

## Founder's Day Speech – Main School Head Prefect – Rijana

Hello everyone.

Standing here in front of you all feels a little surreal. I remember watching the five Head Prefects before me give this speech, and now it's my turn. If you had told me 4 years ago that I would be here, giving this speech to you all on Founders Day I would've smiled and said- "I knew I could do it."

In Year 7 I set my own personal goal to be Head Girl of the school one day. Not for myself, but I thought it would make my parents proud and help me develop as an individual or look impressive on my UCAS. Now, I see it in a completely different perspective - being Head Girl is not about me at all. It's about the duty and responsibility I have to the students and my peers and that is the greatest honour I could ever hope for.

So, as this is my last Founder's Day - until I meet my new goal and return as Head Girl of the Sixth Form, of course - it feels like a special moment. Not just for me now, but for the Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 version of myself who first came to this school not knowing what to expect.

Will the teachers like me? Will I make friends? Will I fit in?

I'm sure we've all asked ourselves these questions at some point.

And this school - The Camden School for Girls - answers them in ways you don't expect.

Yes, you will make friends. Yes, you will have teachers who support and challenge you, like Ms Devine organising the best trips in PE; Ms Man helping us survive Computer Science and Mr Howard doing his best to explain vectors and functions to us in Maths.

But most importantly, you will find a place where you belong.

A place that becomes a little bit like home - a safe space in the PE department, comfort in geography lessons, and maybe even a new love for learning.

I remember the day that The Camden School for Girls became my school. It was not when I was accepted, nor when I had my first lesson or test. But when I made my very own best friends - my Camden sisters, not bonded by blood but by the shared experiences the school has given us and the memories we hold. The never-ending lunch queues, our fabulous Pink Day and infamous Danceathon. Some friends I made right from the beginning of Year 7 and others later in my time at Camden but they all are and will always be the greatest gift this school has given me. This school has taught me the value of friendship and that it is one of the most valuable treasures in life.

Somewhere along the way, you realise that this school isn't just somewhere you come to every morning at 8:45AM. It's a community, a place that shapes you, and a place you'll carry with you long after you leave.

We have all heard the phrase "Onwards and Upwards" but what does it truly mean?

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Our founder, Frances Mary Buss, left us not only with this school motto, but with a powerful message behind it: to remain determined and motivated, no matter what challenges we face. She embodied this idea through her own perseverance, especially as she pioneered for women's education at a time when it was far from equal, she continued to push forward, refusing to give up in the face of adversity. She defied the odds and remained a symbol of resilience for us all.

Beyond our own individual journeys, I think 'Onwards and Upwards' is also a promise we make to one another. I spoke earlier about my Camden sisters, and the truth is, it's nearly impossible to keep moving forward if you're trying to carry the weight of everything on your own. 'Upwards' means lifting the person next to you when the pressure of exams feels overwhelming, or when those vectors in Maths are finally getting the better of you. 'Onwards' means linking arms and stepping into the future side-by-side. Frances Mary Buss didn't just pave a path for herself; she built a staircase for all of us. So, when we repeat our motto, we aren't just cheering for our own individual success—we are committing to climbing together.

There are many ways to interpret the phrase "Onwards and Upwards," but the one that resonates with me the most is the idea of holding your head high with confidence, even when you don't fully feel it.

You see, throughout this speech I have been deceiving you all. I am standing here trying, to the best of my abilities, to say each word with a confidence I do not have right now.

Maybe that's what 'Onwards and Upwards' is... not being perfect, just showing up with the confidence in yourself to take that next step and to continue growing. It is about trying, failing, laughing at yourself and still pushing 'Onwards' no matter the obstacles. And 'Upwards' no matter how far we still have to go.

Thank you for listening and I hope you have an amazing Founder's Day!