

Battersea Alumni Pupil Panel

June 2024



Advice to our Year 8 Leavers from some Old Thomasonians!

As part of this year's leaving programme, Thomas's Battersea had the pleasure of welcoming back nine former pupils who came to speak to the departing Y8s about their transition to senior school. The panel was made up of five boys and four girls (all from Alumni Section 34) and all having just completed a Gap Year or their first year at university. They represented a broad range of schools from single sex to co-ed and from day to boarding and provided their audience with a hugely invaluable (and often highly entertaining!) insight into the challenges of 'moving on'.

Emily Jenkin, Head of Upper School, had done a wonderful job of setting up the Great Hall with armchairs and sofas, not dissimilar to the Graham Norton set and from where Ben Thomas was in his element chairing the panel. He and Emily led the discussion by inviting the old Thomasonians to share fond memories about their time at Thomas's and their senior schools and by asking them about their own experiences of adapting to life in Year 9 and beyond. Topics covered included: the first few weeks; homesickness; balancing workload and extracurricular activities; GCSE options; making friends; regrets or things they wished they had known; parties and social media and future plans.

The panel treated us to valuable snippets of their lives since leaving Thomas's and to a wealth of insight for our Y8 leavers as to how they can best equip themselves to navigate the challenges ahead of them. They spoke reflectively and with much wisdom, wit and humility. Some of the advice they shared was particularly impressive:

- Go with an open mind
- Work hard, be organised and keep lines of communication open - don't be afraid to ask teachers and mentors for help - there is always a way round a problem
- During the first days, be open to meeting new people, even if they aren't to become lifelong buddies
- Go to where the love is - choose friendships in which you feel valued and can be yourself, not those who you think you should be friends with
- Try everything new - don't limit your choices, you will never be presented with such a wealth of opportunities again - grasp them
- Caledonian Society is so much fun and a great way to meet new people!
- GCSE/A Level/University - go with your passions, be you, don't be swayed by others
- Be careful what you post on line and don't be fooled by the party scene - they are not all as fun as they look on Snap Chap or Instagram!
- Always be kind - it is just as relevant at senior school

The panel also took questions from the Y8s and there was time for a mingle at the end, allowing them to approach individuals for advice in a less public way. There was something really poignant about observing our thirteen year olds chatting with these impressive young adults who themselves, in our minds, had not left Thomas's all that long ago. Who better to help prepare our leavers for the next phase of their education?

Nicola Diggle,
Alumni Development

I could not have been more proud of the sage advice given by these young adults, whose experience was recent enough to be entirely applicable to this year's leavers.

Ben Thomas







