

Speech Day 2011 – The Old days; Excellence and enjoy School!

Education, Education, Education...serious stuff but actually, it does provide some laughs though too.

When I was at school the boys all kissed Julie Miller in the art cupboard. They don't make teachers like Julie Miller any more!

They did a survey in England the other week and they found that 50 per cent of the population didn't know what 50% written in numbers and symbols meant.

Consultants were paid half a million shillings to find a name for a new university at Bradford. They came up with Bradford University, University of Bradford and The University of Bradford.

School exams chiefs are contemplating removing all risk of failure by replacing F for "fail" with N for..... Nearly!

How should we tackle truancy was the keynote speech in the House of Parliament the other week. The picture underneath showed that only 12 out of 659 ministers attended the debate. The Schools Minister was absent!

The last newspaper report stated that a new school bus driver got lost while driving the two miles from Bury to Totlington High School. The kids on the bus then deliberately misdirected him on a 20 mile round trip that kept them away from their classes for a further two hours.

1936

Emperor Haile Selassie leaves Ethiopia as Italy invades. Queen Mary, sailing for the Cunard line, left England on its maiden voyage. The Spanish Civil breaks out. The woman aviator, Amy Johnson arrives in England from South Africa in a record 4 days 16 hours. "Green Hornet" radio show is first heard on Radio. **Don** Bradman scores 357 for Victoria against South Africa, 424 minutes, 40 fours. Edward VIII succeeds British king George V. Hitler announces building of Volkswagen. The first transatlantic round-trip air flight. Jesse Owens of the US sets 100 meter record at 10.2. First flight of the airship Hindenburg. Year Buddy Holly was born. Hitler invades the Rhineland's and Stoke City finished 4th in the FA 1st Division league, the highest position they have ever finished. Mrs Greensted's sets up this school.

I will read you an extract from a letter from Sian Newey, formerly Sian Redhead, who came here as a girl in 1939 and visited us again only last year.

"The Greensted's were early settlers in Kenya. Mr. Greensted had been a Master Mariner in the days of sail, but when they had children, two boys and a girl, they settled down.

Being a sailor meant you didn't get much time on land to spend the money your earned, so they were financially well off at the time of the financial crash of 1929....so they bought some land, Mr. Greensted, being a sailor knew how to fix anything, and the local farmers, cash short, paid in kind! Hence "The Farm" started, Mrs. Greensted was a kindergarten teacher and started teaching her own children the 3 R's, when her

reputation grew locally she taught neighbours children, and by word of mouth more and more people needed her to teach their children, so that she had to start taking weekly boarders, there being no reliable road network in those days...this meant asking for payment, and as more and more families sent their children to her, she had to take on another teacher, also someone to look after the little ones outside classroom time!...This is what I know of how it started, and I think I can say with certainty my birth parents were the first headmaster and mistress, after the Greensteds.

It happened like this: Mrs. Greensted was ready to retire when World War II broke out, my father was at that time a House Master at the Prince of Wales school in Nairobi (living in). As was the custom then, he immediately signed up for active service, leaving my mother with two small daughters, to find a home, because their house was required for his replacement. Mrs. Greensted also needed teachers and my mother answered a job offer, was accepted and they became friends. When my mother became pregnant with me, she hated the idea of another child, whereas Mrs Greensted had just lost her eldest son in an ambush on the Northern Frontier of Kenya and was in deep distress, so my mother handed me over "in utero" so to speak, more or less in exchange for the running of "The School"!

When I was at Greensteds there was only bush between the School and the main GilGil-Nakuru road, the land dropped down in two ridges to the "Swamp" as it was known as, then the railway line and the road, before climbing up again to the Abedare hills on the other side. When my birth parents had taken over all the running of the school, Mr. and Mrs. Greensted moved down the hill to "The Farm" where I went to live with them except in term time. My parents decided to leave Kenya when my birth sisters were going into higher education, and they took me with them (I didn't realise at the time that that would be the last I'd see of Mr. and Mrs. Greensted and Kenya)

The present day school motto is very close to Mrs. Greensted's idea about education...she was the most wonderful teacher, kindest and most moral person I have ever met, and the childhood she so generously gave me has kept my life on the bright side ever since. I am thrilled that the school is so successful, and that her ethos lives on! My visit to Greensteds was the highlight of my return to my birthplace and the open and lovely welcome you gave me, laid the ghosts to rest, thank you.

