

Let me start this speech day by unashamedly stating that this School is proud of who we are, what we stand for, what we achieve and that we have acquired an international reputation as one of the best schools in this part of Africa.

We educate people irrespective of their background or creed. Always remember that you are absolutely unique; just like everyone else. The banner outside the dining hall emphasizes the point, different colours; one people. There are a lot of people in this Hall today who have moved from humble circumstances to the height of their professions. It is, I would contend, partly a result of this mixture in an overwhelmingly friendly and secure environment, in which we are united by common values, that we do as well as we do.

The Council of International Schools, to which we are now members, carried out an inspection in February of this year. All areas of the school came under scrutiny and the Inspector found much to celebrate in our everyday practice. There was praise for the quality of teaching and learning so too the pastoral care, community life and the relationships which exist between all members of this community. The inspector extolled the breadth of our subject choices and the value added we place on activities which complement, and supplement the academic curriculum. One benchmark of a good inspection is how many future action areas are recommended and out of 291 performance indicators, we exceeded, or met, 273 standards with only 18 minor recommended action points. I am proud of where we have come and I look forward to taking us to where we still would like to be.

The flags around our school represent the different nationalities we have at present and those we formerly had as teachers, or students. I don't have to tell you we are truly international, you can see it for yourselves. International in body; International in curriculum; International in spirit. This cultural diversity was celebrated in November last year with a week long presentation of music, dance, poetry, drama, art, costume and food.

The next academic year we will see us celebrating 75 years of Greensteds School. Greensteds was started as a result of the 1st World War as children could not travel abroad and so there was a need to establish schools in colonies, in case of another war, so that children of settlers could carry on with schooling. Mrs Greensteds started teaching in her sitting room with only a few children.

So, Greensteds was celebrating its 3rd birthday when World War 2 broke out. The 53 acres of land was owned by farmers Mr and Mrs Greensteds, and the farm was called Kiungururia Farm. After independence in 1963, the Greensteds family left Kenya and gave the land to a Board of Trustees, for educational purposes.

Then, the main entrance to the school was the lower gate by the campsite as this was the main Nairobi road. The entrance we use now was opened in 1984.

Originally, the car park and the house by the workshop were the horse's stables. The area by the new cateress house was the workers camp built during the 2nd World War for British Army soldiers and the lower school garden area was also an army barracks. The McBride office, was the main office with the bursar's office the one next to it. The Junior library used to

be the main dining hall and the back of it, was the school kitchen. Later, the kitchen was moved to the Sanatorium and the house which is now occupied by Mr Mwangi, became the senior dining hall with Mr Omach's house being the junior dining hall. Mr Smith's House was the caterer's house; the front side of the 6th form boy's block was the junior girl's dorm. Nurse Christine's house was the senior girl's matron's house and behind that was the senior girl's dorm, which later had to be knocked down due to being on the fault line.

A section of the Year 11 boy's dorm was the Headmaster's house before he moved to the house which is next to the old pavilion. Class 3 & 4 stands on top of the old swimming pool. The PAD, was the Main Hall and the Art room was the boy's dorm with canvass windows which could be pulled down at night.

Nicholas, one of our catering department, who has been with us for 40 years recalls that the first African children to join the school were from Uganda, two girls and one boy in 1972, the time the first Asian child joined too.

So the school has rightly continued to change yet, always to meet the current, and future needs of the students it serves. Today, children are growing up into a very different kind of world, and they must be ready for it as it is going to require some very special qualities for all of them, if they are going to negotiate this passage successfully. Life in the twentieth century is like a parachute jump: you have to get it right the first time. This is what we are trying to do here.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor words on change seem appropriate here; ***"We shrink from change; yet is there anything which can be achieved without it? Could you have a hot bath unless firewood underwent some change? Is it possible for anything to be achieved without change? Do you not see then that change in yourself is no less necessary?"***

The most significant change during my time here, is that we are now a community which accepts, wants and is determined to change: no matter what success is achieved one year, there is the desire to better what was achieved before. Along with all this change though, goes something very important indeed: the need to have something to hold on to when all about you seems to be moving. Here the goal is to have a community where values are strong; and our boys and girls are equipped with the qualities to understand the forces of change and successfully adapt to them. The skills they will need are more than just the academic ones measurable in GCSE and A level results ; we are talking about respect for the individual; caring for and giving to others; determination in adversity; a willingness to seize opportunities and above all, to work hard.

Over many years at Greensteds, I hope and believe that this is what we do in partnership with you as parents. It is these values, day in and day out, which shine through and become the watchword of the Greensteds student, forged by the culture of the school and taken into their new worlds, wherever they may be. Decisions made in the future will be based on that bedrock of principle, which will become the basis of their lives: treating people with courtesy and respect; being strong in a competitive world, but within a framework of fair play and humility.

