

## Speech 2019

Madam Chair, Governors, Mrs Clancy, guests, parents, and of course, girls.

Today is a special day in the Melrose calendar. It is a day of reflection and celebration; reflection on the busy and exciting year that we have had at Melrose and a celebration of all the girls' successes throughout the year. Not just the achievements of the few who have won a prize but the achievements of every girl in our Melrose community. There will be a few glimpses of some of these events in our 'fly on the wall' video clips later.

So on the theme of reflection, I have reflected on the education that we provide at Melrose and the philosophy that underpins what we do. I took myself back to university when I trained to be a teacher, many years ago and the rather dry lectures that we were given on Educational Psychology. I am sure that some of you can relate to this. They were those sorts of lectures that always ran over time and you cursed anyone in the group for putting up their hand when we were asked for 'any questions at the end!'

We studied educational theory and Piaget in particular. Piaget developed the idea of active discovery learning; providing children with the opportunities and freedom to explore, manipulate and experiment to construct their own understanding of the world. In other words, not pouring information and knowledge into a child but encouraging them to take control of their own learning and think for themselves. Basically girls he said that you should learn by doing rather than being talked at! And that just makes sense.

The best way to learn to be a good teacher is to get into a classroom and try teaching, the best way to learn to drive a car or give a performance is not by reading about it or being told about it – it is by

actually hands on doing it and learning from any mistakes and that is what education should be all about.

At Melrose, through our Melrose Mindset, we actively encourage the girls to risk take, have a go and learn by doing. Our aim is to help them become girls who engage in reflective, skilful and quality thinking; girls who are interested in the world and who are motivated to pursue this curiosity and learn independently. Girls who have the courage to bring their own perspective, hone their ideas and push forward their own learning. Girls who will have the skills and mental strength needed for the ever changing world and workplace that lies ahead.

We do this by providing, wherever possible, the opportunities for them to actively discover for themselves – to learn by doing and the girls have ‘done a great deal’ this academic year.

This has only been possible because we are blessed at Melrose with a team of enthusiastic teachers and support assistants, who will brave the pages of risk assessments in order to take the girls out and extend and enhance their learning. This fantastic bunch of people also have a superb sense of humour which was demonstrated in their end of term performance of The Twelve Days of Christmas.

Mrs Abreu joined the Melrose staff team last September and we are pleased that she will be staying with us as the Learning Support Assistant in Upper Prep. As we said hello to Mrs Abreu we have said goodbye this term to Mrs Dodd from the Pre-Prep Department. Most of the girls were supported by Mrs Dodd in their early Melrose days. We thank her for her commitment over many years and wish her all the best on her new career adventure.

It is not possible to thank the staff for all their individual contributions, there are so many of them so please would you join with me in thanking all the staff on the Melrose team for their hard work this year.

Working well as part of a team is very important and links with our Melrose Mindset of Collaboration; that is why we start our school year with teambuilding days to help the class bonds form after the long summer break.

The girls have also learned a great deal this year from hands on experiences with nearly 30 visitors who have come into their classes and school assemblies. Visitors have included children's authors, local charity representatives, the emergency services and Explorer Dome amongst many, many others.

And our visitors haven't just been human – Lower Prep welcomed The Tiger who came to tea, for a tea party, along with their parents and the girls were most happy when some four legged friends joined us for assembly with Paws for Support.

As you are aware we have been working towards our Wellbeing Award for Schools this year and hope to complete this by December. Our aim was to raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing and take clear steps towards supporting the wellbeing of staff and pupils. The girls have voiced ideas which they think would help them, through the School council and we have already started acting on these. Ideas have included a friendship bench for the Juniors, Play Leaders to support girls at break times and increasing Mindfulness and outdoor learning opportunities.

We will continue to bring their ideas to fruition in next term. We are also grateful to those parents who offered to be wellbeing champions and a voice for the parents' ideas and we look forward to working with them next term and taking their ideas on board for moving wellbeing forward.

