

## **Ben Murphy – Prefect (Academic)**

### **Keynote Speech 2025**

It is within your grasp.

You step onto the pitch, the scent of cheap beer and famous Leicester chips lingering in the harsh November air. The roar of the King Power Stadium surrounds you, as sweat drips and the floodlights blaze. The ball at your feet feels like an extension of yourself. Defenders shout, boots thud behind you, but you don't look back. Years of rejection, factory shifts, and doubters fade away. But you are not nervous. Because you have hit this shot a million times in training. You earned this moment through dedication and hard work, not luck. You take a touch, heart steady. The keeper shifts, but you know where it's going. Your boot connects, the ball soars, the net ripples, the stadium erupts. Eleven games, a goal in each of them and history made. You sprint, fists clenched, teammates swarming. The dream they called impossible is real.

Good morning, Mr Featherston, Mr Ickeringill, Mr Angus, Ms White, teachers, students, scholars, their families, and my own family. I would like to begin by congratulating the scholars of 2024, whose amazing efforts underpin Brighton Grammar's commitment to academic excellence. In line with the efforts of these men sitting before you, I would like to talk to you all today about something that is at the heart of everything we do: success. I wish to emphasise that success is not handed out but rather earned. And more importantly, I wish to present to you the crucial idea that success is personal and that ambitions vary from person to person.

The story I mention tells the true tale of Jamie Vardy's rise to success. Rejected by professional academies as a teenager, he refused to allow setbacks to define him. He continued to hone his skills, exemplifying his commitment and determination and finally, at age 25 while Vardy was playing in the fifth division of English football, he got picked up by a professional team in Leicester City. By 2015, he had set a Premier League record by scoring in 11 consecutive games - a remarkable achievement that highlighted his extraordinary journey from non-league obscurity to top-flight glory. His success was built in moments when no one was watching, in the unseen hours of training with unwavering self-belief. His rise proves that no dream is too big if pursued with commitment and perseverance.

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True success is achieved when ambition is matched with purposeful action. "Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is a nightmare," is a Japanese proverb, illustrating how the most successful individuals understand that ambition alone is insufficient. Instead, it must be paired with a clear sense of direction and relentless effort. Vardy's story is proof of this. His vision was to play at the highest level, but it was his unwavering commitment and high work ethic that turned that dream into reality. Without a plan and the discipline to execute it, even the smallest aspirations will remain at arm's length.

On the other hand, action without vision is like running through obstacles in the dark. Meaningful wins stem from the ability to set purposeful goals and consistently work toward them, even when progress is slow, or setbacks arise. It is during this alignment of vision and action when making those dreams a reality becomes a matter of persistence rather than luck.

“Obsession beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard,” is a very well-known phrase commonly attributed to Kevin Durant, an MVP and two-time NBA championship winning basketballer. But what does it truly mean? Success itself does not simply come about. Obsession is what drives someone to practise the same skill a thousand times—whether it is a math equation, a golf swing, a killer guitar riff, or the lines of a play - perfecting their craft until it becomes second nature. It is that relentless pursuit, the refusal to settle for good enough, that gives obsession the edge over talent. Talent might make it appear easy, but obsession makes it inevitable.

Repeatedly we look towards the most successful people and immediately assume that they were simply gifted with an insane ability. But talent alone is never enough. Sure, it may provide them with a head start but without consistent action, drive, and a willingness to make sacrifices, talent will not make it. Because true success belongs to those who push themselves to their limit. It is fostered in the darkest room when the applause is yet to come and when quitting is the easiest option. That is why it is earned.

But before we go any further, it is worth asking - what does success really mean? Too often success is defined through comparison and perceived as a destination that everyone arrives at in the same way. It is believed to be recognised through awards and praise. Measured by how much one gains. But in actuality, it is determined by how fully you commit to the journey. True success comes from striving to fulfill your goals to the best of your ability, facing challenges head-on, learning from failures, and pushing forward despite obstacles. You may not always reach your intended destination, but if you have truly given your all, you have succeeded. Because diligence, determination, and integrity matter far more than titles, medals, or trophies.

In many ways, success is something we all chase, but we often think of it as something universal, something we all reach in the same way but I’m here to tell you that success is deeply personal. What success means to you might be entirely different to the person next to you. And that is perfectly okay. For some, success may be about academic achievement and mastery of subjects. For others, it may be about developing strong relationships or making a positive impact on the world. There is no standard checklist, no universal timeline, you do not need to follow anyone else’s path.

Success is not about being the best compared to others but about becoming the best version of yourself through dedication and hard work. Success is about knowing what your definition of success is and working towards that. Because your version of success is valid. Every step forward is a small victory. Every lesson learned from failure is a triumph. Every time you progress, no matter how small or subtle, it is a win. Every time you persist towards that one goal is success.

So, if I could leave you with one message today it is this. It is within your grasp.

Thank you.