ANNIE MCGUIRE  HEAD OF MIDDLE SCHOOL
DAVID ROBERTS  HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL

At St Leonard’s College our academic courses, cocurricular activities, teaching staff and facilities exist for one purpose: to equip every student to be the best they can be. We know that every student is different with different learning styles, interests and experiences and there is no such thing as a ‘one size fits all’ approach when it comes to education. To ensure each individual student who walks through our gates leaves with the tools to be the best they can be, we have developed an innovative mentoring program, which runs through Middle and Senior School.

In Junior School, classroom teachers have always acted as mentors for the students in their classes, looking out for their educational and emotional wellbeing. As students move into Middle and Senior School they move from having one classroom teacher to attending many classes each day with multiple subject teachers.

At St Leonard’s College every Middle and Senior School student is also allocated to a home room: a small group of students who have regular contact with one teacher, their Mentor. Mentors monitor the academic and pastoral progress of each student in their group and have regular contact with parents.

MENTORING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The College’s mentoring program is essential to a strong and vibrant Middle School. As children enter adolescence and become more independent, Middle School Mentors must be relationship builders who encourage our students to achieve their personal best within their peer group and cocurricular activities, as well as in their academic development.

Mentors in years 5 and 6 believe that pastoral care is at the heart of everything they do. Sound mentoring is something that happens in every classroom during all periods of the day. Mentors aim to provide all students with positive attitudes to learning, the development of sound social skills and the ability to become self-managing individuals in a dynamic community of learners.

In year 7 the Mentor becomes the ‘go to’ person for students in their homeroom, an integral contact in the transition from primary to secondary school. “Mentoring is not just a job that takes place in 35 minutes - it happens over the year and throughout the child’s education at our College,” said Justine Werba, Mentor for 7X. The program also incorporates our Peer Support program led by year 11 students who provide positive role models and connections for our year 7 students.

In year 8 the program continues with a stronger focus on a growth mindset - the idea that you can learn anything if you have a positive attitude towards the task at hand. Mentors create a culture of positivity and assist their students to challenge their thinking about what is possible. One student commented “the mentor period is a positive and welcoming place with people I’m familiar with. When our Mentor calls us up to talk about how school is going, I like it because we can tell him about any problems we may have.”

The year 9 team is one with a wide range of teaching and extracurricular skills and interests, which provides countless opportunities to connect with their students in and out of the classroom. This team is heavily involved in the CUE program, delivers the personal development program and provides students with organisational and academic advice.

Mentoring in Middle School is quite unique as each age and stage of this section of the College requires a different approach. The cornerstone for all mentoring is the development of relationships. In years 5, 6, and 7 the program is centred around communication, organisation, learning to focus and embracing change. In year 8 we seek to develop a growth mindset and to learn from mistakes. In year 9 with the CUE program and the end of year Big Experience, Mentors encourage students to become independent and to be responsible citizens within the community.

MENTORING IN SENIOR SCHOOL

In the Senior School Parents Manual we highlighted what it means to be an Academic Mentor to our Senior School students. Within the constructs of the College our Academic Mentors have the primary responsibility for the academic, social and personal welfare for each student.
in their home room. Mentors should know their students and the matters that may affect their progress and wellbeing. Being an effective Mentor depends on building connections and knowing each student; knowing their interests, personal circumstances, strengths, weaknesses and academic history. Taking an active interest in the subject progress, career aspirations and the cocurricular involvement of their students and strategically planning for progress is essential.

Three afternoons a week, time is set aside for home room groups to meet with each other and their Mentor. During this time Mentors meet individually with students as well as working collectively with the whole mentor group of around 14 students engaging in discussions relevant to their year group. One afternoon each week is dedicated to the personal development program. In these sessions groups explore issues such as stress management, student strengths, healthy habits and exam strategies. During the other two sessions students have time to work independently on home learning and revision tasks when they are not meeting individually with their Mentor or engaging in group discussions. The individual conversations focus on each student’s progress and their engagement in College life. This time is also an opportunity for the Mentor and student to discuss any relevant factors, where appropriate, that relate to a student’s wellbeing and academic performance.

There are so many ongoing positive conversations happening between staff and students. This is where the strength of our community is paramount. There are many opportunities for positive relationships between students, staff and parents to form, both in and out of the classroom. These relationships ensure the College can provide the necessary support, in partnership with the family unit, to help our students navigate their way successfully through Senior School.

The educational landscape has changed significantly in the last 20 years as the standard of student achievement across the state and country has improved. Our Academic Mentors have actively taken on their roles, and with the reduced number of 12 - 15 students in Academic Mentor groups there is a greater opportunity to engage in one-on-one conversations. As we have stated previously we continue to welcome feedback and encourage parents to maintain an open dialogue to ensure we are doing all we can to support each of our students.