

My speech today is not so much a speech as a ramble through the alphabet.

A is for awards and applause. Congratulations to all of you who received certificates or prizes either at Valediction last night or in the past in recognition of your academic, sporting or cultural achievements. The school's reputation is built on the efforts of students like you.

B is for Bravo to all of you who participated in either Revue 21 or any of the major productions of the past 5 years. They were all superb and will never be forgotten by anyone who had the privilege of seeing the shows.

C is for classes, curriculums and conforming – things which, after today, will no longer be a part of your lives.

D is for de Bruyn. You will have seen both the male and female of this species moving about the school from early in the morning every day. Both are easily recognised by their speed of movement, their animated gestures and their absolute dedication to their young. Neither you nor I could have got this far without the help, support and hard work of this remarkable species.

E is for enthusiasm, effort, energy and excellence. Without the first three you will never achieve the fourth.

F is for family, friends, fun and fabulous Fourways High.

G and H are for goodbye to childhood and hello to the rest of your lives.

H is also for hangovers, which you should leave for after the finals and not before.

I is for integrity, doing the right thing in every situation, no matter how hard or how unpopular it may be. It is too rare a quality these days, but, if possessed, will ensure you stand head and shoulders above everyone else.

J is for “Just do it!” Take the risk. Follow your dreams, regardless of what anyone else says.

K is for the knowledge you gained over the last 5 years – the kind you found in books as well as what you learned about yourself and in interacting with others.

L is for love and laughter. You can never have too much of either in your lives.

M is for the memories each of us holds dear, of the special moments which made up our experience of Fourways High.

N and O together spell no, a word Grade Controllers find themselves using on a regular basis. Often preceded by the word oh such as in, “Oh no, what has he done to his hair now?!”

P, of course, is for Peacock : Prowling and probing..... patiently persuading..... periodically pouncing.....and very proud.

Q is for quickly changing the subject so I don't get emotional.

R is for respect. Treat everyone with respect and you will find life is smoother for it. The only way to earn respect is to first offer it to others.

S is for smile, as often as you can. It's infectious. Say nice things to people, as often as you can. Watch them shine from the inside.

T is for teachers. Whether they were tyrants or teddy bears, taught a subject you loved or hated, they cared and did the best they could to help you reach this point.

U is for, "Um.....uh"the stock answer to the question, "WHAT are you doing??!!"

VW is a make of car driven by 14% of the school staff. I know because I counted them.

X is for the examinations which are fast approaching....Well, not really but what could I possibly do with xylophone or x-ray?

Y is for you. Each of you is unique. Make use of the talents you have been blessed with and never forget how special you are.

For Z, I found a new word. I couldn't let you leave school on this last day without learning something : zarf. It's an ornamental holder for a hot coffee cup.

I would like to close with some lines I read on a poster a couple of years ago.

"At the end of your life, any wealth, fame or power you have accumulated will become irrelevant.

What will matter is not what you had but rather what you gave, not your success but rather your significance, not what you learnt but rather what you taught.

What will matter is not your competence but rather your character, not how many people you knew but rather how many will feel a lasting loss when you are gone.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to follow your example.

Living a life that matters does not happen by accident; it's a choice."

My wish for you as you leave Fourways High today is that you are every bit as successful and happy as you hope to be, but that you also choose to live a life that matters.

Know also that you go with my love.

Thank you