

My Lord, Mayor, Mayoress, Ladies and Gentlemen, all the Mums and Dads and of course Boys and Girls.

I've been umming and aaaahhhing a fair bit about what to say today and how to make interesting.

I remember having to sit where you all are being curious about the question, 'Why Saturday morning?'

I was curious about a few other things too – 'why's it called Speech Day' when there's only one speech given – shouldn't there be loads of them (and at least that way one might be interesting').

I was also curious about what would happen if the speaker (ie ME) broke with tradition and DIDN'T give us all the half-day holiday which arcs back to the days when there was Saturday school. Well, up front let's deal with the elephant in the room – you'll not be going to school this afternoon and the half-day is officially granted. I was always told it was a good idea to soften up an audience early doors...

I also wondered, specifically, as I wrestled with the imposter syndrome, that when looking out at the sea of faces in front of me you all might well be wondering 'Why this guy? He's not done very much. Next year we have a Nobel Prize winner'.

That's true. I'm not really sure I have done that much of true note and I am absolutely certain that winning a Nobel Prize is indeed more impressive. Even

more pressure to be doing this speech in front of such a talented bunch of prize winners today.

But I also wanted to give a shout out to everyone else – to all of the other talents that haven't been recognised this morning. I see you. I know you're there. We all do.

Those frustrated why they've had to miss football as that's their talent, those who would much rather be coding in their bedroom, those who have had to miss a concert and those that would rather be watching Netflix and haven't figured out quite yet what their talent is.

It has taken me a long, long time to even start figuring out what my talent might be but perhaps more of that later. What I do know is that I absolutely sat in those same seats having relatively similar experiences to many of you...

- The predictability that swimming was followed by a lesson right at the top of the hill and sprinting to get there on time.**
- Watching the clock to head to town to meet at the fountain – more in hope than fortune.**
- Any number of sports matches on the Memo fields where our upper hand was not physical or mental strength but more the capacity to breathe only through the mouth and win matches when the abbatoir was in full flow**
- The joy of a supply teacher. "Of course we made them welcome Sir..."**
- The Joint plays with LGGS. More over the cast parties.**

Of course, so much has changed and the Headmaster touched on how much happens in just 1 year. Crikey – it's been 24 years since I left.

For those history scholars, imagine, if you dare, a world with no Minecraft, Roblox, snapchat, Instagram, twitter – in fact no iphones and barely any internet connectivity.

Despite the lack of tech back then, here I am. I made it. Patrick James Earnshaw. Aged 42. From Scotforth.

The paths you can take are limitless. How exciting. A white sheet of paper only marked so far, professionally, by the privilege of attending LRGS. And by that I mean being able to learn, try new clubs and societies and all under a safe roof (although I do wonder if the Goz pit still exists...)

At Speech Day I think you're supposed to talk about your career and how rather well you've done but with some sort of humble modesty. I'm going to speed this bit up as there's this thing called LinkedIn (imagine Facebook for work stuff) and if you have a look on there you'll see I've had an eclectic career. I was always keen to have a job – largely as I loved being around other people and earning a few quid wasn't a bad thing when I was the kind of child who would get a taxi to friends' houses as it saved time.

That focus has served me well and I'm still surrounded by teams and taking taxis to save time. My mum doesn't really understand what I do and she gave birth to me so goodness knows how I'm expected to explain it this morning.

Suffice to say I run ecommerce businesses (like Amazon but not as good... yet) and marketing teams (imagine the John Lewis ad but not as good... yet).

I'd therefore like to congratulate the school on their courage around inclusivity. After 550 years not only do we we have incredibly talented young women being recognised at LRGS's speech day but we have a speaker whose own family don't really know what he does. You see – there's hope yet for all of you.

At Speech Day I think you're supposed to talk about sacrifice, seriousness, competitiveness, excellence. All words that have a place but they won't feature in my speech. I'm more of a happiness, fun, enjoyment kind of guy.

I have been wracking my brains about what invaluable life lessons I can impart on you all today that will help you see the light; Somehow inspiring a moment in the course of nature that will stay with you forever.

The reality is that if I want to live true to things I value most in life – having fun, being authentic and showing vulnerability then I know I can't really hope to do that.

The speech would be needlessly heavy. Growing up, let alone being in the town hall with us old duffers, is heavy enough without me adding extra weight of expectation on you. So just remember the fact that a lad from Scotforth school is doing today's talk.

In the spirit of authenticity and vulnerability it would be remiss of me then not to highlight that I'm pretty nervous up here. That's largely driven by fear of 'failing' – somehow letting you all down and it not being 'enjoyable'. It's also likely due to me worrying I'll swear and you'll witness me getting a telling off from my mum.... 'PATRICK'.

