

To the class of '2022

You have all had a remarkable two and a half years.

Your last totally 'normal' year at school was year 8, 2018/19... In Years 9 and 10 we were going through an unprecedented global pandemic...During year 11 you have had to re-engage with school, with learning and growing and with a sprint to the finish line...

In every way possible, each of you has shown your true colours. Many of you have shown the kind of people you really are and the kind of people you will be.

The news, social media and the government tell us that you have lost so much, that you have been disadvantaged, that your education has faltered, that you are broken by the pandemic or have been made mentally ill. They tell us that your life chances are somehow damaged and that your opportunities are diminished, that you are at risk of earning less and achieving less. Some of these people speak of you as a generation that is lost and either won't or can't cope.

I want you to know from my heart that whoever these people are, however important they might seem or how big an influence they are, that firstly, they don't know you like I know you and secondly, they are most definitely entirely and fundamentally wrong about what they think about you

In front of me now I see a diverse, wonderful group of young adults filled with strength, resilience and courage. I see people who are kind, caring, and generous. I see people who are amazing, inspiring, resourceful, and resilient. I see hope, excitement and opportunity. I see a generation with hunger in their eyes and fire in their bellies.

In spite of the last two years you have developed new skills, adapted, evolved and had learning experiences that you would not normally have had. As a result you have the potential to be independent, to be self motivated, self reliant and to commit to your own success.

I am fiercely proud of you. You are each special to me. As a group of young people you have the power to make the world a better place and to create a future where your children will enjoy living, thriving and growing free from prejudice, fear, intimidation, inequality and injustice.

You are great to be around, you make me laugh, you have given me a thousand and more amazing memories and you genuinely make each day at work a good one (well, most of the time)

I see no place for negativity in your lives. I see over 200 young adults who are ready to take on the world and to prove the critics, the cynics and the doubters wrong. You are the future.

Wear Sunscreen (adapted)

If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it.

The long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists whereas the rest of my advice has no basis other than my own life experience. For the last time we meet as a year group, I will dispense this advice now

Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth.....

You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they've faded, but trust me, in 20 years, you'll look back at photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now how much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked

Floss your teeth every day and brush properly. Take good care of your skin.

Sing in the shower, moisturise and exfoliate. Your body will thank you when you're my age

Don't be reckless with other people's hearts and don't put up with people who are reckless with yours. Write love letters and keep the ones you receive. Don't give your heart away to people who don't deserve you. Respect yourself, respect your body. Do the same for others

Don't waste your time on jealousy. Remember compliments you receive, forget the insults, if you succeed in doing this, tell me how.

Don't worry about the future and don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life. The most interesting people I know didn't have a clue what they wanted to do at your age and some of the most interesting people I know still don't. Remember that sometimes in life you're ahead, sometimes you're behind. The race is long and in the end, it's only with yourself. Do everything you do with heart, courage and conviction. The outcomes of your choices are often half chance but so are everybody else's. Be grateful.

Don't be lazy and don't make excuses for yourself. Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much or beat yourself up either. Be humble and generous with your time. Celebrate the success of others and remember that arrogance is always ugly.

Practice kindness, caring and good manners. Say please and thank you, stand so that someone else can sit. Listen more than you talk. Be a good friend to all who need one and even those who don't think they do. Help out someone just because you can. You will be judged by the world on these things more than you realise. Respect your elders. Even you will be one one day.

Enjoy your body, use it every way you can and don't be afraid of what other people think of it. Your body is the greatest instrument you'll ever own so treat it carefully. Stretch for five minutes every day. Stay active. Break a sweat at least three times a week....Run, jump, dance, play, swim.... Have fun but be safe.

Nutrition is the cornerstone of your health and what you choose to eat when you're young matters more when you are old. Eat well. Green is good. Stay off the sugar and go easy on the burgers. Drink water. The stuff in our taps is a privilege of living in the developed world so drink lots of it and use a refillable bottle when you do. Avoid waste

Invest in feeling good about yourself and do not take what you see on instagram as a true reflection of beauty. These images, as well as the filtered, preened and enhanced people who generate them, are dishonest. They will only make you feel as if you are not good enough. Ignore them and the empty headed people who push them onto you. You are great as you are.

You have the power to turn social media into a force for good and for celebrating the diverse nature of each of you and the awesome things you do. The world of social media is in your hands and only you have the power to use this amazing tool to make the world happy, inclusive, kind and welcoming.

Why some of you use it to hurt, wound, offend and exclude each other so deeply is something that at my age I'll never understand. The consequences of those of you who use social media in this way can be deadly but only you can change this. Don't pretend it's not your problem. Make the world of social media safe for yourselves and safe for your children. Change the conversation. Take control.

Get to know your carers, parents, your family and those who look after you. Be nice to your siblings. Understand that friends come and go but there are a precious few who you should hold on to. Ditch the haters. Walk away from those who try to pollute you with negative thoughts and ideas. They are not your friends.

Travel as widely as you can. Experience other places and talk to other people from other cultures. You come from a privileged part of the world. Take a reality check. Most people don't. Pick up your litter and dispose of it responsibly. The world really can't take much more plastic and don't leave this problem to your children to solve.

Practice resilience and mindfulness. Practice being calm. Watch the sunrise with a cup of good coffee and spend five minutes each day writing down all of the good things that have happened and that you are grateful for

Look for the best in people and expect the best of yourself but don't judge too harshly. Most of us are making some of it up as we go along but most of us are also doing our best. Accept certain truths for what they are. Change what you can change for the better and control the controllables. If you can't change it, stop worrying about it. Life's a journey you get to make once so make it a good one and make it your own.

Finally, If you choose to ignore everything else I've said, please remember about sunscreen