



Good evening Mr Shezi, Mr Singh, Mrs Moodley, teachers, parents, guests, and most importantly, the Matrics of 2026.

Standing here tonight, looking out across this room, it is hard to believe that our journey at NEW FOREST HIGH SCHOOL is drawing to its close. It feels like just yesterday we walked through the gates for the first time as Grade 8's in oversized blazers, brand new shoes that gave us swollen feet, and a quiet panic about finding our classrooms on time. I even remember a time when we might not have gotten along, but here we are together and UNITED more than ever.

Over the past five years, New Forest became more than just a school. It became our proving ground. We grew up on these sports fields, in these classrooms, and on the fields where we shared endless laughter, debated life, and stressed over upcoming exams. We endured practices, long assemblies, endless test cycles and lectures of do's and don'ts and about the friends we choose.

And yet here we are tonight - honouring excellence. To every learner receiving an award this evening congratulations! Your academic achievements, sporting prowess, and service to the school represent dedication and resilience. You have set the bar high and represented our school colours with excellence.

But to the entire matric class of 2026, whether you walk across this stage tonight or not, this evening belongs to all of us. Excellence is not measured solely on distinctions or trophies, it is measured in resilience. It is found in the learner who worked tirelessly to turn an almost failing mark into a pass. It is found in the teammate who kept cheering when the game was lost, and the friend who showed up when someone needed support. Every single one of us has fought our own battles to get to this point, and we have all earned our place in this room tonight.

None of us reached this milestone alone.

To our teachers - thank you for your patience, your guidance, and for pushing us past our limits. You did not just teach us subjects - you helped shape our character - and with that, we have found who we are.

As we stand on the threshold of our final matric exams and step into the world beyond these walls, remember the foundation built right here at New Forest. The world outside will throw new challenges at us, but it will also offer boundless opportunities. Take the lessons, the grit, and the friendships you made here, and use them to build a future you can be proud of.

Let us leave a legacy we can be proud of, finish strong and step forward into the future with confidence.

Isiphile Mkhize

Head Boy 2026