

Known, Nurtured, Loved

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In Greek mythology, Mentor was the faithful companion of Odysseus, King of Ithaca.

Legend has it that when Odysseus set off for the Trojan wars, Mentor was given responsibility to ensure that Odysseus' son Telemachus was raised to be a fit person to succeed his father. Mentor's role was to be parent figure, teacher, advisor, role model, supporter, challenger and encourager. These elements are also found in the role of mentors at St Leonard's College.

At St Leonard's each student is part of a home room, led by a teacher known as the mentor. Mentors develop a

relationship with their students in which they provide ongoing guidance, instruction and encouragement, aimed at helping young people develop their character, achieve their goals and become involved members of the College community.

It has long been recognised that a key protective factor for young people is a relationship with a trusted adult, often a teacher. This can also enhance the sense of belonging to their school community, another important protective factor for wellbeing. The mentor program at St Leonard's College is founded on a commitment to provide a range of opportunities for these connections to develop.

Relationships are at the centre of our model of pastoral care and the mentor's role is pivotal in this context, focusing on each individual student according to their interests, abilities and potential for personal growth.

Mentors meet with their students either daily or several times each week, depending on the age group. They take an holistic view of their students and come to know them across all domains of school life. Mentors track academic progress, know a student's strengths and weaknesses, and meet regularly with individual students to discuss progress and challenges. Older students develop personal academic goals each semester and reflect on these with their mentors at regular intervals during the year, using this opportunity to develop personal action plans for achieving their own potential and ambitions.





Mentors also proactively assist students to develop the skills they need to achieve their goals and further their potential. This may include study skills or organisational habits, connecting students to other supports at the College, or helping the student identify solutions for challenges. Essential to this approach is that mentors seek to empower young people through fostering positive goals that are owned by the student, and are therefore meaningful to their lives and dreams.

The mentoring program is based on our whole child philosophy of pastoral care. As well as monitoring a student's academic progress, mentors keep an overview on cocurricular participation and social and emotional

development. Cocurricular activities enhance young people's sense of belonging and growth in self-esteem, and bring a potential for peer mentoring and role models. Encouraging and fostering opportunities for joining in is an important role of the mentor, as well as helping senior students plan to manage more complex time demands and responsibilities.

The holistic relationship and guidance offered by mentors is also evident in their understanding of the social and emotional development of young people. Effective pastoral mentoring recognises the developmental challenges and social pressures of different ages and stages. In collaboration with other pastoral staff, mentors deliver a

personal development program, which plays an important part in developing the social-emotional skills and values our young people need today. This covers a broad range of content across the College, and includes such areas as cyber education, anti-bullying and growth mindset challenges.

Mentors are the first point of contact for parents and an important connecting element in the vital home-school partnership. Each term, mentors have three points of contact with each family in their mentor group, by telephone, email or face-to-face. These connections enable parents to share any concerns, hear about successes and discuss strategies on which home and school can collaborate for the benefit of the student. Mentors give valuable feedback and advise, reassure and support families throughout their child's educational journey.

Mentors play a particularly important role in times of transition, whether that be at the start of school in prep, beginning secondary school in year 7 or moving into the Senior School at year 10. During transition periods students are more vulnerable as they experience new challenges such as making new friends, learning new routines and managing more complex academic demands. Mentors at each of these ages are key players in monitoring the progress of their charges and ensuring extra support is offered to those who are struggling. Mentors are well-versed in the additional challenges at these key transition times and are expert in working together with families to ensure a positive movement into the next stage of schooling.

Mentors bring many skills to their role: encouraging, advising, organising, teaching and listening. This is based on an interest in each individual child and a commitment to knowing that child in a genuine, holistic manner. Mentors are also members of teams at each level of the College,



which enables them to identify and understand issues relevant to a given cohort and share strategies with other mentors. They are supported by experienced pastoral staff across the College including team leaders, Heads of Year, Heads of House, Heads and Deputy Heads of School and the counselling team.

Steven Spielberg gives us the essence of the purpose of mentoring: "The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves." It is the best version of themselves that our young people are encouraged to create, supported by mentors in partnership with parents.