Maz from the Self-esteem team has visited us again this year, extending the work that she does to include Upper Prep as part of an annual rolling programme. The girls really enjoy and benefit from the

work that she does with them on self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, anxiety, body image and social media.

We are also very pleased to announce that from September we are going to embark on a brilliant school's programme based on the work of Dr Andy Cope, who has researched the effect of positive psychology and the importance of learning how to be positive to support your own wellbeing. There will be a presentation on this at our Curriculum Information Evening at the beginning of next term and I encourage you to come along.

As well as having people into school the girls have been on over 40 trips out. This averages more than one visit for every week of the school year. Visits have included the police station, airport, fire station, Castle Cornet, Candie Museum and even Waitrose – amongst many others.

There has been a great deal of active learning taking place outdoors. Our Forest Schools programme, led by Miss Kinley is still thriving, providing opportunity for problem solving and using initiative. Outdoor education has been further extended to the Beach with our Beach Schools, led by Mrs Reynolds, from the Pre-Prep Department. The amount of learning, from Pre-Prep to Form III using our natural environment, has been extraordinary – Piaget would have been impressed.

Activity week provided the perfect opportunity to promote character building, risk taking, resilience and to develop teamwork and interpersonal skills in activities out of the classroom. Junior Remove and Form I have challenged themselves through coasteering, kayaking, surfing and crate stacking amongst other activities with Outdoor Guernsey. Middle and Upper Prep explored Herm and Lower Prep went to 'Up' and did indeed go Up the new climbing wall there.

Form II ventured further afield in their trip to become Tudors at Hooke Court in Dorset, experiencing discovery learning which included

cooking, candle making and going back to Tudor School. They also showed great resilience when we had to stay an extra night due to travel complications and then get up at 4am to catch the plane.

Form III went to France to experience the history and culture in St Malo and the surrounding area – along with the water park! And also spent a night in Lihou discovering the wonderful natural environment there and enjoying team building activities.

The Melrose girls are fortunate to also have a wealth of hands on experience of a range of Sports both in school and within the local community. The Junior girls have done themselves proud competing against other schools in Netball, Hockey, Football, Tag Rugby, Athletics and Cricket. And at home they have also shown great enthusiasm, resilience and collaboration in competing for their houses in our sports events. The Prep and Pre-Prep girls have also benefitted from their year round swimming, ballet and of course their fun sports day. The Melrose girls are true all-rounders.

Experiencing Healthy Competition is a life skill and the Melrose girls have not just competed on the sports field. Beattie, Eva, Polly & Lily represented the school in the De Putron General Knowledge Challenge against all the other Primary Schools. They showed nerves of steel and made it to the final and were runners up.

Everyone in the school had the opportunity to take part in the Eisteddfod in some way. The girls sang and individually performed poetry in French. Both the Prep Department and Junior and Canto choirs sang beautifully in their classes, receiving some fantastic feedback. The handbells team showed great risk taking and collaborative skills and were very successful, performing in the class without a conductor. And in addition there were many individual and small group music successes.

All the girls contributed to the work used for the Melrose Recycled art display which was expertly assembled by Mrs Walkington. Their

hard work paid off as they were awarded the People's Choice trophy for best school display.

All the Junior girls used a variety of skills, including that of persuasive language, when they entered the Design – An – Ad competition. We were thrilled with the results. We received three first places, 8 seconds and 3 thirds and most importantly we received the trophy for Best Junior School of the year and a cheque for £1000. This was a real team effort with all the girls trying their best and so, as a result, we have a small treat for the Junior girls tomorrow lunch time, when the ice cream van will call!

Another part of our role as educators is to increase the girls' awareness of the needs of others and give them an understanding of how they have roles and responsibilities in society. This year, with your support, we have raised nearly £7,000 through charity events including the Swimathon, Walk On the Wildside for the Born free Foundation and Children in Need amongst others.

