

Lurgan Junior High School



*The Principal's
Prize Day Speech
2017*

PRIZE DAY SPEECH 2017

Madam Chair, Guests, governors, colleagues, parents, welcome to Lurgan Junior High School's Annual Prize Day. A very special welcome to all of our young people present here today. They are representative of those who have worked hard, of those who have made consistent and measurable progress and of those who have excelled in the academic or sporting aspects of school life. Particular mention must go to their teachers, parents and carers who have supported and encouraged them throughout this year and also to our committed School Governors who ensure the school's resources are deployed equitably in the interest of all pupils.

I can stand here today and tell you truthfully that from September there were 21 sub-committee meetings and 8 full meetings of the Board of Governors – in a time when very few do anything without payment, this demonstrates true generosity. The school is indebted to you.

At this point I want to thank all principals from our partner Primary Schools and our Senior High Schools, Lurgan College and Craigavon Senior High for taking the time out of a busy schedule to attend Prize Giving. This is an opportunity for you as Primary School Principals to see the value added by Lurgan JHS and the prospective talent that you as SHS Principals will have in the next school year. Perhaps now is an appropriate time to welcome the newly appointed principal of CSHS, Dr Paula Downing and Mr Colin Forde, newly appointed principal of Moira Primary School. Both come to this community with a wealth of experience, as well as excellent reputations as school leaders. I look forward to working with you and equally I wish Mrs Eileen Cousins and

Mrs Carol Mairs, your predecessors, a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Thank you to those educational bodies that support our schools the year round. In particular I have appreciated the guidance and advice from Mr John Collings, Mr Aidan McCormick, the now retired Mr Martin Daly, Mr Paul Crooks all from EA and Mr Barry Mulholland from the Controlled Schools Support Council. Education is a complex area and I speak for all school leaders when I say that the objectivity and practical support offered willingly and generously at all times means that we feel valued. It has also been a positive and enriching experience to have had visits from Mrs Sinead McKenna and Mr John McCavana from ETI offering both guidance and encouragement.

A special Lurgan J H S welcome for our guest speaker today, Mr Brian McKnight. I am looking forward to your message and know it will be of particular relevance for our young people. As someone who understands the business world and the personal qualities necessary to be successful in employment, the knowledge and advice you offer today will be of real benefit. Due to your experiences, you have the insight and knowledge to understand that successful businesses come down to selecting good people, providing a comprehensive job description, training them up, supporting them to carry out their roles and then giving them autonomy to get on with the job. Obviously, there has to be appropriate monitoring, evaluating and reviewing to ensure that the business is moving in the right direction and is on target for production and profits. I have no doubt that you have had to react to market forces and that the only way for you to succeed in a competitive world has been to make changes along the way. And so it is with education.

School leaders alongside their governors must look to research and evidence for best practice in providing an educational pathway that will benefit all of its pupils. As a matter of fact that is their role. In the educational landscape there will always be change, - that is inevitable. The world keeps changing and we have to adapt in education to ensure that our young people can compete effectively. LJHS has to be an outward looking school, continually progressive and as John Collings, our Educational Director himself said "a school that leaves no child behind". To this end senior teachers have in this last year visited other educational establishments and been receptive to the good practice that is on-going elsewhere.

As you all know, If you are not going forward, you are going backward. There is no such thing as standing still!

Sometimes as parents and teachers, we are caught up in believing that when children are in the school building, or even in a certain class they can succeed. However, even though research clearly demonstrates the importance of attendance, being in the building or being in a particular class does not inevitably lead to success. Success in school only comes after pupil engagement, thorough application, an attitude of resilience and developing in each and every child the aspiration, the motivation and the drive to achieve.

Every young person today needs to do well academically. As many of you will already know, well-paid jobs for unskilled and unqualified people are a thing of the past thanks to the irrepressible forces of globalisation. Over 50% of high status employment in the future will require a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. However as any worthy employer will tell you, Knowledge and skills are not the only requirements.

