

‘Tips for Incoming First Years’

A speech by Enda Kickham

Ireland has one of the most highly educated workforces in the world. Most of these workers have had some form of Third Level education, but before this, they will have embarked on their secondary school journey, which I began two years ago. I am Enda Kickham from St Michael’s College and I am here today to enlighten you all on surviving your first year in “big school!” I am well aware of your busy schedule with your 6th class play coming up so I will keep it quick. I will be speaking to you under three main headings: 1) Managing an increasing workload, 2) Socially integrating yourself with fellow students and 3) Participating in extra-curricular activities.

With that being said, let me begin with the key tips that will help you on your way. It is no surprise at all to hear, in a recent report from the Department of Education, that school-going children who work hard and enjoy all the learning experiences, both academic and social, are finding the transitional step to Third Level Education far less daunting than those who disengage. School can be a difficult time for teenagers. Indeed, it is even more challenging for first year students. You have to mix personal life with the multitude of subjects that you encounter on a daily basis. As such, keeping on top of each subject and homework is vital. Never let homework pile up. The art of prioritising is essential. Let your

timetable be your new friend. An ethic of hard work is integral to success in life and first year definitely prepares us for this. Let's be honest here for a second, any of you with even a tiny iota of sense knows that if you get organised and give this year a good crack, you will be well on your way to making first year memorable.

A few weeks ago, the current first year students embarked on a highly successful and enjoyable class tour to Carlingford Adventure Centre. For so many first years, it was the highlight of their year. It was social education at its best. Secondary school doesn't just prepare students for life in a working way. It also develops your social skills. I couldn't encourage a new first year more to work equally as hard making friends as making that assignment. Getting involved in group work discussions and charitable events are all pivotal in the school experience and are an integral part of student life here in St Michael's.

A student here in the front row asked me on my way in this evening, "Should I just be myself?" The answer to this question is always yes, but take heed of this: Be nice, polite and friendly to everyone. If someone looks lonely, say hello. Meet as many people as you can. Push your boundaries. Don't be shy. Be confident. Love yourself for who you really are. Personally, I took part in as many after-school activities as I could manage. It built my confidence and definitely settled me into the school environment a lot quicker.

Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow students, incoming first years. I was once a new boy in a new school full of anticipation, eagerness and fear of the unknown. Secondary school is a great experience; one where we enter as young boys and leave as young men. I am urging you today to grab onto this exciting challenge, be positive, walk onwards and upwards through the corridors of our school and make the best of your time here!

Thank you for listening.