This aspect of a school, the ethos or moral ideas and attitudes, can be felt, but is less easily quantified. The results take time to be seen and of course, unlike teaching the concept of photosynthesis, or the law of motion, which may take a couple of lessons, it takes many and repeated lessons before values are assimilated. Not everyone comes to our school with the same code of conduct and aspirations; values need to be coached, as well as taught. Behaviour is influenced by so many external factors which may initially be beyond our control. It is the drip, drip method which seems to work although I, and we, would often much prefer to see a Damascus type experience. Greensted's continues to develop the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual sides of the personality, in a manner of which, I am confident our founder would have approved. Our vision and energy continue to burn brightly, but we know that our work is never done.

Former students

It is at this point that I would like to draw attention to our former students who are with us today. We are delighted to see you back. "Greenies", are all over the world, in all manner of occupations lawyers, financial advisors, accountants and then some have become useful members of society. I hope they would agree that this school helped them to establish who they are, as well as where they are now and I would encourage our current students, particularly those few who seem to think that moving out of this place is going to free them of responsibilities, expectations, rules, behavioural values and hard slog, to talk to ex-Greenies, as I am sure they would each reiterate a message that all people trying to make headway in this outside tough world would say, enjoy this time; do not take it for granted; don't wish it away; appreciate these precious days of self discovery and learning. It is tremendous to have you with us and I look forward to sharing a glass of water with you after this event.

Academic results

We remain, first and foremost, a school where academic results have to be our bread and butter. Even if we are not as selective as other schools, our IGCSE are good, and the AS and A2 results, very good indeed. It need hardly be said that this is not the case everywhere and having been tried and tested for over 25 years at A level, it is one of reasons why our Sixth Form has become popular with students who join us from a wide variety of other schools. They can be confident that they will gain good results here and will receive the sort of guidance that gets them into good universities in UK, USA, Australia, Canada and elsewhere. Our 6th form options are varied from the traditional to the more new, Media, Music Technology, Psychology, Sociology, Thinking Skills and in September, we are introducing Philosophy and Ethics as well as looking at alternative qualifications such as BTec and Diploma's. We have now 24/7 internet connection throughout the school with all years 12 & 13 with lap tops through which subjects can now be delivered. We have one white or, smart board in school, but by September, we aim to have this increased to a minimum of 5. Academic coasting, I need hardly point out, is not for us. The new Early Years section is growing, as are the teachers, I mean the number of teachers and this is providing a healthy platform for the expending junior school.

Sport

Striving for excellence of course, is true in all the school undertakes and it is this commitment, plus the breadth of experience, which determines that the individuals here do so well in sport. Open Girl's won the Rounders league, the Hillcrest Hockey tournament and league plus, go on next week to represent the Rift Valley Province in the National Hockey festival. Open Girls and boys, won the Turi Cross Country for the first time and in doing so, won the event overall. They also won the Kasarani athletics too. U13 boys and girl's won the Brookhouse Hockey Tournament; the U15 boys, runners up in

the John Garrod football tournament where the girls won the Plate competition.. Three boys and 4 girls, represented the U13 Up-Country Hockey team. Rahul and Gagan have been selected in the Kenya U19 Cricket Academy, in preparation for the next World Cup qualifiers. Three boys have just been graded as a black belt in Tae kwon do, bringing that number up to 4, at senior level.

Music

Since our last Speech Day we have had our third UK music tour under the guidance of Mr Mwashimba, Benji, Mr. Domingo & Mrs Kahiri. Again touring the Sussex and Devon counties, this group of students had not only a fantastic time sampling the delights of camping in the English summer, but the opportunity to show people in the Uk the spirit, and warmth, of Kenyans and African music. Our band and choir play a key role in marketing all that is good about our school and I have become a bit of a groupie following them around to places outside and within Kenya. The inter house competition was incredibly competitive with some outstanding performances in voice, choral, instrumentals and dance categories.

Community

Several staff members and over 60 students, have really taken the projects at Arap Moi, the Little Lambs and Homa Bay to heart, showing that we are very much concerned with making a contribution to our community. Regularly, we have children from Arap Moi come here to enjoy the space, horse riding, games, food and swimming and it is not difficult to buddy each one, with a student of ours. An activity which sees Year 13's and Year 7's literally working hand, in hand. Buildings have been erected, dormitory's painted and upgraded, play facilities built, all with funds raised by our staff and students. This spirit was also seen most recently when approximately 270,000 shillings, was handed over to the Save the Children organization in support of their work for Haiti relief. Save the Children were taken aback as they have not received a single other donation to this cause. I haven't mentioned everything here as the list would be too long; the jigger campaign, operation smile, Cricket Without Boundaries, trying to bowl Aids and HIV out of Kenya using cricket to get the message across. In May, we have set up a link with Arsenal Football Club with a project in local Primary and Secondary Schools. Altruism, should run through the core of what we do here.

