

## Head Student Speech

### **Lily Banning-Wilde**

Parent Information Evening, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Four years ago, I sat in this hall with my parents about to start year 7. To be completely truthful, I was terrified. I was a shy child and lacked self-confidence. At primary school, I did not feel I had the support or belief of a teacher. I felt stupid and less than my peers.

But it didn't take long for that to change.

I would describe my transition into Sir William Romney school as being like the moment when a butterfly breaks free of its chrysalis. For the first time, I began to enjoy life at school as I grew in confidence and self-belief. This came through making new friends – our supportive head of year – and the teachers who provided a kind of encouragement that I had not yet experienced.

My tutor, Mrs Brand told us that we should think of her as our parent at school. I remember feeling safe and comfortable as I joined my new tutor group for the first time. She put us at ease and made us feel genuinely cared for so we could bond as a group. The year 7 experience was fun and exciting. And I began to love school.

I soon realised that all of my worries were completely unnecessary. I had a wonderful group of people to support me. And this meant that all the new things to do with starting school in year 7 – such as catching the bus each morning, finding my way around the school and having more responsibility and independence gradually became part of my everyday life.

Since then, I've had so many opportunities outside of the classroom, like singing at the Christmas carol concert organised by Mr Dillion, the annual school walks, trips to Thorpe Park and canoeing during our enrichment week, competing in the Prince of Wales athletics event and skiing in Italy.

I will never forget how our history teachers brought history to life – by arranging for a 93 year old holocaust survivor to tell us the story of his life. I feel so lucky to have heard him talk.

And, in year 10 there was a new challenge when we had to write a CV and practice being interviewed! Local employers came in to ask us questions and prepare us for life after school, college and work. This came in handy when we had to do our work experience and I loved the time I spent working for a jewelry shop in Nailsworth.

So, if you are sitting there like I was four years ago - feeling terrified or even slightly nervous, I'd like to offer my best friendly advice.

Firstly, don't let other peoples' expectations of you hold you back.

Secondly, make new friends, try new clubs and grab all the opportunities you are offered. And finally, believe in yourself and I believe that here at SWR you will find your own way.