Employers want young people who are articulate, who tell the truth, who can take responsibility, who are dependable, who can find solutions, who have the ability to come up with fresh ideas and can find alternative ways of moving forward.

For that reason, we at LJHS, strive to develop these characteristics in all of our young people. We want them to take accountability for their progress. Oh yes, they cannot be expected to do it on their own. They need the best of teachers, the most responsible of parents and a community with moral purpose. We have to be the role models for our young people. We have to set the tone. We have to raise the bar. We have to do it for all our pupils and we can't be found wanting.

I am pleased to say that in Lurgan JHS we are blessed with a supportive network. We engage frequently with our community through our links with the REACH Team, Family works, Love for Life and the Youth Service to ensure our pupils have the strongest pastoral foundation possible.

Our Christian values are further embedded by visits from our Church leaders who attend regular assemblies and the weekly Bible Studies led by Peter Wright and Mark Hand. Pupils and staff alike appreciate the very valuable contribution that they make and I want to take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the effort and commitment made by staff members alongside all external agencies who give their time, their commitment, their generosity and their energy to the pupils and to the school.

These individuals, as part of their organisations, provide our children with genuine role models and I hope in the future the same young people can reflect on the positive relationships they developed with them

during their time at LJHS. The constant and consistent messages they share support us as we embed a culture of positive discipline, of mutual respect, of equality of opportunity, of fairness and of course strong academic achievement.

Schools are microcosms of society and however hard we try we cannot escape the issues of cyber safety and on rare occasions, anti-social behaviour. This year, as always, the Neighbourhood Police, with Constable Michael Allen, & Constable Colin Lindsey alongside Mr Jonathan Mercer from Mournview Community have stepped in to offer advice and guidance to both pupils and parents regarding these issues. Given the very recent tragedy of a pupil from our Craigavon community I am reminded that the preventative curriculum carried out by our pastoral teams and our supportive agencies is genuinely needed.

I feel privileged and proud to be speaking on this occasion as I recognise the efforts, the persistence and the determination these young people have demonstrated throughout this school year. Indeed for some sitting in front of me today, they have been regular visitors to previous Prize Days and have consistently demonstrated their dedication to learning, and to achieving in both the academic and the sporting life of this school. I have been impressed and continue to be impressed by those who have clearly enjoyed the enriching experiences of school life.

For those in Year 8 & 9 I want to congratulate you today and encourage you to continue to work hard in all of your subjects, to ask questions when you need clarification and to participate eagerly in class discussion bringing your own focused ideas and opinions to the table whilst encouraging others to join in. With practice, you can only get better.

Special thanks to Class 8A6 who have successfully participated in the Shared Education Programme with St Ronan's College. This has been an amazing success under the collaborative leadership of Mr Michal Addley LJHS Coordinator & Mrs Mairead Greene, SRC Coordinator. 8A6, with a Yr 8 class from SRC have worked with Mrs Bloomer Art Dept, Miss Murphy, Music Dept, the P.E. Dept and Mr Logan ICT and AMMA to ensure inspirational learning experiences for our children. Recently we joined with pupils, staff, governors and parents at a celebratory event to mark the end of a very successful year of Shared Education. This was held in Brownlow House and on behalf of our Shared Education Coordinators I would like to convey our thanks to Mr David Martin for providing us with such a wonderful location to open and close this programme. This will be extended in the next school year to include our prospective Year 8 pupils with RE being the lead department.

And now to our Year 10s, I not only want to wish you well, I also want to thank you for the major contribution you have made to LJHS. As Prefects led by our worthy Head Boy and Head Girl, Nathaniel Cunningham & Ellie Taylor, members of the School Council, House Captains, Team Captains, Scripture Union members, participants in the Lip Sync Competition, STEM Competitors, school ambassadors in Primary School Sampler Days, Assembly Leaders, organisers of the Semi Formal and committed students, you have proved time and time again that you have the personal qualities, the commitment and the drive to make things happen, I have had so many opportunities to be proud of your achievements and, parents, as prize giving gets underway you will be able to see in your programme many of their successes.