Rhino Charge, the Hog Charge, Mount Kenya cycling from 10,000 feet to 4, Mount Kenya expedition, President's Award Scheme, Junior and Senior Model United Nations, Adventure Club, cycling, horse riding, peer counseling, bible study and church leadership, headmaster's project, board games, swimming, cookery club....don't say that there is nothing here to extend your experiences, to learn and to grown and develop personally, socially and intellectually? I have never, and will never, accept that any of these activities affect academic performance, or, compromise what students have to do to succeed. It can be an all too convenient an excuse, for those who are not prepared to give, but simply wish to take. All the successful people in this world learn how to manage time, how to meet busy schedules and deadlines and in schools, my experience tells me that the best students, are those who are busy in many different areas of school. They are the ones who achieve the most because, they give the most.

Staff

All of this success occurs, of course, because our staff, all of them drivers, groundsman, catering dept, maintenance, admin, dorm, technicians, San work tirelessly for this school and therefore your children.

Teaching staff

What is gratifying is that so many of the achievements of our students as individuals and teams have been replicated each year. This sustainability is something of which we are proud and it is possible only because of the commitment of our teachers who accept a role which is more encompassing, and more demanding, than that defined by some of their colleagues in other schools. Not for them any sense of work to rule, or the 3.30pm bell being the time they switch off and disappear. All teachers should bring to a school an expertise in an area of the curriculum but outstanding teachers believe that education is a life-enhancing process. Rather than narrow technicians wedded to prescribed syllabuses those teachers who truly make a difference ensure that the young people they teach are encouraged, supported and facilitated towards growth in several directions. I hope you share my conviction that this is the culture which identifies Greensteds; that while our students are subscribers to a demanding curriculum, at the same time their talents are developed and valued as environmentalists, hockey players, adventurers, athletes and footballers, community minded players, singers, musicians, actors and artists, public speakers and debaters. Teacher's genuine interest and concern in their students, their passion for their subject and their commitment to the school's philosophy make our staff a class apart. Forget the wonderful facilities we are fortunate to have; it is the teachers who make the school strong and successful. Greensteds teachers are a different breed again.

But our successes, are dependent upon a wider community of parents and friends who value what we do: Chairman, board members, parents and friends who work hard to ensure that we can sustain the rich programme of activities we can offer. We are "buzzing with life". And that comment – which should make my colleagues proud – was intended not only as a response to the enthusiasm and energy of the students, but as a credit to all those adults who oversee the busy-ness and whose good will, and sheer humanity, makes this a place to relish and to love.

Nelson Mandela remarks: ***"Often in addressing younger people, I make the point that what counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived - it is what difference we have made to the lives of others that determines the significance of the life we lead."*** To the Prefects who have made a difference this year I want to thank you for a job well done. It isn't an easy job but you know why you were selected and appointed to the task. To Wasim and Rahul, you now know what is required when you head up a group of others and you are there to be shot down by everyone. It takes real courage of conviction to lead a group of people and I can think of very few in my 30 years of teaching who have done this better than Loise. She ranks amongst the very best Head of School I have seen and is worthy of applause from all in here.

Year 13 leavers

Armed as you are with an education, the excellence of which will make your journey into the future far less arduous than the path travelled by those less fortunate than yourselves, you need to become proactive agents of change. You might be asking yourself: "How can I possibly influence situations like global warming, world poverty or world peace?" The answer is quite simple: Our responses to these questions are not determined by politicians; they are determined by the people that vote them into office. My advice to you is to put your Greensteds experience to good use by making a difference in the lives of others and in so doing, remember the words of Anthropologist Margaret Mead who said: ***"Never doubt the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. That's about the only way it has ever happened in the past."*** One man, stood in front of a tank in Tiananmen Square and changed the course of a nation!

I would say, that we are well grounded as a school. When you get it right and do the honourable thing, we will applaud and encourage you. Likewise, when you get it wrong, we will let you know and give you what you need to hopefully, get it right next time. Political correctness, and massaging egos neither of which I naturally subscribe to, often can get in the way of raw honesty at times and, as life can be tough out there, our students sometimes need a good dose of a northern reality check. It is well advised to reflect on Bill Gates observation of school and life: ***Some schools have abolished winners and losers, but life hasn't! They may have eradicated "fail grades" and given you as long as you want to get the right answer. This bears no resemblance to reality!*** Being real with you is also a part of our role.

Finally, I would urge you all to adopt the Mark Twain, philosophy of life. ***"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do rather than by the things you did. So throw off the bow line. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."***

Thank you.

M.P. Bentley. MBE

26th March 2010