

As opposed to most of you, I joined CSG towards the end of year 8. When everyone knew each other, when everyone had picked their friends and when everyone had understood the way the school operated.

I was new. Entirely new and it was terrifying.

My first lesson was a maths lesson. There was on the board what seemed like a *simple equation for the rest of the class, but the Monty Hall problem for me. Two letters embedded in a row of numbers accompanied with the simple question of "What is the value of x?"*

*And I thought about it, trust me, I thought hard. But all that came was confusion. I thought there'd been a mistake. There's no letters in addition or multiplication! How could I have known it was an equation?*

*It got explained to me. Eventually. But it was hard for my system to understand.*

*It was simply unfathomable, nothing I'd ever heard of before. That was the day my fear of maths began.*

I guess what I'm trying to say is that not all beginnings in life can be easy, and adapting your mindset to change can be scary. As a matter of fact I am terrified right now.

But that's beside the point-

When Frances Mary Buss founded Camden School for Girls in January 1871, she lived in a world of hardships and terrible prejudice. I imagine she must have felt scared, petrified even, but that did not stop her.

What I've now understood is that all fears are defeatable, whether you understand this at the age of five, finally realising there are no monsters under the bed, or later when you understand life is to be lived to its full potential or maybe even in the 1870's as you stand ready to open London's first girl only school, it is crucial to know. Fear is simply an obstacle in your way, it helps you to grow and it helps you live. As Marie Curie said "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is to be understood".

Although my personal fear haunted me for a while, I overcame it. With the help of people around me, because to me, people are not algebra, they're not there to be calculated, subtracted, or held at arm's length across a decimal point, they're here to help. This is why I'm incredibly lucky to be standing in front of hundreds of Camden girls, who would not even hesitate to help a sister out.

That's what it means, to be a Camden girl. Well, aside from knowing how to juggle multiple pieces of homework, a million extracurricular activities, and the power to jump through lunch queues.

It's about being part of a community that challenges and supports you at the same time. A Camden Girl is someone who doesn't just follow the rules—she holds the power to redefine them. She questions, she leads, and most importantly, she stands tall and knows that she can do anything she sets her mind to. We're encouraged here to be both kind and strong, compassionate and ambitious, creative and logical—essentially, we are the complete package. And yes, I admit, we may sometimes have to take a deep breath before that next challenging exam or presentation, but we know we'll get through it. Because Camden Girls don't just succeed—they thrive.

It is quite bittersweet, I know I'm not gone yet and that being a Camden girl still stands outside of this establishment. Yet, I already miss it. Every aspect of it, event the dreaded lunch queue and the early morning further maths lesson

Being a Camden Girl is so much more than walking through those gates every morning, it's an infinite list of numerous qualities we can take out into the world. So let's continue being the ones who inspire change, who lift each other up, and who face every challenge with strength, humour, and wit. And yes, we might make a few mistakes along the way—but if there's one thing a Camden Girl knows how to do, it's turn a mistake into a lesson learned and come out even stronger, because we are amazing but certainly not perfect.

*So I say this now, and you may hear me say it again. A fear is simply an obstacle in your way, it helps you grow and it helps you live. Without Miss Frances Mary Buss overcoming challenges, I would not have the pleasure of standing before you in a school I can call home. So let your fear shape you, just how I've now realised too not run from maths, but instead walk straight into my next class.*

Thank you, and happy Founders' Day.