

Good evening, everyone. My name is Blake and as Head Student here at Isleworth & Syon, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our school and I hope you really enjoy your Open Evening experience.

I remember being in your shoes not too long ago, feeling slightly nervous but also very excited about what was ahead! I hope by sharing about my journey so far here, you'll also feel just as excited about the amazing opportunities available to you here on your I&S journey.

When I think back on my time so far, three key things come to mind and that's resilience, second chances and seizing opportunities.

Year 7 was an amazing year and it started off with our PGL trip which was a great time to get away from school and really build good friendships with different people in my year, some of whom are still my closest friends today. I loved competing for the school in sports such as rugby and also playing basketball at lunchtimes. Some of those 7am Rugby games were the best times! I was doing quite well academically, but if I'm being honest, I did also find myself getting in a lot of trouble. When I think back on it now, though, the amount of support I got from some of my teachers, especially Mr. Dargan, was key to really helping me get back on track.

By Year 8, I was finding my feet, stepping into my role as captain of the basketball team and really building close bonds with my friends. I still look back on Year 8 with very fond memories. But when COVID suddenly happened, it definitely rocked me a little bit. Not seeing friends for several months and discovering this thing called Microsoft Teams taught me a lot about resilience and adapting to change.

Fast forward to Year 10, I decided it was time to give my academics greater priority and really just give it my all. I started taking on leadership roles in the Student Council, performed in several school plays and got my first taste of a career in law, thanks to Mr. Adams. These moments, these opportunities are readily available to students here - you just have to take them.

In year 11, I faced personal challenges, but it was also full of many highlights. Notably, I worked really hard and finished at the top of my year with a clean sweep of 9s and 8s in my GCSES. I even made it to the National Final of the Poetry by Heart competition and got to perform to a sold-out audience at Shakespeare's globe - truly an unforgettable experience.

Starting Year 12 was quite similar to year 7 in that it would be a whole new experience. However, I really came into my own. I was elected Senior House Ambassador, played on the Senior football team, got involved in work experience programmes and volunteered as a reading mentor to younger students.

And this has all led to now. As I am in Year 13, standing here as Head Student - a position I could not have even imagined I could be in back in year 7, I've been able to reflect a lot.

If there's one message I want to you to take away from my journey tonight as you decide whether you want to embark on your I&S journey, it's that there are so many unique

opportunities waiting for you here. Whether it's academics, sports, the arts and music, leadership or something else entirely, I truly believe that there's something here for everyone. You've just got to take that step and make the most of it.

Thank you.