



St Leonard's College
An education for life.

From the Principal

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Teachers Touch the Future

Here is a quick thought experiment I use with prospective parents at the start of a College tour. It works for anyone over the age of 20 who wasn't raised by wolves in the forest. Start by clearing your head of all other thoughts or current concerns. Then quickly call to mind the name, perhaps even the face, of the best teacher that you had at school. Junior, Middle, or Senior School; it doesn't matter. Perhaps a person who always seemed to have time for you, made you feel seen. Maybe one who propelled you down a previously unconsidered pathway. Someone who always lifted your spirits. Or the one who simply "got" you.

In decades of trying that trick, I have yet to meet anyone who can't immediately conjure up a name. Which I take as a mandate that the most important part of my role is the recruitment and retention of outstanding educators. Because that exercise always reminds me that the influence of teachers we put in front of your children is not confined to their school years. These are people who will have an impact on students' lives long after they walk out of the College gates at the end of Year 12. An effect which will echo down the years. The esteem they built, the example they set, the reassuring smile and the authentic praise, those are lessons that endure.

Which is the reason why, when hiring new teachers, I always encourage senior staff to never appoint the best person to the job. Never appoint the best person, only appoint the right person. Why? Because the best person in a mediocre selection is still a mediocre applicant. Sadly, my thought experiment also works in reverse. If I asked you to recall your worst teacher, I guarantee you could do that just as easily, no matter how long ago you left school.

Yet holding out to appoint the perfect person is easier said than done in the current employment market. We are facing a growing shortage of teachers worldwide, where even schools with a reputation such as St Leonard's are feeling the pinch. Fields of applicants are getting smaller, the calibre more variable. When our priority is to ensure there are teachers in front of every child, it takes courage not to appoint the best person that comes to hand. Yet what favours do we do them if the first available teacher is uninspiring or inept?

Thankfully, the existing staff at St Leonard's are not only superb educators, they are also deeply collegial and committed. Willing to step in and cover additional classes when a short-term gap arises, allowing us the time to seek out the "right" replacement. It is a mark of their professionalism, and the College culture, that they also recognise the influence of their vocation.

So, as all in the College community take time to enjoy a well-earned Easter Break and reflect on the abundance of opportunities seized during this busy first term, I hope you can also take a moment to consider the people who made those experiences possible. To recognise the warm impression and reassuring affirmation that St Leonard's teachers are instilling in your children. Because the lasting imprint of a great teacher is what we mean by 'an education for life'.