of us “singing” Gravity and Lost Boy ending it with the 30-minute shopping spree in Dundrum. The boys weren’t left out either travelling around Cork, Kilkenny and further afield to Wales for rugby.

I suppose now would be a good time to mention some of what we did in the classroom as we finally hit 3rd year. We were now established in school but stressed out because we thought that we were facing our toughest and most important exams- ironically, we weren’t far wrong. We somehow managed to complete it. Not without making our teachers raise a few eyebrows though, like Mr Brown in technology when we showed him our intricate, detailed designs despite barely being able work a scroll saw or draw a straight line, or our Irish teachers when we still couldn’t understand a word of what Ruairí ó nDún na

nGall was going on about on the listenings; to be fair they had their reasons to worry as half of us left our exam to find out that the letters we had written about a lovely day at the lake should have been about meeting our heroes. True to the words of older students the 2 weeks of the Junior Cert were possibly the most fun we had had in the school so far. Hours with our friends with so much to discuss, nice weather and poster making. What more could a group of 15/16 year olds have wanted?

TY! TY is what more we could've wanted. The break our brains needed from the academic schooling to step into life schooling and getting to meet so many new people who were joining our year. There was so much on offer during TY I don't think that I will ever be able to talk about it as it was a different experience for each one of us. We had so many events; the Fashion Show, Drama, Achill, the Community group, Enterprise, Junk Kouture, Green Schools, Sports Day, ITY, MUN, PE and Gaisce to only scratch the surface. Whether it was when to give a MUN speech, poker or how to stay on a ski lift we all learnt so much. For me Achill was the best experience. All of us stuck together with limited phone service, freezing and hungry but getting on with it because we were together. So many friendships were forged between the most unlikely of people during that week. It's nice to think that a piece of our year will always remain in Achill in Serena's shoe stuck in that bog hole.

We finished TY and had to overcome so many new challenges including subject choices, teachers, friends, hobbies etc. It became so much that some of us had to take a trip to Barcelona, Washington DC or Japan for a break and others like Zara resorted to baby food to try remember a time before all the stress. While we were panicked, I don't envy our teachers for one second, during the first 3 months I don't think a week went by when one of us didn't change or drop a subject. I don't know how they kept tabs on us all! But we settled down and found our swing of things again. Ms O'Dea's class probably win in that aspect managing to get spice bags throughout the year.

It would be wrong of me not to mention the introduction of IB here. We were the first ever cohort in Ireland outside of Dublin, and faced our own challenges like learning what EE, TOK, WOK, AOK, CAS and IA meant and then participating in UN day, the Knockilasheen project, open nights and so many other trips and events. I think that even Alejandro will agree that I'm right when I say that at times we wanted to pull our hair out like when we realised that we hadn't referenced an essay and had to go back through the whole thing to make sure that nothing was plagiarised, there will be a reference list for this speech provided on request. Timon introduced us to German comedy during his talent show performances, which was followed up with multiple maths puns. Although it's sad that we never got to go paintballing for the last time, I think that the

baby ibs will be safer for it after watching how Weronika dissected that heart, I suppose that Filip would've made up for it with lovely eulogies being the man of words that he is.

Finally, we come to this year, our final year, 6th year the one which we had all been waiting for. It has been a rollercoaster. Some of us started in Holland. For any of you who are hoping to go to Holland we made some notes; breakfast, lunch and dinner consist of bread rolls, avoid the hockey pitch if you don't want a bruise the size of Derravoher and if the paracetamol is cheaper than you expect it's a suppository. Then school began back. In our first meeting as a year we were reminded that it was 9 months to the LC, so it was like our baby or we could choose to have a baby instead. We were grounded pretty early on with Christmas exams and mocks to remind us that we still had to attend classes, which we were constantly reminded of at our 6th year meetings. Many guidance council meetings, CAO deadlines, UCAS or EUNICAS submissions ensured that we were unable to forget the importance of our final year. We got through it together; through breakfast club at Gordon's, lunchtime discussions and the quick comments shared at the lockers. Perhaps these didn't manage to keep us sane but allowed us to keep a standard level of insanity throughout our whole group.

We mustn't forget some of what we've learnt or our achievements over our time here. We learnt things outside of the classroom like school shoes can survive a 3-storey fall, although they last at least another two years if this is avoided. Ties and specifically coloured socks are the hardest pieces of clothing to keep. If you ever need to know what's happening around Villiers, you can just ask Gordon. Our year group was a part of so many things like the junior cert, MUN, hockey, rugby, basketball, badminton, soccer, cricket, swimming, athletics, horse riding, maths, business, writing, art, music and many more. It must be remembered as well that the senior B hockey trophy was held by our boys last year.

Every graduation speech needs a section which inspires the cohort so here we go. "don't let anyone call you a green starburst, you are a pink starburst", "when nothing goes right, go left", "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud" and in the words of George "There's no such thing as winning or losing, it's winning or learning". Hopefully you can see past the cringe to the sentiment of these. While none of us know what's going to happen today, tomorrow or in our futures we can be sure of some things like in 20 years' time Max will have published his biography on Angela Merkel, Jake will have started a Christian rap group and Kaila will finally look old enough for 6th year. Whatever we will be doing we can all appreciate the words of Mean Girls' Cady Heron, "The limit does not exist!"

It mustn't be forgotten that we didn't reach this point on our own. Villiers is a community not just of students but of so many wonderful people. To our parents thank you for your endless support, taxying and lack of questioning when we claimed to be stressed from all our studying. To all of the members of the Board and PTA, thank you for making the school a student-orientated facility which stays true to Villiers nature and lets us enjoy every day. To all of the non-teaching staff of Villiers, I don't think that we ever truly appreciate all of the work that you do ensuring that the school runs, looks and feels the way it does, you treat it like a home and this has greatly impacted on all of us. To our unmatched teachers, you challenged us even when we didn't want to be challenged and this has taught us so much more than any school is ever expected to. Without you and all of your unseen work none of us would be who we are today, thank you for the impact you've had, which will remain with us for the rest of our lives. Finally, to Ms Storey and Ms Quinn, thank you so much for listening to our ideas and ensuring that Villiers has always been open to student initiatives, keeping our ties and top buttons up and making each one of us feel valued. On behalf of the year I would like to thank every member of the Villiers community because without you it would never be the same.

It's nearly time for me to stop talking now. I hope you all the very best in wherever you choose to go and whatever you choose to do. For these unprecedented times, I will leave you with the words of A.A. Milne "Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there some day."

Go n-éirí atá libh, comhghairdeas agus go raibh míle maith agaibh.