PRIZE GIVING 2013 - HEADTEACHERS SPEECH

Guernsey Grammar School & Sixth Form Centre

Honoured guests, (Mr Roger Berry and Mrs Berry, ) Minister of Education, Deputy Robert Sillars, Deputy Conder, Director of Education Mr Alan Brown, colleagues from the Education Department, parents, staff and students, I should like to offer you all a very warm welcome (quite literally) to our school Prize Giving. We are here in order to celebrate and reward the achievements of the students in Years 7-10 during the academic year Sep 2012- July 2013. We celebrate the achievements of Year 11 and Sixth Form students and two further evenings which take place during the Autumn Term.

We are particularly pleased that Mr Roger Berry, Managing Director of Concept Group Guernsey has agreed to present the prizes this year. You are most welcome. We very much appreciate the links that we have with local employers and thank you for the valuable role you play in supporting the development of work related learning through work experience placements and real life projects delivered in partnership with school, as well as offering employment routes for young people as they leave school and enter the world of work. Recently the whole of Year 10 were on work placements and the feedback we received was very complementary about all of you. Alongside attaining good qualifications the development of transferrable skills and attributes which enable young people to be ready for the world of work is an essential part of the work that we do.

Today is our opportunity to celebrate the individual successes of students; the recognition of consistent and sustained effort, for excellence in subjects and for outstanding achievement in sport. This year we have a new prize – the Georgina’s Gang Trophy for Endeavour which will be presented to a Year 7 student. Thank you to Mr and Mrs Pearce for their very kind donation of this beautiful award.

To the prize winners – whatever your prize is today be assured that the school, your teachers and your parents are very proud of you. Well done to each and every one of you.

If you are not a prize winner please be generous in your support and celebration of those who do come forward but also set yourself some personal targets for the year ahead. We have all been reading your end of year reports which reflect a great deal of hard work and commitment from so many of you. In a recent assembly acknowledging the students from this school who will be leaving tomorrow to take part in the Island Games in Bermuda Mr Alun Williams – urged you to think that next year it could be you. So we will urge you to think the same – it could be you. Don’t be afraid to think big and don’t be afraid to take risks. You will never know what is possible if you don’t try.

I would like to take a moment to praise those students who are competing and performing at national level - Benjamin Foss who is English Schools Table Tennis Champion, Jack Turvey who is ranked Nationally for Squash, Hanako Dickinson who is member of the National Youth Orchestra and Sam Wallbridge who, on Saturday 6th July won the 400 metre hurdles at the English Schools Athletics Association National Championship.

Well done to all of the students for everything you have achieved over the last year. Give yourself a round of applause.
It has been another tremendously busy and challenging year for the school and it would be impossible to document everything here today.

As a school we have continued to work on our particular areas of focus as part of our continuous cycle of improvement – improvement in the progress of students, teaching and learning, our use of data to inform planning, and how we can make best use of technology. In November a visiting team of external validators visited the school for our Post Validation visit in order to provide an external check and balance of our progress, and we received positive feedback on the progress we are making and on our evaluation and strategic planning.

As the school building approaches its 30th Birthday in 2 years I think that we would all acknowledge that it has stood the test of time very well and been well cared for and maintained. But as time goes on we need to continue to upgrade the building and facilities. We appreciate the recent and ongoing projects which include a long project on the roof, the car park area, upgrade of Science, mathematics and Geography and, most recently the girls PE changing area.

To say that we live in interesting times is something of an understatement for all those who work in education. Change and managing change seem always to be at our door whether it is curriculum and the drivers from the UK government initiatives or the challenges and opportunities that we face much closer to home in our own island. Financial constraints affect us all and we believe we have responded to the challenge to be efficient and effective in the use of valuable and scarce resources. We strive to ensure that this does not impact upon the experience end outcomes for our students and are concerned that we maintain our provision and breadth of choice for all. The Education Board’s vision to create an education system to meet the demands of the 21st century, which acknowledges the importance and value of all young people and which places them at the heart of any strategic plan is something to which we all aspire. All children deserve the best we can give them. I am confident that this school and the staff who work here have a key role to play in the education of our island’s young people at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, and we all look forward to working with our Education Board and the Education Officers to ensure we achieve this vision.

As this school year draws to a close I would like to formally thank all members of our school community for their support throughout this year. I would particularly like to thank publically all of the staff: teaching and non-teaching for all of their hard work. This school is successful because of the standard of teaching and all the extra opportunities offered to the students as well as all of the hard work that takes place behind the scenes by our administrative, technical and caretaking teams. I never cease to be amazed by all of the events that take place over and above the day to day teaching and I am very grateful to work with such a dedicated, committed and professional team of staff. I am particularly indebted to my senior team for all of their support this year.

The recruitment and retention of high quality staff remains one of the biggest challenges facing the school and last year 17 new staff took up their roles across the school. This year we have recruited a further 7 staff.

As always happens at the end of the academic year we sadly say good buy to a number of teachers. They are:

Miss Robinson, Ms Allsopp, Ms Seymour, Mrs Blin Bolt, Miss Robilliard, Mrs Pugh
We would like to give a special mention to Mrs Blin-Bolt, Miss Robilliard and Mrs Pugh who have given significant service and dedication to teaching not only to this school but throughout their working lives and retire at the end of this year. Mrs Blin-Bolt has a real love of teaching young people and we value her dedication, Miss Robilliard has been with the school for 10 years and her expertise as an examiner and her support of medics have been much appreciated. Mrs Pugh has been a member of staff for 22 years and her contribution to the development of music in school and across the island cannot pass without our acknowledgment and debt of gratitude. It is also important to remember Mrs Falla who retired at the end of the Christmas term after a very long association with the school going back to 1977.

To all of the staff who are leaving this summer we would like to express our sincere thanks for their hard work and dedication. I pay tribute to them and commend their commitment and professionalism. They all leave with our best wishes for the future.

It was very fitting when, on 12th June, we were able to formally open the memorial garden in memory Jane Brache our teacher, colleague and friend. It is a lovely peaceful haven in this busy school and we think that Jane would approve and particularly love the mosaic that was created and executed by so many students, staff and friends.

I invite you to express our sincere thanks to everyone who works in this school. (Applause)

And finally to the parents of this school I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support and co-operation and interest in your children’s education who continue to be a delight to work with and to teach. The triangle of support between the student, the school and yourselves is so very important and one which we value very much indeed. We are very fortunate to have a very active and supportive Parent Teacher Association and I thank them for all the ways in which they support this school.

We are a large and busy community where hardly a day passes by without some special event or activity or achievement taking place. This year alone to mention a few: West Side Story, The Spring Concert, the recent Exhibition by Art, Photography, Media Studies and Technology, all of our many Sporting events, Year 7 performance of Aladdin, Year 9 Macbeth, the Extended Study Project, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, the Grammar English Speaking Board, Maths Challenge, Science week, Languages week and the many many on and off island trips that take place. The life of the school will again be superbly chronicled and recorded in the 19th Edition of the Grammalogue which will be finalised at the start of next term. My thanks to Mrs Perrio and the editorial team for what I am confident will be another magnificent school magazine.

We continue to build our capacity to be a full learning community, reflective about the work that we do and always looking for ways to improve and to move forward in order to ensure that we prepare young people for their future journey in life; to provide them with the necessary skills to be able to deal with whatever life throws at them. We are dedicated to developing in our students the qualities and skills to become confident, self motivated and independent young people.

In conclusion, congratulations again to all our prize winners but more importantly thank you to all members of this community who together make it such a special place.

Thank you.