



Head's Founders' Day Address – Mrs Heather Cavanagh

Good afternoon, students, parents, colleagues, Governors and guests.

It is a joy and an honour to welcome you to our annual Founders' Day, a celebration of achievement, growth, and the extraordinary spirit of the students in our school.

I would also like to say what a genuine personal privilege it is to stand before you today as your—albeit familiar—new Head of Burgess Hill Girls. Having already shared so many meaningful moments with you, stepping into this role feels both exciting and deeply humbling.

Girls, I am truly looking forward to continuing this journey together. Celebrating your achievements, walking beside you through challenges, and watching you grow into the remarkable young women you are becoming.

Parents and guests

As we gather to mark the end of another remarkable school year, I want to take a moment not just to celebrate what we have achieved together, but to reflect on the broader journey we are part of, one that extends beyond our gates and into the evolving world of independent education.

Something is changing in our sector. And it is changing for the better.

We are seeing a shift,

a move away from independent schools operating in isolation and tradition for tradition's sake, toward something more collaborative, more inclusive, and more forward thinking.

Schools are no longer standing alone, they are sharing ideas, resources, and opportunities. These partnerships are enriching our students' experiences and strengthening our collective ability to prepare them for a complex, connected world.

And within this changing landscape, the value and distinctiveness of girls-only education can shine more brightly than ever.

In our school, we see every day how powerful it is when girls are given the space to lead, to question, to create, and to grow. We see confidence built not through competition, but through community. We see girls stepping into science labs, onto



sports fields, and into leadership roles with courage and conviction. And we see the lifelong friendships and support networks that form in an environment designed to empower.

It has always been clear to me that what we do so well at Burgess Hill Girls is ensure every girl is known. That we guide them to focus in on their strength and be proud of who they are. Because of this recognition, alongside excellent academic provision and co-curricular activities, our students make outstanding progress and achieve such excellent academic results.

A set of parents once shared with me that while their daughter had always been bright and curious, in her co-ed primary school, she would often hold back in class, hesitant to raise her hand.

When she joined Burgess Hill Girls, it all changed for her. Surrounded by peers who were equally encouraged to explore, question, and lead, she found her voice.

At our school we understand how girls learn best - through collaboration, discussion, and encouragement. Lessons are tailored to build confidence and curiosity.

The student joined the robotics club, captained the debate team, and even discovered a love for physics. In our girls only environment, she did not have to compete for attention or feel self-conscious. She could just be herself.

But it was not just about academics. By nurturing the student's self-belief and leadership potential she took on the role of Head of House, mentored two younger students, and a lead role in the school production. She also played hockey, tried fencing, and joined the choir!

In a girls' only environment, every opportunity was theirs for the taking.

By the time she finished sixth form, she was not just academically prepared, she was confident, articulate, and ambitious. She had role models, mentors, and a keen sense of who she was.

When you chose Burgess Hill Girls for your daughter, you chose a place where she can flourish; academically, socially, and personally. You have given her the space to grow into a young woman, who believes and knows she can do anything she sets her mind to.

You haven't limited her choice; you have expanded it.



Girls

Today, we celebrate more than just academic achievement, we celebrate your courage to try, your creativity to dream big, and the compassion you show every day.

Each and every one of you brings something truly special to our school community and today is about recognising the incredible young women you are becoming.

One of the things that makes our school so unique is that it is a space designed entirely for you. In a world where women still face barriers in many fields, our school offers you a powerful foundation. It allows you to take the lead in every classroom, every club, and every conversation.

It gives you the freedom to explore subjects like science, technology, computer science, and leadership without stereotypes or limitations.

Girls' education is not just about opportunity; it is about transformation.

When girls are educated,
communities thrive.

Economies grow.

Societies become more just, more equal, and more compassionate.

You as educated girls will become women who challenge injustice,
who lead with empathy,
and who change the world not just for yourselves, but for everyone.

At Burgess Hill Girls, you have not just been prepared for exams, but to challenge the world.

To ask tough questions.

To speak up when it matters.

To lead with integrity.

To imagine a better future and to have the courage to build it.



Our School Values are : Spark, Spirit, Strength and Success

Spark is where it all begins. It is the glimmer of possibility, the flash of inspiration, the moment you realise you can.

It is the light that turns boldness into action, spirit into movement, and strength into change.

Spirit is the fire within the energy that fuels your passions, the resilience that keeps you going when the path is steep.

It is the laughter in challenge, the grace in defeat, and the joy in striving.

Strength is your quiet power. It is clarity in chaos, courage in uncertainty, and conviction in the face of doubt.

It is knowing who you are and standing firm in that truth.

Success is not just the prize at the end it is the journey of becoming.

It is found in the courage to begin, the persistence to continue, and the pride of knowing you gave your all.

And to be BOLD is to step forward when others hesitate,

to speak when silence is easier,

to try when failure is possible.

Boldness is not the absence of fear, but the belief that something greater lies ahead.

This year, I have had the privilege of witnessing many inspiring moments from our students but one in particular stands out.

A student who has always said she hates speaking in public and can often experience moments of significant anxiety, stood up in front of her peers and delivered a presentation she had worked hard on.

Her hands trembled, her voice wavered at first, but she did not stop. She kept going.

By the end, she had not only shared her ideas with confidence, but she had also earned the respect and admiration of everyone in the room.

That moment was not about a presentation it was about courage, growth, and the quiet power of believing in yourself.



That is success. That is boldness. That is the spark we celebrate today.

To our incredible Year 11 students,

You have come so far, and now you are standing at the edge of a brand-new chapter. Over the years, we have seen you grow into strong, thoughtful, and resilient young women.

Your wings are ready — and the world is waiting.

As you take your next steps, remember to stay Bold,

stay kind,

stay curious.

We believe in you, and we know you will shine wherever life takes you.

Go forward with confidence and keep in touch!

To our amazing Year 13 students, some of whom I have known since Reception Class.

You are ready.

You have grown into thoughtful, capable, and courageous young women.

As you go forwards in life, whether it is to university, an apprenticeship, a gap year, or something entirely different, take the Burgess Hill Girls spirit with you.

Let it remind you that your worth is not defined by others, but by your own values, your own courage, and your own dreams.

Challenge the world.

Ask more of it.

Expect more from it.

And never be afraid to demand better, - not just for yourself, but for those girls and women whose voices are not always heard.

To our parents, thank you.

Your trust, encouragement, and unwavering support help shape our community into a place where your daughters can thrive. Your partnership with us is deeply valued.



Thank you to our Board of Governors, for volunteering your generous time and strategic guidance.

To my colleagues, thank you for your wisdom, your care, and your tireless dedication.

A Final Thought for our leavers.

There is a line in the poem, *On the Pulse of Morning*, which says;

"Lift up your eyes upon this day breaking for you. Give birth again to the dream."

This is your moment. Your dream. Your time to rise.

I urge you to nurture your spark. Let it grow into a flame.

Be bold. Carry your spirit. Strengthen your mind.

Define success on your own terms. And never stop challenging the world to be better. Because the world needs your light, your voice, and your vision.

You are powerful. You are capable. You are more than enough.

So, as we close this chapter and look ahead to the next, I want to thank each of you; students, colleagues, and families, for being part of this journey.

For your resilience, your creativity, kindness, and your belief in what a difference girls' education can make to self-belief and success.

Congratulations to all our prize winners and thank you all for making this school a place of inspiration and hope.

Have a wonderful summer.

Rest well, dream big, and come back ready to continue shaping a future we can all be proud of.

Thank you.