



Melrose Celebration of the School Year 2020/2021

Head Teacher's Speech

Firstly, a very warm welcome to you all and thank you for coming to our Celebration of the School Year. Last year, due to Covid, we changed the format of our end of year Celebrations, bringing it back to Melrose, rather than in the Senior School and changing from one large whole school celebration to more intimate departmental ones. This provided us with the opportunity to give each class more time to reflect and celebrate and was met with very positive feedback. So, with a few tweaks we are keeping this new 'girl friendly' format.

Today should be about the girls and not about me and to allow time for that I will be giving you a brief summary of the year, mentioning just some of the events, followed by a short photographic montage which will hopefully show how much your daughters have experience and enjoyed this year.

After that I will hand over to the girls who will share some memories and sing for you. Mrs Clancy & Advocate Chan have kindly joined us to present the prizes and then I will round off proceedings. The aim of today is not to be a formal event but rather an opportunity for us all to get together, and, as it says on the invite celebrate the school year.

When I reflect on a school year, I like to think about the achievements and successes, not only the academic but, equally importantly, the social and emotional ones too. We pride ourselves on our six Melrose Mindsets and how we aim for these to support the girls in their learning and this year our Mindset of Resilience, in particular, has shone through again.

A study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that social and emotional skills are the biggest predictors of future success. We live in a fast-changing world where ever-increasing demands on time and energy have created an environment which can be overwhelming as we find ourselves pulled in many different directions. And these pressures will only increase for our children. With the power of the internet and social media, they are already exposed to and have to deal with far more social pressures than when we were at school and the fast pace of life created by technology will only further increase when they enter the work place.

We know that the road to success and happiness is paved with bumps along the way. It is the same for everyone, but it is those who have resilience, who are able to reframe adversity into something positive, who are able to bounce back and move forward, leading to success and mental calm.

It is our job, as educators, to help the girls develop their resilience in order to give them the best support for what lies ahead. The best way to do this is to expose them to as many different experiences as possible both in and out of the classroom, experiences which will challenge

them, experiences which they may fail at first at, but experiences through which we can support them to grow mentally. As I briefly re-cap on some of the events of the year, I am sure you will be able to see how we have provided the girls with those opportunities.

We started the school year, grateful to come back to normality and we reflected on Lockdown 1 by creating a wonderful whole school mural called 'Freedom'. Led by Helen Bonner Morgan, from Arts for Impact, each girl created a tile in rainbow colours, symbolising what was important in their life or what freedom meant to them. This is now on display on the fence, where I hope it will be reminder of these unusual times for many years to come. I encourage you to find your daughter's tile when you pass by.

We have supported charities wholeheartedly again this year, raising about £4,500 for Children in Need, The Royal British Legion, Comic Relief and Children in Need amongst others. We are immensely proud of the girls, some of whom showed great resilience, in the Swimathon and raised over £3,000. Thank you for your support with these events.

Supporting 'charity at home' the PTA, staff and girls worked hard to put on a very successful Christmas Fayre which raised over £4,000 and was hugely enjoyable. The PTA are a small group of very committed individuals who work tirelessly to provide enjoyable experiences for girls and parents and raise a great deal of money at the same time. May I take this opportunity to thank Mrs Hyland who has been an active member of the team and who ends her stint this term as her daughter is moving up to the senior school. I encourage all of you to sign up to support the PTA, even if you can only spare the time to help with one event a year – a larger team will really spread the load and benefit your daughters. Through a generous donation from the PTA we are in the process of installing a large piece of play equipment in the Junior Playground, and if planning permission comes through, we hope to have this in place by the end of this year, with phase 2 of a quiet, landscaped area to follow.

One very popular event was the School Sleepover for Forms II & III. This event run by Mr Lewis and his team of committed, if slightly mad staff, gives the girls the chance to see the school building in a different light, experience a range of fun activities and 'sleep' (I use the term loosely) on a classroom floor. At least they do sleep, Mr Lewis and his team make a point of staying awake all night – and for this I truly thank them. This event is meant to be biennial but there is girl pressure to make it an annual event.