If that was the past, what of the now and the future? Our motto of "it is honourable to do the right thing", is the basis upon which we continue to move forward whilst also keeping an eye on what skill sets are required to be marketable and employable for life. Consider this: It is estimated that today's learner will have 10-14 jobs and in unrelated professional fields. According to US Secretary of Education the top 10 in demand jobs of 2010 did not exist in 2004.

We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist using technologies which haven't been invented.

Surely, a school should be providing a complete education and life long lessons which caters not just for now but for the rest of ones' life. So, knowledge, understanding, and the application of both are important but, so too a completely different skill and ability set such as interpersonal skills, communication skills, working together, leadership and management abilities and quality of character, are just as significant. Clearly *this is what we aim to do here* so our students don't just have the qualifications to move on to

higher education but have the personal attributes to be high fliers and highly prized young men and women in society.

We always strive for Excellence but excellence is not about asking our students to get straight A's in their exams or, first in every competition and certainly NOT at all costs. Far from that, *striving for Excellence* affirms the effort of our students in wanting **to do better than before**. It is about 1. a mindset of giving of one's best effort, 2. an attitude of not giving up easily against any odds and 3. a commitment to improving one's personal best.

Going by the varied achievements of our students across the academic and extra curricular fields and the feel-good factor among students, that is now much stronger than before, I cannot but emphasise that a vibrant school spirit grows in tandem with the school culture. For Greensteds School academic excellence and the extra curricular activities have been our twin emphases in the past 9 years to strengthen students' schooling experiences and build character.

Many parents I speak to formally and informally often share with me about how amazed they are by the positive transformation of their children, thanks to the many opportunities and programmes that the school provides in support of character development. One parent wrote and said, "I don't know what you have done to my son but thank you....he is a completely different young man now; confident and articulate."

In order to harness talents, skills and abilities in our students it is essential that we have staff who exhibit all those skills and abilities and who impart them not because they are paid to do so, but because they love their job; it is their vocation. It's really quite amazing when I think about our staff talents in the classroom, on the games field, in the performing arts; art, outward bound, technology, community service and the list just goes on. No wonder they make such a positive impact on our students and on the school spirit and culture.

Going Forward

Our journey towards the school mission to provide a complete education which modern parents expect and feel is essential to prepare young men and women of vision and integrity who will be of service to their fellow human beings, is an ongoing one. All our planning and efforts are directed to sustain the ongoing strengthening of Greensteds School as a choice school for both parents and students living in Kenya and beyond, and to imbue in our students an **excellence** mindset, nourished by a can-do spirit.

The continuing success of a school does not happen overnight, but is a result of the collective hard work put in by our teachers, support staff and the steadfast support of our Board of Governors, parents and the commitment of our students to excellence and teamwork. We deeply appreciate your support.

I can only see our school continuing to evolve, progress and develop whilst maintaining the best traditions of the past merging it with the best of what is to come. We are planning a number of exciting new and different curriculum innovations so we can continue to lead educational provision here and not respond to; there are new building projects too which will transform the face of the school and provide the school with the facilities and resources for the next 75 years. However, and this is where I will draw to a

close, the success we have had; the longevity we are proud of and the foundation upon which we stand is no different to that Mrs Greensted's envisaged. We are investing in our children so they will be honest, upright, hard working, community spirited young men and women of vision and integrity ready to make their mark on this world. We are proud of our heritage and who we are; we have a passion for what we have to do next and together, we will continue to strive for excellence.

The Call to Excellence thus aptly captures the Greensted's school spirit, in which our students take up new challenges and are motivated to push new boundaries of achievement and stretch their capabilities. The Greensted's school spirit also involves our students assimilating new beliefs about themselves - who they are, what they can achieve, and exercising the perseverance to reach their goals, both for themselves and the school.

Today is a about recognising achievement and celebrating achievement. Serious stuff but in a more light hearted ceremony at our 6th form dinner last week our 6th form had a "most likely: award ceremony...most likely to marry a man for money..Ivy; most likely to stay at home with parents until 40...Jonathan; Most likely to beat her husband ...Vera; Most likely to live in an Amazon village...Anzal; Most likely never to stop yapping....Yasmin; Worst hair and shadiest person ...Sydney. Most likely to be a politician..Mamadou. Good to see we don't take ourselves too seriously.

I loved my time at school and sometimes Headmasters, teachers and parents, in the search for ever increasing A grades have forgotten that students MUST enjoy being at school. We are a happy school. A factor which I believe promotes a happy school is that we try to do things with a smile on our faces. Even on a formal occasion like Speech Day there is room for some humour and indeed some banter. This is not to say that we disrespect the tradition of such events but we do need to enjoy the events as well. I hope you enjoy this one.

M.P. Bentley 14th May 2011