So spoiler alert team... Being scared is part of life. Accept it. In fact, if I nick a quote from Yoda in Star Wars; "The greatest teacher, failure is." Well apart from these teachers. They're the best. Less green and alien too. Although I had my suspicions back in the day.

I mentioned you can use LinkedIn for my career highs. Instead, I wanted to share a potted history on failure. Just so you know it doesn't define you and I have had some epic fails.

Christmas Exams, 1994, History. 30%. Mr Castle was so good about it all. I spent no time revising. It appears that I take a while to learn a lesson though.

Lightning struck twice in the First year of Uni, 1998. Contract Law. 13%. I spent all my time in the Law Library with a Harry Potter book wrapped in a Law textbook just so I could be there to meet people. My brother Tom had also bought me a PlayStation for my birthday the day before. I ended up writing a poem to the law lecturer. It appears he didn't appreciate my side of the deal...

Lower Sixth. Careers talk. 1997. I was asked to give the vote of thanks. I spent all the time during the talk repeating what I was due to say at the end of the

speech. I then stood up and forgot it all. Mortifying. I was called 'errrrr' for about 2 weeks. No pressure Oliver...

2003. I think I might be the only OL that Kevin Roberts hasn't given a job too. Worse of all I had flown to NYC to pitch for an opportunity. There's nothing that says failure more than not getting a job off one of the most generous OLs in history.

2006. Travelex. A foreign exchange business. Youngest UK Marketing Director and I was determined to take us mainstream.

Something called the iPod Nano had been launched... I realise for you all today that this means nothing but it was a significant step for tech. So to capture consumer demand for this global innovation I decided we should run a big promotion all across the airports in the UK offering travellers the chance to win an iPod if they changed their dollars or whatever with us. I took sexy photos of the product. Created the imagery. Had it put up overnight. Sales were flying...

I had however failed on one small tiny point. And that was asking Apple for permission to use their product. Yep, the biggest company on earth and I was breaking every copyright law going (I knew I should have focused more). 3 very painful months of my life followed as our in house lawyer made me open the post every single day. They never wrote.

So I guess the message I want to get across to you all is not to worry about the moments that go wrong. I'm certainly not saying they are great or any such nonsense about 'relishing' them. I just don't believe the mistakes that

inevitably happen will define you. And to the parents too – we fail as regularly as our children – perhaps we could all admit that a little more too.

I don't appear to be doing so well with that earlier rhetorical question about why me? What has given me the right to be here today.

In sharing my strengths I'd like you to focus on whatever it is that makes you excellent, makes you different, makes you special. These are things I know about myself and have been lucky enough to have been told by others.

- 1) I'm an enthusiast. I love getting people together and seeing what happens when a great group has an objective. I rarely do any of the doing - arguably another strength is the art of delegation (my wife would disagree) but I love being in the mix with people and being confident enough to help others believe something is possible that they potentially thought beyond their capabilities.**
- 2) I'm curious. I genuinely like 99.9% of people in the world. Their stories, their journeys. The things they can teach me that I have no clue about. And to be clear, the ones I'm not sure about typically aren't very authentic and rarely show vulnerability. Doesn't mean they're not great – they're just not for me.**
- 3) I'm not worried about calling people out for poor behaviours. I think that being ok with letting others know when behaviour is not ok is a really positive trait. Two important points to remember on this one – If you're going to let others know when things aren't great then try not**

to criticise the person – challenge the behaviour. It's a big difference.

Remember to keep working on your SELF-AWARENESS.

If you are determined to throw stones then make sure your greenhouse is double-glazed.

- 4) I challenge the status quo. Or to be a little less like a business manual – 'Never sacrifice your right to be dumb'. I can't tell you how often I've asked a question that people later confided they wish they'd asked earlier.**

(Do ACCENT) "It's not very British. It's a little rude or impertinent."

Codswallop.

After all, how does anything ever advance without challenge, without questioning.

I've often wondered where these traits have come from – what was the moment I became like this? The reality is I was born like this. I've just learnt what makes me different. And there's no rush either.

Of course, whilst I'm up here as the person giving out prizes it would be wrong not to take the opportunity to thank my Mum for being a legend and also for her DNA.

My dad sadly died 22 years ago but I thank him for supercharging my special.

My brother for making me realise I'm not so special.

My best mates from LRGS Knotty, Crooky, Ranners and Bungle – they're my true loves from school.

And Mr Novell, Mr Sunderland, Mr Walker and Mr Maccafferty. Great teachers but more importantly, great people. I love them.

So there we go.

Failure isn't forever.

It's important to be vulnerable.

And be true to you. It's your life – go live it with love and find what makes you special. Because you all are. Every single one of you.

Thank you.