



THE
PORTSMOUTH
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL

Prizegiving 2023

Speeches by Head Prefects

Sophie Haworth

PGS has given me so many experiences and new skills that, coming from a relatively small state school in Year 7, I could have never imagined.

Prizegiving is a time at which all of us, prize winners or not, have an opportunity to reflect on the excursions, challenges, and successes of the past academic year, as well as striving to improve for the next. All the prize winners in this ceremony, as well as many of you who maybe have not won prizes, have epitomised many of the core values, whether that be commitment to your studies, intellectual curiosity, or the courage to push through when struggling.

Personally, I have done so much in my time here both inside and outside of lessons which encompass these values, at one point in Middle School I was a member of 15 clubs spanning the whole range of activities – Sport, Music, Drama, and everything that was in between. From Year 9 I started developing a surprise love for the outdoors. Though, admittedly, I joined at first because everyone else was, this all started with CCF. Through the Cadet Force I have personally developed myself, as well as learning how to teach and lead others. My key take away, as I'm sure will be the same for many of you who have gone, or will go through CCF, was the strong friendships I forged with those who I didn't normally interact with. Once you have lived the hard life of a weekend camp, in the rain for most of the 48 hours you are there, everything is soaked and to top that, you've been led along a contour line for hours on end, you develop a closeness with your fellow cadets that leads to some great friendships that last all through school. If you go through those sorts of experiences with others, an unexpected friendship is an unavoidable side effect. In a similar sense, the Duke of Edinburgh journey, all the way from traipsing in the New Forest for Bronze to canoeing in the Scottish Highlands for Gold, the most difficult experiences can often be your most enriching (and to be honest, your funniest!). The one miserable lunchtime we spent huddling under trees in the pouring rain was definitely not my favourite moment at the time but is now generally one of my fondest memories of the whole excursion.

Gold DofE was a highlight of my Sixth Form and is a pretty holistic demonstration of the PGS Core values, but primarily a key example of collaboration. Walking away from the airport two weeks after we arrived, with all friendships intact, only a few hospital visits under our belt and our expedition comfortably passed, we considered the experience a total success.

I travelled to Turkey to study the Gallipoli Campaign constituted by Residential for the Award, and I count myself lucky considering I stayed in a hotel and not a tent! This off-chance opportunity has ignited a passion for this particular area of study that has influenced my university choices – so do not be afraid to take those opportunities as they come, even if they are daunting at first as no one you know is going! Taking that initial courageous jump can change that trajectory of not only your school career, but your life in the future, and as such I would urge you to embrace the fear.

Thank you very much again to Mr Kanwar for his words today and congratulations to everyone who received a prize today.

Henry Ball

Mr Kanwar, thank you so much for coming to our prize giving and taking the time to give out awards to all our hard-working PGS students. Having learned a bit about you and hearing what you have shared with us today, I'm sure everyone will feel very honoured to shake your hand and receive a prize from you.

Today is a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate success and achievement in all areas of school life. The sheer breadth of awards that have been given out today perfectly demonstrates something I think is really amazing about this school, the incredible variety of opportunities that are available to students that are willing to put themselves forward and give everything a go.

My time at PGS has been full of lessons but if I was to share one piece of advice, it would be to be interested, be curious and never turn down an opportunity.

Curiosity is, in fact, the first of our 6 core values and in my opinion, it is the most important.

PGS is the perfect place to push the boundaries of your knowledge and your skills as there are so many opportunities to ask questions and to gain a deeper understanding of a topic. Once you begin to exercise your curiosity by questioning the reasons behind something, rather than just accepting the facts it makes learning so much more interesting, so much more satisfying and you remember so much more of what you learn.

Being curious however, can take another of our core values: courage. It can take courage to put yourself out there, asking questions without fear of looking stupid or standing out. While this is scary at first, I promise you that in the long run it will be worth it.

Every one of my parents' evenings has ended with teachers saying that I ask a lot of questions in class, admittedly often slightly too many, however I would never change a thing. If, in a lesson, you can find a chance to say, "but what if?" or "why is that?", you will be pushing the boundaries of your learning and finding a hugely rewarding connection with the subject.

This curiosity, however, shouldn't be restricted to the classroom.

Curiosity exposes us to countless experiences that will help us to become well-rounded, diverse individuals. This could mean signing up for a new club, joining a new sports team or even trying out a new instrument.

One of my personal examples of this was how over the last few years, as I'm sure lots of my friends would say, I was absolutely terrible at rugby. I could barely catch the ball even if it was placed directly into my hands. However, just by turning up to training every week and a little bit of throwing a rugby ball at a wall in my garden, I eventually improved and even managed to get a few games in the first team, although I suspect my fellow second team players would say I'm much more suited to second team rugby. My point is, however, hopeless you might think you are at some sport, instrument, or general skill, if you just have the courage and curiosity to just turn up and give your best shot, you will, eventually, get better at whatever you're doing, and hopefully much better than I ever got at rugby.

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to push ourselves outside our comfort zones. This definitely takes courage. If we can put ourselves forward without fear of failure, if we can have a go at something for the sake of the experience and without an obsession with being the best and if we can find every excuse to be curious, we can enjoy so many amazing opportunities and develop so much more as a person, and hopefully encourage others to do the same.