

Speech by FS at Braemar Hill Nursery School 45th Anniversary and 40th Graduation Ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at Braemar Hill Nursery School 45th Anniversary and 40th Graduation Ceremony today (July 4):

Ms Stella Lu (Supervisor of Braemar Hill Nursery School, Ms Stella Lu), Principal Leanne Lu (Principal of Braemar Hill Nursery School, Ms Leanne Lu), Reverend Koon (Legislative Council Member, Reverend Canon Peter Douglas Koon), teachers, students, parents, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls,

I am delighted to be here, with you, tonight, to celebrate Braemar Hill Nursery School's 45th anniversary and this evening's 40th Graduation Ceremony. As some of you may know, I'm involved in finance and economic development.

I love what I do, but I must say talking to bankers, money managers and company owners doesn't make me smile in quite the same way as seeing all of you here this evening.

So many proud teachers and parents, so many happy students about to graduate from K3. Ready now for primary school. For another eventful stage in your young and promising lives.

So let me ask our young graduates, and tell me as loud as you can: do you like your school?

Ah, I can hear your love of this school! But it is also time for each of you to start a new journey. Some of you may join each other in primary school, while some will have to say goodbye to your friends.

It may be a little bit saddening, but let's not forget happiness. Sometimes we lose happiness – we don't know where it went. But then there it is, right in front of you. Waiting to put its shine all over you.

That reminds me of a story about a boy named Jack.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away – no, this is not a Star Wars story – there lived a young boy named Jack. Jack was always curious and loved to ask questions. One day, he asked his grandmother, "What is happiness, and where can I find it?"

His grandmother smiled and said, "Happiness is like a garden. To find

it, you must plant the seeds of kindness, curiosity and resilience."

Jack decided he must find those seeds. He travelled far and wide. He climbed mountains, sailed the seas and explored cities and towns and villages all over the world. And everywhere Jack went, he asked people if they knew where the seeds were.

Sadly, no one knew. But while he never found those seeds, Jack did discover the world, its people and its creatures, with his own curious eyes. And through it all, Jack kept an open heart. He was kind to everyone, and everything, and he made many friends along the way.

When he finally returned home, his grandma asked him, "Jack, did you find the seeds of happiness?"

"No grandma. I looked everywhere and couldn't find them anywhere," said Jack. "But I don't think I need them. I feel happy anyway."

"That's because you've already planted those seeds, Jack," said grandma. "Kindness, curiosity and resilience – they're in your heart. And they've sprouted, their roots and leaves growing like magic."

And, well you know the rest, children: Jack lived happily ever after.

Parents, teachers, and children, maybe it's just a story, but it reminds us of something so simple yet so important: happiness, and indeed many other virtues, are just around the corner.

Likewise, for the very elements of success. There may be books telling us the 100 rules of how to become successful. But ultimately, it may boil down to just a few simple principles.

Two of them, in my view, are particularly important.

First, curiosity. In my career, I often deal with outstanding and successful people from all walks of life. And while each of them is blessed with distinct gifts, certain traits appear again and again – passion and curiosity, among them. Constantly asking questions, wanting to learn, to innovate, are often at the heart of their achievements.

Today, artificial intelligence, or AI, can perform many repetitive tasks, write articles, and analyse data. But even the most powerful AI models will need humans to ask questions in the first place.

Curiosity and imagination are the core to push the boundaries of possibilities.

Second, optimism. Optimism is all about staying as positive as you can, even in very difficult times. Life won't always be smooth sailing. Indeed, many great people – be they leaders, innovators, writers, sportspeople – failed numerous times before making great achievements. But common to them is

that they learn from failures, avoid the same mistakes, and do better next time. Take challenge or failure as a friend, a good companion in life. There is no need to fear losing.

I am pleased to note that Braemar Hill Nursery School is committed to instilling children with these and many other good values, in addition to pursuing academic excellence.

To this end, the school's holistic approach is commendable. Its commitment to cultivating Christian character and values, its emphasis on children trying their best, pursuing excellence while encouraging and supporting one another help children build a healthy and well-balanced outlook on life.

The love and attention that the teachers at the School show towards the children are remarkable. Their keen observations and valuable insights extend beyond academic matters to include the emotional and social development of the children.

And it is keen on building a community, not only among children but also among the parents. The famous tug-of-war competition on sports fun day and the K3 graduation trip are perfect examples of how the school engages parents and builds camaraderie among them.

To parents, I also want to commend you for your love and dedication for your children. You have gone through very trying times during the COVID-19 pandemic and what all of that entailed. It is heartening to see your resilience and resourcefulness, where you have found ways to adapt and thrive in spite of adversities.

As parents, we know that raising a child is a tremendous responsibility, but it is also a great blessing.

Parents, teachers, and children, I am incredibly happy to be here with all of you on this joyous occasion.

As we can all see, the seeds of education, of love of learning, the seeds of Christian character, kindness, optimism, resilience and, yes, happiness, are growing splendidly in the hearts of the 61 graduates here on this memorable day.

My congratulations once again, to Braemar Hill Nursery School on this, your 45th anniversary of inspired, and inspiring, education. And to this year's graduating students, I wish each and every one of you continued flourishing – in school, and in life.

Thank you very much.

