Dear Parents, Friends, Staff and Students,

Developing leadership capacities and qualities in our students is a high priority in our learning at Mt St Michael's. It is not incidental or haphazard, rather it is integral to our learning frameworks, our structures and processes and it is well resourced. In this final term of the year, the significance of student leadership is highlighted as we have already experienced in the final assemblies, led by our current student leaders, the SLT, and further, in the process of electing the College Captains and SLT for the coming year. This is also a time of excitement and anticipation.

Our students have multiple opportunities to explore their leadership traits from the day they enter the College through the traditional class captain roles, but most importantly through their participation in our co-curricular programmes; being a member of a CAN group or participation in the academic, sporting and cultural groups where students learn to work in teams and understand how they can contribute. In our Positive Education programme students learn about their character strengths and are encouraged to reflect on these traits and how they might draw on these in their contribution to the College community both within and outside the classroom.

However, the role of student leadership in our whole school assemblies is perhaps the pinnacle opportunity for our young women to develop their skills, shine and make a difference. I frequently speak with them about the significance of their contributions to the mission, spirit and culture of the College. They have the capacity to inspire the whole community in the way they lead with their chosen theme, highlight what is important, along with the multiple ideas they have to engage the student body. Through this assembly structure I believe that Mt St Michael's is unique in the way student leadership is valued and expressed.

On Tuesday our leaders of 2014 held their final assembly. It was a moving and memorable morning. The consistent theme was gratitude for all those who had enabled them to be leaders; staff in the College, their families and their friends. Embedded in their gratitude was an appreciation of how much they had learnt from their leadership roles and this was a time to
say 'thank you’. As teachers we can "see" their growth in confidence and leadership capacity without needing to measure it. It also gives us joy and deep fulfilment.

We congratulate and thank our College captains, Lily Treston and Bridie McKim for all that they have given to the College community this year and to the entire Student Leadership Team. As we move through this season of celebration and farewells there will be more opportunities to express our appreciation and acknowledge the new team who will follow in their footsteps.

Leadership is not limited to those who are elected. Acknowledging this principle we have a particular leadership award for a Year 12 student who epitomises the spirit of the College and has made a difference by her actions and her presence. This award, The Chroi of Mt St Michael's College, the Irish word for "heart", will be announced tomorrow and be presented at the MSM Celebrates Award ceremony next week. It should not surprise that this award is a legacy of the 2008 Student Leaders with the important criteria that it must go to a student who does not hold an elected position. It is indeed an honour to receive this award which is nominated by members of the Student Leadership Team.

In the coming days the most powerful political leaders will be on our doorstep, a few kilometres down the road for the G20 Summit. Their leadership qualities will be on display. Given recent media prominence in how a political leader too close to home, aspires to manage conflict as if in the football arena, I am sure we will be watching with interest to see how their leadership traits match up with those of our young women!

These thoughts lead me to the importance of role models. Tomorrow we celebrate International Teachers’ Day; an opportunity to acknowledge with deep appreciation the work of our teachers. We know the enduring significance of great teachers who lead by example with multiple skills and a commitment which is a vocation, to inspire and grow the hearts and minds of those they teach. At our College Board meeting this Tuesday, our Chair, Mrs Jane Slattery, a former teacher and Principal concluded our prayer with these words from Christa McAuliffe, a teacher who lost her life in the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986.

“I touch the future. I teach.”

Clearly she was proud to be a teacher and all teachers at Mt St Michael’s share her pride and passion.

Tomorrow we take time to celebrate.

Sincerely,
Alison Terrey
Principal