

S6 LEAVERS' CEREMONY
23 April 2020

Dean Smith

Welcome everyone to our S6 Leavers' Ceremony for our Class of 2020. I am delighted to see all of you on this special occasion for our S6 pupils.

Class of 2020 we started our journey together at Mearns Castle when you arrived in S1 in August 2014. This is particularly notable time for me as, like you, I am completing my time in the school in 2020 so this will be my last ever S6 Leavers' Ceremony.

In 2014 you settled into the school and started to find your way and here we are nearly six years later. You have changed a bit more than me in that time (save perhaps for more grey hair and the reading glasses) but hopefully you have all grown and flourished during our time at this wonderful school.

You have been pupils at Mearns Castle for six years, so how are we to judge your time with us? Bart McGeltrick, Professor of Education Emeritus of Glasgow University, says *"Education is a conversation between one generation and another about the things which matter."* Hopefully you feel as you leave us that that six year conversation has helped you to work out what matters to you.

Schools are challenged to produce young people with four key capacities. Confident Individuals, Successful Learners, Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens.

I think we can say with certainty, that as an impressive group of young people, you have developed and exhibited these characteristics in abundance throughout your time at

Mearns Castle right down to recently donating many pints of your blood to help others and also adding your names to the Anthony Nolan Register for bone marrow donation.

You have had many successes during your time in the school. You have produced some of the school's best SQA exam results to date in both S4 and S5. Given that Mearns Castle is one of the highest attaining schools in Scotland that is indeed an impressive performance.

Most importantly, in my view, you have demonstrated your attributes as Responsible Citizens by making an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community. You have been involved in the further development of our House System and through that in outstanding Charity fund-raising work. Many of you were involved in leading the school to raise more than £6,000 to be donated to deserving causes chosen by each of our six Houses. £1000 of which we have again donated to our school's main charity partner the Prince & Princess of Wales hospice.

I told you at the start of the year of the importance I placed on S6 students in our school. You have risen to that challenge. You have led the school well and set an excellent example for our younger pupils. You have set the bar high for those who will follow you. I and the rest of the school thank you for that.

I hope you have enjoyed S6 and indeed your six years at Mearns Castle, and that you have many special memories to take away with you

As you leave I am sure that you will now go on and make your mark in the world.

A wise person that even Google can't identify once said "It's not about how clever you are it's about what you are clever at". I urge you to remember that advice as on leaving Mearns

Castle each of you have an important contribution to make to developing, enhancing and improving the world we live in.

I will now quote American Businessman and author David Nadler in his Celebration of Student Achievement address to the graduating students of the Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington. I have used this quote a few times now but I feel it perfectly encapsulates the advice I would like to offer you for the future.

Nadler had this advice to offer and I offer it to you today as you look to your time after Mearns Castle:

'Find what you love doing, that which gets you up in the dark hours of the morning or keeps you up late into the night because that's what you'll do well.

Life is short so make sure that you're doing what you really want to be doing. Make sure that you are finding your professional passion. Make sure that you are expressing your personal genius.'

In the years to come we will need the intellect, the talents, the experience and the energy of people like yourselves if we are to make society a better and fairer place for everyone to live.'

An American Educationalist, Lou Watters, said "*A school is a place with tomorrow inside it!*" So today you are, to quote one of my favourite American singer/songwriters Harry Chapin, '*our promise for tomorrow*'. And tomorrow and every day after that as you make your way in the world I hope you will always be proud to say that you were a pupil at Mearns Castle.

While I was researching the source of one of the quotes, I encountered this one from author Kurt Vonnegut that I thought was quite funny so I thought I would share it with you. Vonnegut said “True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country!”

Now go and make your parents and our school proud. We will miss you class of 2020. We will look forward to celebrating your many successes as former pupils of Mearns Castle High School.