

Next week I leave Merchiston after working here for 8 years, and the Headmaster has asked me to speak to you about any topic, and give some reflection on my time here.

I didn't go to a private school myself, I went to my local state school, and when the job at Merchiston came up I stuck in my CV, out of nosiness more than anything else. It was the first IT teaching job to be advertised that year, and all of my classmates on the IT Teaching Course at Moray House applied. I don't actually remember much about the interview, but I do remember being very surprised when the Headmaster phoned me later on to offer me the job! It was the first full-time job after University that I had applied for, and the first full-time job I had been offered so I accepted straight away!

I've got to admit that what followed was a lot of stick from family and friends. The reason for this is that I had always been very anti-private schools. When my parents urged me to go to a private secondary school, even at the age of 11, I refused! They tried again after I'd sat my standard grades, but my opinions were even stronger and I again refused! In fact, as part of my Higher English coursework I wrote my discursive or argumentative essay on private versus state schools, but it wasn't a very balanced essay! It clearly argued against private education! But, Merchiston had offered me a job, and who was I to turn down a proper job?!

It didn't take long for my pre-conceptions to be proved wrong, as I was quickly impressed by what was on offer for you all here at Merchiston. More than that though, you, the boys of the School impressed me with your manners, the respect you showed the staff and each other and your genuine caring nature for the rest of the community. Many others have said it before me, but it is the community, and the friendliness between the boys and the staff that make Merchiston such an enjoyable place to work (and for you to live), and I will certainly miss that. I'm not saying it's all been plain sailing – there have been times that I have been totally fed up of Merchiston! I'm sure most of you here have felt the same – elements of school life or certain individuals can be very annoying in this intense 24/7 environment; but, ultimately what I have learned, and what you hopefully will learn too is that these are very small things and that the bigger picture is that everyone here is very lucky to be part of the Merchiston family. I would encourage you all to be grateful for the sacrifices that your parents have made sending you here, because they believe it is the best thing for you – and by sending you here they are giving you every opportunity to be the best you can be.

Most of all, I have enjoyed the company of both the boys and the staff here, and hearing of all your achievements; thanks for making the past 8 years a really enjoyable part of my life – as I get married and move on to the next chapter I take many great memories with me and I will certainly miss Merchiston!