

Joe Weber – 2024 School Captain
Keynote Speech – Presentation Evening 2023

Good evening, Mr Featherston, Deputy Headmasters, Mr Ickeringill, parents, teachers, and boys.

I stand before you today deeply humbled and incredibly honoured to be elected as your School Captain. The privilege of serving in this capacity is one I take very seriously, and I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me.

Service and sacrifice are at the core of leadership, and Sam Linder and I and the prefect leaders are committed to dedicating ourselves wholeheartedly to the wellbeing and progress of our school.

Servant leadership is not about being subservient or soft, it is about recognising the work of others and working towards collaboration, kindness and a common purpose for good.

This evening I would like to honour Mr Peter Toms, the longest-serving staff member and former Junior School Headmaster, at Brighton Grammar, he is the embodiment of service leadership. I would like to share a story, which he shared with me in the making of a podcast called “Beyond the Gate”.

During this project we interviewed several past BGS students to understand their lives after their time at BGS. Mr Toms told me of student in 1972 who had lost his way, who was disengaged and disconnected with school. However, Mr Toms was not prepared to give up on this student, so he asked him what he did outside school, and what was his passion or hobby.

The student loved to go fishing. So, Mr Toms asked him if he'd like to bring in his catch and together, they could try to sell the fresh fish to families in the Brighton community.

It was a huge success – all until the school holidays when a freezer full of fish went rotten in a power outage and stunk out the school!

This student today leads and owns a pharmaceutical company and manages a large amount of property around Australia. He told me that he stills considers Mr Toms as a mentor who changed his life.

The purpose of this story is not to tell everyone to start selling fish, it is about understanding the truth that every person has value. I am prepared to find the value inside of all of you, but the challenge is I can't do this unless you find your value and purpose within yourself first. So, I ask you - What do you bring to the table?

Service at BGS means recognising the diverse talents and backgrounds that make our community unique. This lies at the heart of inclusion which is not just a word; it's a commitment to ensuring that every student feels valued, heard and represented.



I pledge to work tirelessly to create an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, feels a sense of belonging.

In our youth, it's easy to be eager, to want the answers to big questions such as "What am I going to be when I'm older, who am I?" and the small questions too such as "What is on my next exam?" or "Am I going to be invited to that party?"

I know from experience how agonising some of these questions can be, as I too have these thoughts. However, a wise leader at BGS who we all know well, Dr Swann once said to me, "life is about EXPERIENCING life, the good, and the hard times and the in between". There is no doubt we live for the good times and need to have goals to drive us but sometimes we win and sometimes we learn.

I invite each one of you to join me on this journey. Share your ideas, voice your concerns, and let us work together to make our school the best it can be. Whether you're an artist, an athlete, a musician, or someone who quietly excels in the background, your contributions matter, and I am here to champion them.

As we embark on this exciting chapter in the history of Brighton Grammar, it is essential to pause and honour the rich legacy that has shaped our school into what it is today. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us - dedicated educators, passionate students, and a community that has always valued excellence.

However, our duty does not end with mere acknowledgment; it extends to embracing the needs of the present while casting our vision forward, preparing the students of today to navigate the complexities of the future.

Through this we will enable each student to embark on their own transformative journey, to becoming the best version of themselves, enabling them to then contribute to their community.

Together, let us be educated and empowered, let us be prepared not just for exams but for the lifelong journey of realising our full potential. Let us be the custodians of tradition and the architects of progress, shaping the legacy that future generations will celebrate with pride.

In closing, I am deeply grateful for this honour, and I am committed to serving you all with dedication, humility and integrity. Let us embark on this adventure together - with all our diversity, our collective enthusiasm, and our willingness to serve each other.

I leave you with some words from Paul's letter to the Romans "Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves."

Thank you, let's make 2024 one to remember!