Needless to say there are too many to name individually however I would like to acknowledge the wide range of academic ability throughout our school in Year 10. This year I am delighted to say that the majority of our pupils achieved level 5 and above in their Key Stage 3 Assessments in Communication and Mathematics. Recognition must go to all departments across the school who have supported the English and Maths departments in targeting oracy, reading, writing and numeracy but particular mention must be made of the Coordinators and Heads of Departments in these key areas. Well done!

Lurgan Junior High School has an excellent and well deserved sporting reputation under the able leadership of Mrs Elizabeth Quinn with Mrs Linda Dougan and Mr Robert McDowell with Mr John Guy. They sincerely appreciate the support they receive from staff and community throughout the year. It would be remiss of me not to mention the assistance given consistently by Mrs Sue Gibson, Mr Ivor Lennon and Mr Cyril Vennard, in hockey, the rugby support provided by Mr Grant Martin, Girls' football support from Mr Phil McKinley, Lurgan Town, tennis support from Mr Roy Hollywood, Volley ball support from Miss Amy Wethers and also the many past pupils who regularly come to help through the REACH Team. We are also grateful to Mr Billy Keegan who is frequently called upon to support with mini bus driving.

All of these individuals give their time willingly and regularly because they want to see our young people develop as Sportsmen and Sports women of the future. And many do.

There can be no doubt that Lurgan Junior High has had substantial successes in Sport this year.

In hockey the Under 14 Squad had another fantastic run in the Ulster School' Junior Cup and for the second year in a row reached the final of this prestigious competition. The Under 13 team played in both the Mid Ulster League and Cup competitions and the very talented Under 12 team won the Killicomaine Tournament finishing as runners up in the Mid Ulster League.

Congratulations to Lydia McNeil Captain of the U14 Hockey Team on her selection to the Ulster Under 16 Squad for the second successive season. Well done also to Anna Cowan and Julia Anderson who have been training with the Under 15 Development Squad and also the Yr 8 & 9 girls who have been training with the Under 13 Development Squad.

In Netball too the Year 10 Team were runners up in both the Vista League and the Vista Cup. Two talented players Anna Cowan and Ellie Taylor have participated in the Under 15 Netball NI future Internationals Academy and Zohar Sohail has been chosen for the Under 13 Netball NI Development Squad.

In Girls' football, the team led by Jessica Hall were runners up in the IFA NI Junior Cup and the Armagh/Down Futsal Heats. This was the first time ever that we had a team entered for the competition and we are delighted at the result. Congratulations to Jessica Rea who was recently selected as part of the U16 NI Squad and Leah Heaney for the U13 County Excellence Squad. On behalf of the Girls' Football Team I would like to say a sincere thank you to Mr Phil McKinley for his generosity in presenting the school with a trophy in recognition of their commitment in this sport.

In Girls' Athletics, our mini team came 1st overall with Jessica Huff winning gold in 3 events and with Lily May Ruddy achieving gold in the shot putt.

In the girls minor teams we had 3 successes with Laura Cregan achieving Gold in the Shot Putt and Eva Corr and Isabel McConaghie receiving bronze in the high Jump and javelin respectively.

But the girls of LJHS were not to be outdone by the boys.

Indeed it was another exciting year for Boys' Sport at LJHS. 2016-17 saw the U'12 and U'14 teams both reach the High Schools' Cup Semi-finals. The U'14 team captained by Harry Bird recorded some memorable wins over Ballymena Academy, Wallace, RBAI and local rivals Banbridge Academy. A number of players deserve a special mention including Rhys Gregory for his ability to score trys from anywhere on the pitch, most improved player Bartlomiej Tzack and indeed player of the year, Harry Bird.

