

Celebration of The School Year
Head Teacher's Report
2016-2017

Madam Chairman, Governors, Mrs Clancy, distinguished guests, parents and girls.

What seems like many years ago when I was at school, it was scorned upon to fail. Tests were the method of judging whether you were clever or not and, as pupils, you were required to listen, absorb and regurgitate information. I liked the comfort of being given the information which I quite easily stored to memory and to be honest wasn't that keen on thinking for myself. However, in those days that wasn't really required at school!

I was quite competitive at school, not necessarily a bad thing, and a bit of a perfectionist. This, coupled with the educational approach of the time, meant that I did put myself under pressure to always succeed and compare myself with others and found it difficult to cope when I wasn't near the top of the class after a test. I wasn't resilient, that was a lesson I, like many others, had to start to learn after I had left school.

Fortunately, education has moved on and we no longer rely solely on tests to gauge success. We assess and monitor progress and ability through a variety of methods and draw on a great deal more than answers on an exam paper to measure whether a child is making progress or has understood a concept. That does not mean that our standards and expectations are any lower.

In fact girls leave Melrose consistently performing well above the national average in Literacy and Numeracy. This year, for example, all girls in Form III far exceeded national expectations in Mathematics, over 85% are leaving us comprehending texts at a level at least two years above their chronological age with 1/3 of the class comprehending texts at the level of 16 year olds. Our standards are still high but we recognise that children can show their capabilities and strengths in a variety of ways and curriculum areas. Not just by being an excellent reader or Mathematician but in other ways.

By being able to present a point eloquently, being able to use initiative and adapt thinking to solve a problem, to have the curiosity to question and find out more, to be self-reliant and independent, to be reflective in order to

improve. These skills are equally important in order to achieve success, particularly in the long term.

We recognise that instead of focusing purely on the originals 3 R's we should also develop 3 new R's - Risk Taking, Resilience and Reflection amongst other positive Mindsets.

Through our positive Melrose Mindset, launched in September, we have aimed to remove the unnecessary pressure on children to always have to succeed, telling them that if you never fail at something you are never really learning and that it is through failing that we reflect, learn, get stronger and push ourselves on.

We are giving the girls the toolbox to deal with the challenges that school, work and life may throw at them and develop an inner strength that will support them throughout their lives.

The Melrose Mindset has been a real success this year, it has underpinned all that we have done and been embraced by girls and staff alike. The recognition of girls demonstrating the various mindsets has happened in class, in the playground, on trips and in all areas of school life. In class the girls' approach to learning is being recognised and valued as much as the end product and, apart from Form Prizes and Certificates this has been an important element when selecting today's prize winners.

We celebrate today another very busy year at Melrose and reflect on the successes of ALL the girls. I thought that this year an appropriate way to look back over the year was through each of our Mindsets, although many of the activities cover the range.

Curiosity

The best way to satisfy your curiosity and seek answers is through 'hands on' learning. At Melrose we have experienced this year over 35 trips out and about, including ones to The Occupation Museum, Castle Cornet, Herm, Saumarez Park and Candie Museum. We have had over 20 visitors into school ranging from Prince Edward, to Bernie the Fire Engine and then going into space in the Space Dome.

Outdoor learning continues to thrive with Literacy, Numeracy, Science and History making the most of the outdoor environment. Our Forest Schools programme has now extended down into the Pre-Preparatory Department and fuels curiosity through a range of activities, with the fire pit adding another dimension.

Risk Taking

We try to reassure the girls that there is nothing to fear about taking a risk in their learning as if they do not succeed they will learn something from the experience. However, if they don't take a risk then they will never really accomplish anything.

India, Isla, Lauren and Nina took a risk in Form III when they represented the school in the primary school De Putron Challenge Quiz. I have huge admiration for how they kept their nerve under pressure, and were well deserved Island finalists.

The Melrose girls have entered many competitions this year and received many certificates and awards. Olivia Usher deserves a special mention for coming in the top 5 Island Junior Designers in the Design-An-Ad competition and Isla Savory for coming 3rd on the island in the The Literary Festival Writing Competition.

