

Dear Ben,

You like being called Ben at the moment but there are times coming when you'll be Benjamin (and it won't be Mum who calls you that but someone who loves you and will be able to whisper you to bed with that single word), there are still times when you'll be Bunny (but you know that you'll always be Bunny to some people), times you'll be Sir or just Mr Whitehouse and other times when you'll be called other things I'm not allowed to tell you. You'll be surprised at the creativity and lengths people will go to insult you. Learn from how they stretch words and language, it's a valuable gift. I know you like getting letters in the post and I know you'll wait till you're walking to school to pull this letter out of your satchel, read it and quietly ponder what's written here. I'm glad you'll do that, this isn't something Mum needs to read.

I'll start with a shocking confession: I am you, writing to you from the future.

I am 28 years old right now and you are 14- I like how I'm twice your age. 28 seems impossibly old to you right now and you might want to ignore what I write to you but I know you well enough to know you'll finish the letter out of fascination and then you'll file it away with your poetry and keep it all under your bed. The years gap between your life and mine is both massive and infinitely small. I remember being 14 like it was yesterday. At the same time, it feels like a lifetime ago.

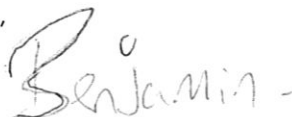
Sadly I'm not allowed to warn you about what's coming; the pain, the fear and the changes in your life are needed to turn you into me. I can't give you a life plan or words of caution because you need to make every step without fearing it or worrying about the outcome. Also any plan has a habit of falling down in flight. You'll (I'll? I'm not sure how to address you/me- is it we/us?) make mistakes but you'll also have some unique triumphs that you'll smirk about.

Cherish the people around you who build you up and recognise that the people with whom you struggle the most will be recognized as your greatest teachers. Don't ever compromise who you are; unless of course you have to, then you're allowed to sacrifice everything to hold your universe in shape.

So, young man, there are no screeching birds to help create prophecies with. Read the past. Everything swings round and round anyway... and some of the relationships you have now you'll spend time and effort trying to recreate in the future. Hold onto some of your clothes- you'll always be surprised what comes in and out of fashion.

See you soon,

Benjamin.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed name "Benjamin."

PS I love you more than you possibly know or understand.