

Head's Assembly – 2020 welcome

Dr Emma O'Rielly

Thursday 2nd February 2020

Good morning students and colleagues - a very warm welcome to a new school year and a new decade!

I especially welcome the students who are new to Girton Grammar School, including our Prep students who are embarking on their school journey, and the new Year 7 students, along with students from the Junior School, who start Secondary School today.

I started my school journey in the 1980's where it was all about ra ra skirts and fringes for me and finished in the 1990's when shoulder pads were cool, the world was certainly different then compared to now, 2020, the year our year 12's will finish their school journey. Our prep students will graduate from school in the year 2033. I wonder what the world will be like then.

We have 14 new and returning staff who join or re-join us today, and I extend to them also, a warm welcome.

So 2020.

Some of you may have made new year's resolutions to kick off your year in a positive way, making promises to yourself that you feel will make your life better.

I think positive intentions are excellent. The hard part is making these intentions a reality.

Did you know that about 80% of people give up on their new year's resolutions by the second week of February? So, if by next week, you have not started to realise the benefits of your well-intended goals, you are not alone.

Every year, some of the most common new year's resolutions are exercising more, eating healthier, getting more sleep, saving more money, and getting better control of personal devices like mobile phones – we can help you there!

Experts say that the main reasons we do not stick to our resolutions are as follows;

Firstly, we fail to set ourselves realistic goals in the first place.

Secondly, we don't sufficiently plan a way to achieve our resolutions.

Thirdly, we fail to make our resolutions a habit.

And finally, we overlook the need for support in achieving our resolutions.

You can see how important these considerations are when tackling a goal such as getting more exercise because a lofty ideal alone will not make for a better life.

It is too easy to simply desire the end game without first considering things like, what does "more" exercise mean? How can we fit more exercise into our already busy week? How can exercise be built into our lives to become a habit? How can we gain the support we need from people around us to remain motivated?

So, with this in mind, I urge you to think about what 2020 might look like for you. I encourage to think about some positive, but small and realistic steps, to make this year better than the last.

Now to pivot slightly from new year's resolutions to my hopes for you all for 2020.

There are three things that I, along with your teachers, will support you in this year and that we hope you embrace for yourself, and these are:

To do your best.

To be your best, and;

To ask for help.

Think of it as a “no regrets” approach. Because if you strive to do these three things for yourself, there is nothing else that you can ask of yourself or that others can expect from you.

If you **do your best**, you show yourself respect. You know deep down what your personal best is, and that is what I hope you strive for, in everything that you do. In saying that, remember that at times, things get difficult and you may struggle, don’t give up during times of struggle, this is the time you must persevere and continue to do your best.

Break it down into a daily aspiration. If you resolve to do your best each day and put in a good day’s work, it will add up to doing your best in general and you will find that things are also less overwhelming.

To **be your best**, you need only imagine what the best version of yourself would do in any circumstance. I hope that you strive to be that person in as many interactions, with as many people as possible, every day.

As our school charter says: *“I can choose to be optimistic and enthusiastic in my daily interactions because I know that when I am positive, great things happen to all of us.”*

The school charter also talks of being responsible for our own feelings and for the relationships with everyone around us, and this is what we expect of everyone in the Girton community.

Asking for help can be hard. Sometimes, in asking for help, we feel that we are too needy, that we are not worthy of someone else’s time, that we should know better ourselves.

Or more commonly, we are not willing to expose what we perceive to be our weaknesses.

Asking for help when required is anything but a weakness, it is wise. You will find that seeking assistance becomes easier the more you do it. Eventually, it becomes an excellent habit that will serve you well forever.

So, those are my three hopes for you this year.

While you are developing your own personal goals, it is important that you also understand what is expected of you, and that these expectations are not to make life hard but to help you grow.

The reason we have expectations of you is that we believe in you. It's really that simple.

We know that for you to achieve your potential, we need to create expectations that will help you thrive, and I know that you can do the three things I have mentioned and that they will bring you meaning and self-esteem.

I know that it will not always be easy and that sometimes you will not feel like being your best.

I know that asking for help is hard for some of you and that sometimes, you will lack the motivation to do your best.

But I also know that what I, and your teachers, believe about your capacity and your capability, often determines what can actually be achieved, so we will not give up on creating expectations for you and supporting you in achieving them.

So please, do your best, be your best and ask for help – make 2020 the year of no regrets.

Thank you.