Performing in front of an audience is definitely a risk taking area, girls I am taking a big risk now! You are putting yourself in a vulnerable position, opening yourself up to judgement by others. This year the girls should be extremely proud of their efforts in the Music, Art, Literary and French Eisteddfod. Girls from Upper Prep to Form III performed poems and songs in French as solos and in groups with great success. Both Junior choirs gave outstanding performances and Upper Prep sang with energy and such enthusiasm.

Melrose was also represented by the Handbells team, who took an even greater risk this year by performing in the Chamber Music class where they had to perform without a conductor. They really had to work together as a team and were rewarded with the trophy. In addition, the small music groups and many individual girls gave excellent performances, I congratulate them all on their courage and commitment. Our Eisteddfod art display, inspired by artists, and showing work from all year groups, looked stunning thanks to Mrs Walkington.

The Preparatory Department girls performed their nativity "A Miracle In Town" superbly at Christmas and the Junior girls performed with such energy in the vibrant production of Alice, The Musical at Easter. The confidence and enthusiasm that was shown by all was impressive.

A musical theme continued in the Summer Concert with Upper Prep joining the Juniors for the first time in a full Senior school hall for a relaxed

evening which showcased the wide variety of Melrose music and the enthusiasm that the girls have.

The girls were not the only ones who took a risk and performed and enjoyed the experience. The staff decided to stage a short panto version of Cinderella in our final assembly at Christmas.

Junior Remove and Form I took part in a week of Outdoor Guernsey Activities last week. They and the staff were kayaking, climbing, sailing and surfing amongst other activities. Some of these activities took many out of their comfort zones but they took the risk and came back full of self-pride about their achievements and with the desire to try things again.

Resilience

The girls have shown great spirit and resilience thorough out the year, persevering when things get difficult. Middle Prep need a special mention for their resilience as they had to handle continuous rain on both their trip to the walled garden at Saumarez Park and also their trip to the beach. No one complained!

Sport is a real strength at Melrose and we have a great deal of talent to celebrate. However, some girls have truly showed resilience in sporting events, we are not all athletes and they have shown real strength of character in cross country, swimming and athletics amongst other sports.

Forms II and III went to London and France again this year and for some this was a first experience of travelling away from home. They all put any nerves aside and had a fantastic time learning about historical places and equally importantly bonding and having fun with their peers.

Initiative

Having initiative is a skill that is needed throughout life and it is one that some find tricky. At Melrose this year we have tried to add events that provide opportunities for the girls to use their initiative to the full.

Being the oldest in the school, we call on Form III to use their initiative more than anyone, particularly through their roles. This year they have been outstanding as Prefects, Librarians, Sports Monitors, ICT and Prep Monitors showing reliability and efficiency. They pushed themselves further on the initiative front during the year with activities such as,

Cycling Proficiency, Safety Calling where they had to react to different dangerous situations, and their Red Cross Survival Skills Day.

Collaboration

Melrose simply would not work without collaboration. We have a fantastic team of dedicated staff at Melrose who work incredibly hard together to provide quality learning experiences for the girls. I would like to take this opportunity to publically thank them all.

You, the parents, are also much appreciated members of the Melrose team, supporting your daughters in so many ways, through helping in the classrooms and on trips, attending performances and meetings. We are very lucky to have such a supportive PTA who have again organised some fun filled events this year, including Bingo night and the Summer Camp and raised substantial funds in the process. Girls can we now thank your parents.

The girls have collaborated a great deal this year and we have tried to provide opportunities to work across year groups in order to share experiences and value the ideas of others. The Happy Puzzle company challenge day allowed girls to use their puzzle solving skills across mixed age groups.

The girls also have shown their strength of collaboration through team sports, competing both in school and against others.

One fine example of collaboration was when Form II and the Pre-Preparatory Department went to the beach, rock pooling and creating beach art. It was a real learning experience for all with some of the Pre-Preparatory girls teaching the Form II girls how to be resilient when it came to beach wildlife!

As well as collaborating in our everyday lives, we have all worked together a great deal for others this year. Through a wide variety of events we have supported over 10 charities and, with your help, raised nearly £6,000. Special mention should go to Mrs Morris who has completed the 30/30 and got soaked to the skin for many years now to raise a great deal of money for Les Bourgs Hospice.

