

## Sanjana Iyer – GCSE presentation speech 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

‘What do you want to do with your life?’ This is a question that hung over my head right from the start of Year 12, and my answer was an Artificial Intelligence developer, yet the confidence with which I said that I didn’t really feel. And now, for those of you who don’t know me, I’m Sanjana and I am a first year Politics, Philosophy and Economics student at Warwick. AI to PPE sounds like an even bigger U-turn than the government promising to keep my exams and then cancelling them, but it taught me that at the age of 16 going on 17 you do not need to know the answer to the question ‘what do you want to do with your life’. I found myself being asked this question more in Year 12, than I am now in first year.

The question I’ve learnt you really need to ask is ‘who do you want to be?’. I want you to look around at the people sitting next to you, in front of you, behind you. These are the people that either already have or are going to play pivotal roles in shaping who you are. And throughout your Sixth Form career, this will be in small, great ways. Some of these people have seen you right through your pre-teen and teenage years and some will become people you couldn’t imagine getting through Sixth Form without but you just don’t know it yet.

It is so easy to get lost in the cycle of the mundane: going to lessons, doing homework, having the intention of using frees productively but that falling apart immediately, and repeating. But it’s that one free you spent getting to know someone new, that one lesson where you participated a little more than the last even if you got things wrong, that adds up to who you become. To think I was in your position two years ago and looking back on how different I was back then has really shown me how much you will grow over the next two years, and how much the people around you and the experiences you will have, especially at Kendrick, will shape you. In the history of Kendrick, 2 years is just a blink of an eye (or as a former Further Maths student I’ll say it’s technically  $\frac{2}{145}$ ths) whereas by the end of Sixth Form, 2 years is 1 whole ninth of your life so far. So don’t take for granted each day you have here, each opportunity that is presented to you, from the little ones like challenging yourself to only speak German/French in your language lessons, to the bigger ones like running a society or an event or being on KSL.

At Kendrick, what made me who I am was getting involved in as much as I could. When else are you going to be able to have a lipsync battle with your teachers or take out your frustrations at how many Economics tests you have by playing a friendly game of Dodgeball with Mr. Wilson. When else are you going to have both the freedom to study subjects you are really interested in, whilst also having a team of staff and peers there to look out for you, push you and guide you. Once you leave the Kendrick bubble, your hand is no longer held, which is both exciting and daunting, but taking the chance to try new things while knowing that whatever hurdles you face you have people right there for you is a part of Kendrick you only truly cherish once you have left (although can you ever really leave I mean I’m already back here!). Now that I am at university I really value the close-knit community Kendrick has, where you are truly free to be whomever you want and have the space to figure that out with an incredible support system of people behind you. The greatest gifts Kendrick has given me are a community I know I will always be able to return to, opportunities that made me grow not only academically but more importantly as a person, and memories that I will cherish forevermore. Sat in a lecture hall of 300+ people, sometimes all I want is to go back to Mr. Nemeth’s philosophy lessons and play the trolley game - and Philosophy students if you are yet to play this you have a treat in store for you.

To answer the question of who you want to be, in the words of Marie Kondo, ask ‘what sparks joy’. And I don’t mean what subject do you want to study at university, but what clubs do you want to play an active role in, what do you enjoy doing with your friends, what are some conversations you’ve had that you keep returning to. I remember one conversation I had with Frau Mueller, where she told me about her experience moving across the country for university and how despite her fears she just went for it and she is forever grateful that she did because that has made her who she is, someone I would now call fearless. This will always stay with me and I want to pass that onto you. Just go for it. No matter what fears you may

have about getting something wrong or things not going to plan; no matter what your passion is, or even if you have no idea what it is, when you see something you think you'd enjoy, or even if you're unsure, just go for it. To answer who you want to be, it is just as important if not more important to get things wrong and learn from those experiences than to get things right. When you leave Kendrick, what will stay with you and shape you is not the times you were completely on top of your work and got an A\* on that one topic test, but the times that you were learning how to balance work and life, when you were building your work ethic and realising what motivated you, when you picked yourself up when things got harder and you kept going, and above all the connections and memories you made that you will cherish forever.

Through my whole 7 years at Kendrick but especially in the Sixth Form, I loved the incredible diversity of interests and of people, each with unique drives, backgrounds and stories. It is so easy to feel like the upcoming years are defined by UCAS and it's all leading to university, but you will come to realise you are not defined by what you want to do, and especially if you don't know what that is you are in an incredible position to take every opportunity to try something new, and those experiences are what will shape who you are, not the result. My friends from Kendrick are now all across the world, some in apprenticeships, some studying what they have always wanted to and some figuring it out as they go along, but each of their stories is fascinating. While in the grand scheme of Kendrick's history, your time here may feel infinitesimal but Kendrick would not be the same without every single one of you. You have all already begun to carve your legacy in these small, great ways, from the impact you have made on each other and on your teachers as well as the impact they have had on you. You each have a distinct story to tell and already are and will grow to become people that Kendrick could not be prouder of.

I remember being a Year 7 and seeing the Sixth Form as having their lives put together, but once I got there, as I'm sure you will agree with me, we are all just trying our best to thrive. And if any of you are looking at me as a university student who is put together, trust me I am not, in fact I was editing my essay due tomorrow on the train here (don't worry Mum I have it under control)! I am so impressed by every single one of you just for making it through your GCSEs - that's already something you will have really grown because of; I could not imagine doing that many exams for a constant six weeks so you should all be so proud of yourselves.

All we are aiming for is doing our best. Some days that is just going to your lessons, other days it's taking on new challenges and experiences, and that journey to figuring out who you want to be is one you will be on for your whole life, but that is what's so beautiful about it. You don't need it all sorted now; you have your whole life ahead of you. You are only ever confined by the boxes you put yourself in and can only fly as far as you allow yourself to spread your wings.

2 years from now you will have completed that 1/9th of your life and said goodbye to the people currently sat around you as you all spread your wings, ready to take on your unique adventures, and go into the world leading, inspiring and making a difference. And you will be one step closer to learning who you want to be, but I already know that will be someone incredible.