

The English School Graduation Speech

Head Boy: Onat Ataman

Head Girl: Yiolandi Maou

Honorable guests, parents, teachers, friends and our ESL16,

At this point, we can't help but look back.

And looking back, I can still see it.

I can still see that 11 years old, anxiously walking around The English School yard on the Saturday morning of the entrance examination.

I too can still see those worried parents, whispering good luck to us before we went into that room, full of faith and hope.

Standing here today, I can still feel that striking rush of adrenaline at the moment we learned that we were to become English School Students. The satisfaction of those endless hours of hard work having paid off. The possibility. The excitement.

I remember that 11 year old walking through the Lloyds door for the first time, clueless, yet excited about the unknown to come. Years 2 and 3 passed, and the uncertainty and fear of the 1st form were placed with the anticipation to become seniors.

I remember 4th formers counting the days until their first school trip. Flooding the Main Building yard, writing 'ESL16' on every bench without even knowing what it really meant.

I remember 5th and 6th formers, starting at 7th formers hanging out at the parking lot, car keys in one hand, thinking that it's cool and waiting until the day we would become like them.

And eventually, we did.

The worried and clueless 11 year olds, of the entrance examination grew up to be the adults who call themselves ESL16.

We have been through a lot together; our first day all-nighter, endless banner painting sessions, going around the island in order to film the best leavers 'movie in years, planning our vibrant Jamaican BBQ, singing together at ESOBGA, counting yearbook votes for three full days, cutting our cheeks with the one blade razor due to the shaving policy, unforgettably celebrating our last day with a colour fight...

Now I see these 160 7th formers, dressed in identical gowns, equipped with invaluable knowledge and experience, about to graduate.

However, in the eyes of each and every one of us, I can also see that 11 year old. I can see the same stubbornness, the same hunger to work and achieve, the same persistence.

Back then, we wouldn't take "no" for an answer. The English School was our first and only choice.

We worked in order to be here. We persisted. Some of us even took the examination two, three times.

Today we are fully grown adults, ready to leave our nest and chase our dreams, however, we still have the same curiosity, the same passion, the same eagerness. We still won't take "no" for an answer.

It is with the same spirit that we will embrace the future.

Well done for making it through.

Before leaving this podium for the last time, there's a long list of people we ought to thank. We worked hard to get to this point, but we didn't do it all ourselves. Behind each graduate here today, there is at least a dozen of people.

First and foremost to our teachers, thank you for so unselfishly sharing your time, talent and knowledge with us. Yes, we know it was your job to do it, but what you did for us went beyond the call of duty. You took the time to explain assignments, sometimes repeatedly because we weren't paying attention. You put in the effort to make lessons more interesting so we wouldn't just tune out – but many times we did tune out anyway. You demanded excellence from us whether or not we wanted to give it. You set the bar high and challenged us to live up to it.

Secondly, to our Head of Year, Mr. Lodge, thank you, for being probably the most patient person we've met in this school. You somehow managed to tolerate our stubbornness, morning lateness and unwillingness to wear school uniform without losing faith in us. We are certain that all boys will remember you whenever they are asked to shave in the army.

Dear Headmaster, thank you for your support and constructive advice throughout the year. To Mr. Georgiou and Ms. Asvesta, thank you. Your work ethic is truly admirable, and we're infinitely grateful for the sacrifices you've made just so that everyone in the school is happy.

To our examination office mastermind. Ms. Elena Michaelides, thank you. We can honestly say that you have been running the school with a dedication strong enough to run the country.

We would also like to thank the Board and ESPA, for their valuable contribution to the school. Most remarkably we owe events like the Rock Night, our BBQ's and the Prom to ESPA and the people who have worked to make it possible.

To our backstage heroes, Savva Charalambous and George Venizelos, thank you. If the day had a 25h hour these people would still spend it here, working tirelessly for us, trying to satisfy our ever need and demand.

We would also like to thank our deputies: Sophia Brown and Constantinos Kazamias, for their valuable help and support throughout the year.

Last but not least, ESL16. Thank you for the memories, the lifelong friendships, and for making these 7 years a rollecoaster ride.

We would like to conclude this speech by quoting Tom Stoppard:

"We cross our bridges when we come to them and burn them behind us, with nothing to show for our progress except a memory of the smell of smoke, and a presumption that once our eyes watered."

We want the English School memory to be a guiding light for you, to give you that 11 year old inspiration and motivation to keep moving forward.

Thank you.