Our Melrose sponsored swim is also deserving of comment. This was the first time that we staged our own event both at Beau Sejour with the Pre-Prep and in our pool with Melrose. Helped by the sunshine, there was a lovely, relaxed, supportive atmosphere and the girls really enjoyed the

event. It was also special in that we selected three charities close to the Melrose heart. The Cheshire Homes, which Form III will visit and take a cheque to on Thursday. The GSPCA, chosen by the girls themselves through our school council, our Pre-Preparatory girls and the Form III School Council members took a cheque to them last week. Finally, we chose our own PTA as we are keen to upgrade the Preparatory Department climbing frame as soon as possible. I am very pleased to say that with combined money from school funds and the PTA the new climbing frame will hopefully be installed this summer holidays, ready for September.

Today is all about the girls and you will hear from each of them their highlights of this past school year. From my point of view one special highlight was Den Day. This day provided an opportunity for all the girls to put the Melrose Mindset into practice, raise money for Save The Children, welcome you as helpers into school and have a great deal of fun.

To see nearly 30 Dens up, of all different shapes and sizes and designs was fantastic. There was an energetic buzz of excitement and productivity throughout the day. The dens were played in, eaten in and admired by all and the amount of problem solving and teamwork that occurred was almost immeasurable. This will definitely become a regular event and we are already thinking about how to make it even more exciting next time. Thank you to all those who contributed and may I say a special thank you to Mr Argo for taking away two lorry loads of cardboard for recycling!

Reflection

Our final Mindset is reflection, being able to look back at experiences and learn from them. We, as staff, are always reflecting on what we do in order to continue to improve and enhance the education of our girls.

Reflecting back over this year we have congratulated Mrs de la Fosse on the birth of Alicia Sophia, welcomed many new pupils and also Mrs le Conte and Mrs Jackson to cover teaching Junior Remove and Mrs Saunders and Mrs Brookes to the Pre-Preparatory and lunch time teams.

As we have said hello to some new faces this year, we now also need to say goodbye to some older ones. Form III, it is now time for you to move on to pastures (slightly new) at the Senior School. It does not seem that long ago when some of you were the first intake into our Pre-Preparatory Department. I look forward to hearing some of your memories of Melrose a little later but would like to say now that we are all very proud of how you have grown into the confident, well-grounded young ladies that you

are. I hope you reflect fondly on your times at Melrose and embrace the exciting times that lie ahead of you.

We also have to say goodbye to Mr and Mrs Beebee as they return to Scotland. I would like to thank Mr Beebee for his many innovative and exciting assemblies. There is always a buzz in the Melrose hall when Mr Beebee is in school. I am sure that St Andrews will benefit greatly from the Beebee buzz!

When it comes to thanking Mrs Beebee it is very difficult to know where to start. Ailsa joined Melrose not long after me, 14 years ago. She originally came in to cover a sabbatical but we realised that she was too good a find and, as a result, she has been here ever since.

She was a class teacher in Form III before moving to Lower Prep and then went on to become Deputy Head Teacher for the last 7 years. Mrs Beebee and I have seen Melrose move a great deal forward over the many years.

During that time Mrs Beebee has shown true dedication to the school and the girls. I have yet to work with someone who shows such commitment and loyalty and such genuine kindness towards her colleagues. She has a fantastic sense of fun and wonderful sense of humour. She has been a steadfast and devoted Deputy Head and a loyal support. Mrs Beebee has been at the heart of the Melrose team.

Whilst, it is an enormous loss to Melrose to see her go, for one I hate to think what state the Melrose staff kitchen will end up in now! It is the right decision for her and Graeme to move back home and I wish them all the very best. Please will you all join with me now in a round of applause to thank Mrs and Mr Beebee for all they have done for Melrose and wish them well.

I hope that I have illustrated how fortunate your daughters are, not to have the sort of education that I experienced, but one that still has strong academic foundations but also provides so much more; the hands on exciting opportunities to develop the other strengths and qualities that will support their progress and ongoing education and, the opportunities to have a great deal of fun along the way.

Thank you.