



## MR RUGBY TELLS BOYS TO BRUSH UP THEIR SHAKESPEARE



Pictured from left to right are Shane Fox, Chair of Governors Dr. Peter Goodwin, Ray French, James Keulmans, Headboy Joseph Ronan and John McDonald.

St. Ambrose College welcomed Mr. Rugby Ray French as their special guest speaker at their annual Speech Night at the Bridgewater Hall.

Speaking to some 2,000 parents and pupils at one of England's top rugby schools with a string of county and regional titles this year while producing a conveyor belt of young national players for both England and Ireland, the dual code international, who represented England at both League and Union, told the young men: "Enjoy school, enjoy it both in the classroom and out of the classroom. Give your best for the school because as a teacher of some 35 years experience I can tell you school is giving its best for you."

The veteran BBC commentator and raconteur, now 78, added: "It doesn't matter how good you are at rugby or drama, football or the choir do something with your life; do something for the school. Enjoy yourself and make friends, this is the time you will develop passions that will last a life time."

Though a life long St Helens fan, particularly as a boy, Ray played rugby union at Cowley, a grammar school in St. Helens and a team St. Ambrose still play today, alternating between the two codes as both a professional and an amateur.

He said: "For me it was rugby but that wasn't the only passion I developed at school. It might seem odd to some but as a grizzled old second row I still love my Shakespeare. I go to as much theatre as possible and read avidly and like my rugby I might not have developed such a passion without my teachers."

Ray, who is Chairman of Liverpool St. Helens Rugby Union Club, also gave the nod to Owen Farrell to captain the Lions: "He's a very impressive young man, like his father was and though they might think he's too young, for me he's the one."

The event saw prizes awarded across a range of academic, sporting, cultural and community activities to both present and former pupils with Principal James Keulmans, himself a former Dutch international rugby player, saying, "Listening to Ray French is manor from heaven to an old rugby player like me, but Ray can't be categorised. He's a polymath with a fabulous range of skills including being one of sport's most celebrated commentators and the ease with which he captured the audience was a lesson to us all."