

Dear Parents

Earlier this week, I attended the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) conference, of which we are a member school <https://gsa.uk.com/about/our-members/>.

I always find being away from school a little tough, such is my passion for all things Bute, but I have to tell you that this conference was inspiring and affirming! We heard from a number of keynote speakers, amongst them some of our esteemed local senior school heads, but also from Mary Ann Sieghart author of 'The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do About It.' We went on to discuss the studies carried out in this area, and what we as leaders of girls' schools can do to empower our girls so that they can stand shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts with confidence and have the courage to be who they want to be.

GSA's own research suggests that girls attending single-sex girls' schools are generally more confident and have a greater mental toughness, or emotional resilience than girls in coeducational schools, and it is this mental resilience that 'correlates with attainment, wellbeing, aspiration and the ability to deal with change'.

Never have I been more certain of our work here at Bute and the way in which we are developing that confidence, which I hope will enable our girls to be courageous in their endeavours now and in years to come. Upon my return to school, I asked the teachers for examples of how your daughters are demonstrating their confidence and courage.

A poignant instance unfolded in Year 1, as reported by Miss Krenzer and Mrs Maguire, where a once tearful swimmer underwent a remarkable transformation. Just weeks ago, she would shed tears during swimming lessons, and yet, this week, she returned triumphant, proudly declaring, 'I can touch the floor with my tip toes now!' Her newfound confidence spoke volumes, the tears replaced by a glow of achievement.

Miss Krenzer, witnessed even more courage and adventurous spirit by the Year 1 girls during a science lesson in the Wilderness Garden, as they fearlessly handled slugs, worms, spiders, and woodlice without batting an eyelid.

In Year 2, a girl seamlessly caught up on her Nativity T-shirt design with unwavering determination, despite missing a previous lesson where it had been introduced by Mr Vessey. Her ability to block in shapes with a kaleidoscope of colours showcased not just artistic prowess but a confidence in her creative choices.

Mrs Yap brought to light the power of courageous conversations. Some girls in Year 5 navigated friendship issues with a bravery that comes from confronting challenges head-on. Their experiences highlighted that, when approached thoughtfully, such conversations can be transformative in resolving conflicts.

Mr Foster and Mrs Ball told me of the pupil who channelled her inner 'prime minister voice' to overcome her shyness when presenting to her class during Mirrors and Windows. She had the courage to step out of her comfort zone and present brilliantly to her class!

Mrs Kateley, leading The Greenpower Goblins, explained that they are enthusiastically learning new skills to build a race car which they will eventually compete in against other schools at the end of the year. They will need confidence in their work and the courage to try and win.

When I asked Mrs Whiteley, Head of Music, if she had any stories to regale, I was told ALL the girls are brave, all of the time, and the girls who will perform readings and solos in front of a huge audience in the Christmas Celebration in a few weeks will also have to draw on their confidence and courage. Me too!

As we approach the Lower School Nativity performance, the anticipation of seeing numerous brave young girls, some taking their inaugural steps onto the stage, adds a poignant layer to our narrative. Each performance will be a testament to the resilience, confidence, and courage instilled in our girls.

I see examples myself every day, and no more so than in our Year 6 cohort who are in the thick of their 11+ exams which they are taking in their stride! We are very proud of them.

In every corner of our school, from the smallest achievements to the grandest endeavours, the unmistakable growth in confidence and courage is a testament to the nurturing environment that defines our school. It is a journey of empowerment that not only shapes the present but lays the foundation for a future where our girls face life's obstacles with unwavering courage and the confidence to conquer them.

Have a wonderful weekend

Sian