The U'12 year group were able to field three teams with the 'A' team co-captained by Peter Bird and Matthew Conn. Their rugby journey started with wins over Armagh Royal, Friends and Killicomaine before a successful cup qualifying campaign saw them defeat a strong Tandragee team by 5-4. This gave them a place in the finals day at Lurgan Rugby Club. A special mention to player of the year Noah Parks, centre Callum Fitzgerald and full-back Sam Stevenson for their tireless work for the team throughout the season.

The U'13 team captained by Angus Cunningham improved throughout the course of the season with excellent performances coming against Friends and RBAI 'A' in their last game of the season. A number of

these boys were promoted to the U'14 Cup Squad by the conclusion of the year.

The footballers in Lurgan JHS had a hugely successful season, with the U14 team lifting the Northern Ireland Plate. Jesse Carson, as captain, was an exemplary team leader and was rewarded with numerous appearances for the NI Elite Squad. He was without doubt player of the season closely followed by Shane Adamson and Rhys Gregory who picked up the Golden boot award for top goal scorer with 21 goals.

The Year 9 football team, captained by Jamie Rusk, finished second in the Mid Ulster League. They also went on to reach the final of the Mid Ulster Cup where they finished runners up.

The U12 squad also had a successful Year with A, B and C teams regularly competing against other schools.

At this point I want to acknowledge our partnership with Glenavon Football Club. This was initiated by Gary Hamilton, manager, at the beginning of the school year when we were able to provide a regular training ground for Glenavon's Senior Team. Currently, Glenavon are financing a refurbishment of the grass rugby pitch to improve its surface. We are delighted to support our local team and recognise the long term benefits this will have for our school.

From kicking the ball to punching the ball ...

It was an outstanding year for all the boys' volleyball teams with the U'13 team captained by Jamie Rusk winning the N. Ireland Schools' Tournament defeating Campbell College in the final. The U'14 and U'12

teams both finished as runners-up in their respective Tournaments. Well done on an excellent achievement!

The Mini Boys' Team made silver at the District Championships at Lurgan Park with Daniel Scott also qualifying as an individual for the Ulster Schools' Championships in the Minor Boys team.

The District Track and Field Championships saw our boys win 3 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals thus qualifying for the Ulster Schools' Athletics Championships.

At the Ulster Championships Lexx McConville won Gold in the Mini Boys' High Jump in a new school record of 1m 50cm beating the previous best held by his brother Troy. Rhys Gregory brought home Silver in the 100m and qualified for the Irish Championships where he finished 5th in Ireland. Finally, the Junior Boys' 4 X 100m Relay Team of Shane Adamson, Harry Bird, Alex Wheelan, Rhys Gregory and Travis Barr won Bronze medals.

The highlight of Sports' Day at Mary Peters Track in Belfast was the achievement of Lexx McConville. I am delighted to say that Lexx won his three individual events in three new school records in the 200m, long jump and high jump – a fantastic achievement!

The School Community is immensely proud of the wide range of sporting participation and the achievements of our young people. It is extremely difficult to get both teachers and pupils out of school due to the many after school activities and there are too many days when caretakers are

ready to lock the doors and staff are still in school. This continuous support for our young people is extended to residentials and this year Mr Black has arranged the Ski Trip to San Valentino, Italy, and the traditional Liver pool Trip. Mr Addley with the ML Dept organised a memorable 1st WW trip to Belgium for 60 pupils and currently the Drama Department are away on the London Trip. I'm sure many of you are keeping up with your friends through Facebook.

All these wonderful experiences provide many opportunities to learn, to communicate, to socialise and to allow our young people to develop independence and initiative.

My final message to you is ...

At LJHS Children are the priority!

At LJHS Change is the reality!

At LJHS, we collaborate across departments, across schools and across the community.

At LJHS, reaching out to other successful educators is our strategy!

And now, I would like to call on our very own young people to stand, to turn and to applaud your parents and your teachers for the encouragement, support and inspiration they have given you so generously and so graciously.

Madam Chair, with that applause I end my report!