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Keynote Speech 2026

I want to talk about something that most of us... don't really talk about. Something that feels a bit awkward. A bit uncomfortable. Something we probably feel every single day, but never actually say.

It's three words. 'I love you.'

Now, before you laugh, or look at your mate next to you and roll your eyes - hear me out.

As humans, we throw around jokes, banter and nicknames. It's our way of bonding. It's natural.

But when was the last time you actually told someone - really told them - that you love them? Your mate. Your mum. Your dad. Your brother. Your sister. Your nan. Your pop. Your teacher. When was the last time you looked someone in the eye and said, 'I love you. I'm grateful for you.'

For a lot of us, the answer might be never. But why?

We go to Brighton Grammar - a school built around values like brotherhood, courage, and compassion. We wear the same uniform, play under the same banners and cheer for each other until our voices are gone. We're surrounded by hundreds of people who we call brothers.

And yet, sometimes we walk around like we've got to act tough - like showing emotion makes us weak.

But here's the truth:

Telling someone you love them - that's real strength. That's courage. Because one day - and this is the hardest part - you won't always get the chance.

Good morning Mr Featherston, Mr Angus, Dr Swann, Ms White, my parents, staff and boys. Today, I'm here to highlight the importance of telling people that you love them.

I want to tell you a story. Around nine months ago, to be honest, I was having a pretty hard time. Like many of you, it built up over pressures with school, sport, friendships and relationships with other people. It got to a point where I was standing in front of my three closest mates in tears. I was stuck. I was lost.

But you know what they said to me? 'We love you, mate. You've got us.'

A few simple words strung together. Some people wouldn't dare to say it. But these boys did, and I can tell you first-hand - it's made all the difference.

I often think to myself: 'What would I be like if I was never vulnerable, or if my friends were too shy to say that to my face? If they hadn't said anything at all?'

There are moments in life - maybe at camp, after a big game, or on the last day of school - where you look around at your mates and think, 'These are my people.' They've seen you at your best. They've seen you at your worst. They've lifted you up when you were down, and made you laugh even when you didn't think you could.

That's love. Even if we don't always call it that - that's exactly what it is.

And here at Brighton Grammar, we talk a lot about brotherhood. But brotherhood isn't just playing APS games together or wearing the same crest on your uniform. It's caring enough to check in.

It's being brave enough to say, 'I'm proud of you.' It's telling your mate, 'I love you, bro. You mean something to me.' Because life's too short to leave those words unsaid.

I know that if every single person here said one real, honest thing to someone they cared about - this school would feel different. The energy would shift. Because love - real love - changes people. You'd be surprised how much it means to someone to hear it. To know that they matter. That they're seen. That they're loved.

Even the strongest people you know - the ones who always seem fine - they need to hear it too. Sometimes they're the ones who need it most.

So here's what I want to say today - to you, and to every single boy, teacher and person at this school. Tell them you love them. Tell your mum when you hang up the phone. Tell your dad, even if he never says it first. Tell your mates - after a game, after school, when you're mucking around - don't let the moment pass.

I also know that everyone in this hall wishes they could've said these three words one last time to someone that really mattered to them. This could be a grandparent, a parent, a friend, a pet, a neighbour. But if you start now, that inevitable feeling won't be a moment of regret, it will be gratitude. Gratitude for the person, that you said it, that you shared it - together.

For me, it's been as easy as sending a text. Just as simple as, 'I'm proud of you, dude. I'm so lucky to have you. Love you heaps.' Starting small has allowed me to be vulnerable enough to show this face to face with the people I care about. The people I truly love.

Only a few months ago, a group of us were circled around a fire we built together. One of my best mates turned to me and gave me a hug. His exact words to me were, 'I love you, and I'm honestly so grateful for everything you do for me. I don't say it enough.' This is the same guy who will text me on a random night and tell me how much he loves me or is proud of how far I've come, or when I tell him, 'Don't worry, it's a long story,' he'll tell me he's got the time. I replied back and told him, 'You do say it enough, mate. I love you too.'

But whoever says it enough, you know? Days can be rough, everyone's different, and you never know how far something like that can go for somebody. If there's anything I've learnt in my life, it's to surround yourself with people like that, because you honestly don't know how much of an impact it makes. He's always there for me during my lows, and he'll always be there for the highs. I love you, mate. Truly.

See, it's really not as hard as you think. Because one day, those moments will be the ones you look back on and think, 'I'm glad I said it.'

At Brighton Grammar, we talk about becoming 'good men.' Positive masculinity - being motivated, connected and authentic. But what does that really mean? It's not just about success, or strength, or leadership. It's about heart. It's about being the kind of man who isn't afraid to show love.

Because one day, when we all leave these gates - when the cheers fade, when the uniforms get packed away - all we'll have are the people around us. The memories. The love we shared. That's what makes life beautiful. That's what makes this school special.

So say it awkwardly. Say it with a laugh. Say it with a hug. But please. Just say it. To a mate, a parent, a grandparent, your dog, a teacher, a neighbour, a random stranger. Say it. Because one day, those words will echo back to you - and you'll realise they were the most important words you ever said.

So today, when you leave this hall, I want you to think about the people who make your life better. And I want you to tell them. Because life's too short. Moments disappear. And all we're left with are the people we loved... and the times we were brave enough to tell them so. Because the truth is - we all need to hear it. We all want to know we matter.

We live on a floating rock in the middle of nowhere, spinning through space, stuck in a universe that doesn't pause or rewind. And whether you're ready or not, time will keep moving. In all of that endlessness, we only get one life. One shot at loving people properly. One chance to say what we mean, to feel things fully, to show up while we still can. So don't wait. Don't save the words, the hugs, the risks or the moments for later. Make the most of every single moment you have, because this life isn't a test or a trial. It's the only thing we get.

So don't wait for a tragedy. Don't wait for a 'someday.' Say it now. Say it while you can. Tell them you love them.

Thank you.