One charity event, our Enterprise Week, saw Piaget's discovery learning at its best. As you are aware each class had to use all of their Melrose Mindsets and independent learning to grow their £30 for their chosen class charity. I am sure that those of you who attended will agree that the ideas were impressive and the girls grew their money to £800, much to the delight of the chosen charities which were close to their hearts. Special mention to Form III who raised over £200, definite entrepreneurs of the future.

Form III chose to give their money to the Cheshire Homes, a charity which they have had strong links with throughout the year, visiting at Harvest, Christmas and Easter and building their friendships every time

The Pre-Prep have continued spreading some cheer with their regular visits to the Russells, where they sing and do crafts with the residents there.

Being the eldest in the school, Form III have increased opportunities for hands on learning, including learning survival skills with the Red Cross. We are very much a community at Melrose and, being a small school, there is much opportunity for cross year group work and whole school initiatives. The School Council have continued to move forward their initiative of recycling and, now thanks to their hard work, we are close to gaining our 'Plastic Free School' status. The girls also worked across year groups on World Book Day sharing the joy of reading with others.

The other key people in our Melrose community are you, the parents and grandparents and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have helped over the year in lessons, activities, productions, with Christmas parties, on trips and with cake sales.

Thank you also to our very active PTA who have held and supported some super events for the girls this year, including old favourites like the Pancake Breakfast and the Christmas Fayre and new ones such as the Junior Disco. Another new event this year was the 'brain child' of Mr Lewis who had the slightly crazy idea of an Upper Junior School Sleepover. I am not sure how much sleep was achieved by either the girls, or the brave group of staff who very kindly volunteered for a very different kind of Friday night, but the girls had a blast and I have a feeling this will be getting a permanent slot on the calendar. Thank you to Mr Lewis and his team.

When it comes to hands on active learning; performing on stage ticks so many boxes. The girls at Melrose are so adept at performing on stage from a young age and this year was no exception. In the Summer Concert the Junior girls again created a fantastic atmosphere in the Senior School hall and performed with real gusto and enthusiasm, showing the array of music that happens at Melrose.

This year the Preparatory Department performed their Nativity 'Born in a barn' with confidence and a real feeling of enjoyment. The

Junior girls excelled in their production of The Lion King, wowing the audiences and were supported by the most amazing costumes and make up that I have ever seen on stage at Melrose. I am not sure how we will follow that, next year – I have my thinking cap on!

Form III led the performance of The Lion King with such maturity and self-assurance and it highlighted how far they have come as individuals since their journey at Melrose began. Form III will be singing a song for you later, based on their memories, but Form III as you to move on to pastures new I would like to thank you for all that you have done for the school in your time at Melrose and say 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. Girls please can we all wish Form III good luck.

We also need to thank someone else, who I am sure will have exciting times ahead – Mrs Cave. Mrs Cave joined Melrose 14 years ago. She has been a Middle Prep class teacher for that time and almost all the girls sitting here have benefitted hugely from Mrs Cave's experience and calm and warm teaching manner – and all of them remember her 'Good Morning' song. Mrs Cave has also moved forward our teaching of English as Literary Co-ordinator and most recently has been Head of the Prep Department, leading the department with the utmost of professionalism.

Mrs Cave has shown true dedication to the school and the girls. She has shown huge commitment, even volunteering for the school sleepover, loyalty and genuine kindness towards her colleagues and all she has taught. She has a fantastic sense of fun and wonderful sense of humour. She has been at the heart of the Melrose team. We wish you all the best Mrs Cave for a retirement that is full of fun and adventure and we already have your name down on the teacher supply list for September! Please will you all join with me now to show our appreciation to Mrs Cave and wish her all the very best.

In rounding off my speech today, I hope that you can appreciate that at Melrose we do provide the girls with as many to explore, manipulate and experiment to construct their own understanding of the world and learn in an active, stimulating way through experiences they will hopefully remember for many years to come.

Marc Van Doren, American scholar and professor, said that the art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery. Girls you have discovered so many new things this year and we look forward to continuing this exciting journey of active discovery with you when you return in September.

Thank you.