Competition provides great opportunity for building resilience and the girls have entered many competitions this year both in school and independently through sporting events such as sports days and the Primary Schools Athletics, the Island Tag Rugby competition, the virtual De Putron Challenge, Fairtrade and Writing competitions amongst many others with lots of individual successes. One competition worthy of specific mention is the Design-An-Ad Competition, in which all the Junior girls took part and which resulted in Melrose having winners and gaining overall 3rd Place for the school. All the girls who took part received a treat for their hard work when the ice cream van called on Tuesday break time.

Inner resilience is also needed when standing up in front of a large audience and performing and the girls, again have had the opportunity to do this. The Prep Nativity – A Midwife Crisis was a resounding success, showing such confidence in our younger girls with some of them needing extra resilience with a collapsing back drop. The Carol Service was wonderful with some fantastic singing and provided a special time in the year when the girls come together

and perform as a whole school. Then we had Mary Poppins, which was postponed due to lockdown. This show was a huge parent, teacher and pupil team effort and a resounding success. It illustrated a prime example of resilience when the smoke machine set off the fire alarm and we had to evacuate and then return. The girls just got straight back on stage and carried on like true professionals. Finally the girls who didn't have the chance to perform at the Eisteddfod have shared their hard work through an informal music hour just this week.

Our year was disrupted again when we were thrown into Lock down 2, incredibly quickly. However, we were prepared and after a virtual Sunday staff meeting on the 24th January, we hit the ground running with home learning provision. Having built on our previous experiences this was very successful with the girls fully engaging in the learning provided and the live interaction giving them the chance to still feel very much part of their class and school. Teamwork and resilience was key at that time and I would like to thank you, as parents for the fantastic support you gave your daughters, whilst juggling your own lives. You girls for your hard work and endless enthusiasm and the staff who really went above and very much beyond, both with home learning and through supporting key workers children at school. Thank you all for making a tough time as productive as you did.

Our resilience was key not only during lockdown but on our return to 'bubble' school which required both the girls and staff to meet the adversity of a strange, segregated world back at school, but not normal school. They did this admirably, developing their inner strength more and more each day.

Since returning to normality we have really embraced the chance to get out there and benefit from as many experiences as possible. The girls have been on nearly 30 trips to enhance their learning and provide some of the challenge that I mentioned earlier. Activities week provided many opportunities. There are far too many trips to mention but I hope that your daughters will have enthused at home about them and you will see some on the montage. Form III will definitely not forget their special end of year trip to Lihou or Form II their sailing. The girls have shown resilience on many occasions but one which stands out was Form III spending the day learning cycling skills in the pouring rain and one saying to me 'Well if we can cycle in this, we can cycle in anything!'

As staff our aim is to role model resilience wherever we can and some very wet trips and events out provided the opportunity. So well done to all the girls and staff for their resilience and good spirit.

So we come to the end of another busy and at times challenging year and I would like to thank you as parents for your support and the staff again for all their hard work and commitment

At the end of a school year we sadly have to say some goodbyes. We say goodbye and thank you to Mrs Maginnis, one of our lunch time supervisors, as she takes on a role supporting Food Technology at the Senior school. We say a brief goodbye to Mrs Ingrouille as she goes on Maternity leave and we say a goodbye to those girls who are leaving us. As I have said before to Form III, they should be very proud of how far they have come on their Melrose journey and of how they have grown into such well - grounded, confident individuals. Girls I have a short poem to read to you to send you on your way.

Let No One Steal Your Dreams

Let no one steal your dreams

Let no one tear apart

The burning of ambition

That fires the drive inside your heart.

Let no one steal your dreams

Let no one tell you that you can't

Let no one hold you back

Let no one tell you that you won't.

Set your sights and keep them fixed

Set your sights on high

Let no one steal your dreams

Your only limit is the sky.

Let no one steal your dreams

Follow your heart

Follow your soul

For only when you follow them

Will you feel truly whole.

Set your sights and keep them fixed

Set your sights on high

Let no one steal your dreams

Your only limit is the sky.

Paul Cookson

So returning to the theme of resilience, this year's journey has provided the girls with endless opportunities to grow stronger mentally, further develop their resilience, feel supported and hopefully have a lot of fun along the way.

Thank you.