

Torquay Girls' Grammar School



14 – 21

SDP

How can we best prepare our girls for the future?

Our centenary year led us to reflect on the past 100 years of education at Torquay Girls' Grammar school and to ponder the question; 'How can we best prepare our girls for the future?'

Our archive is awash with pictures from the first half of the last century. The sepia images portray girls in traditional poses; formal class portraits; hockey team snapshots and prefect line-ups. The overriding impression is one of restraint, compliance and uniformity. These girls belonged to a very different world, a world utterly incomprehensible to our current cohort. The serious and contained young ladies staring out of these pictures compare markedly with the Y13 girls who collected their A level results recently. The modern-day equivalents were all emotion and hot pants. There were shrieks and tears as their exam results provided them with their passport to University. The joy of success was mixed with nervous anticipation of the next step on the hopeful road to a glittering future.

Wardrobe contents aside, the freedom to choose and shape their careers is the striking difference between the cohorts. Few of their early predecessors were encouraged much beyond secretarial or caring horizons, even fewer went to University. The change in the attitude to women in the workplace, still a work in progress, has been substantial and welcome.

However, this puts our teenage girls under far greater pressure than past generations. The expectation of a successful career has added to the increasing pressure they feel from a world of rampant consumerism and highly sexualized pop/cyber culture. It's a world where they must continually strive for physical perfection and stunning success on all fronts. There is an increasing need for us to care for the girls unable to meet these insistent demands.

We have witnessed a marked rise in cases of depression, stress and anxiety over the past few years and this has been internet-fuelled. Our teenage girls are the first generation to have lived their lives fully in a digital age. They have had no escape from the celebrity cyber-culture constantly reminding them of the seemingly unobtainable expectations of society. They have had no relief from the relentless digital stream of peer judgement.

They no longer find shelter from the storm of teenage life in traditional anchors like place or faith. The rise of the BRIC nations has shifted the old world order and they are just as likely to compete with girls in Delhi as they are with girls in Devon. Many lack the direction and stability that faith can provide. Thanks to their parents, even the weather appears to be changing.

From an early age, our girls find themselves in a fast paced, ever-changing and unforgiving jungle which can so easily chew them up and spit them out. The imminent arrival of our new Year 7, bright eyed and bushy tailed, strengthens our resolve to avoid this.

Our immediate task is to prepare our girls for the reality of the world they live in and the foundation of our strategy is to develop within them our 8 learning skills. These are the skills we believe will enable them to be successful whatever life they choose to lead. Skills such as concentration, resilience and the ability to manage their emotions.

Attention spans have been slashed so, unlike their predecessors, our girls struggle to cope without incessant stimulation. We try to teach them how to slow down, to **concentrate** and sustain their attention in an attempt to counteract the flitting superficiality of modern media. This can be as simple as getting them to read silently in registration for twenty minutes or to sit still in their seats. Our girls alternate between phases of sloth-like inertia and hyperactivity which is reflected in their posture. Few would earn a 'department band' described by some returning old girls as a sort of sash awarded to girls who were seen to consistently stand up straight, without slouching, over a two year period!

They also need to learn how to cope with failure, as they bruise easily. Our aim is to get them to **be resilient**, to regard setbacks as temporary and part of the learning process. It is crucial they avoid responding virally, where one small setback in one small area of their lives, such as a poor grade for an essay, infects them globally. There is a need for them to develop grit, to cope with things that actively make them want to give up.

They must learn to **manage their emotions** and the inevitable stress they will encounter because uncontrolled these will divert, hinder and betray their development. Consequently we try to teach them coping strategies such as; better **organisation and planning**; the ability to ignore the things they cannot control, the use of relaxation techniques and the benefits of regular laughter.

In the past, girls could earn a detention for actions as innocuous as buying an ice cream whilst in school uniform or for taking their hat off on the bus! It is unlikely that our current girls or indeed their parents would accept these sorts of rules and we certainly would not want to enforce them (we would be overwhelmed!) However, because we expect them to **consider others** they must exhibit good behaviour and manners. This is done as collaboratively as possible. If, for example, they can put forward a polite, timely, cogent and believable excuse for why they have not done their homework and this is accompanied by a plan for its resolution, then we can do business. I am sure this is not a freedom afforded their predecessors. The skill, for them, is to recognise the behaviours and sanctions not up for debate and that sometimes questioning is inappropriate. In terms of learning however, it most certainly is not. We do not want to produce regurgitating robots so we encourage them to **question** how things are and to imagine how things could be. Taking risks, being creative and innovative are all encouraged. We need to create an environment where it is safe to fail otherwise they will be risk adverse forever.

We want our girls to be the leaders of tomorrow whether that's leading a multi-national company, managing a Health-Care trust or directing the village drama production. Providing leadership opportunities is a start but it's not enough. They need to study and practise the art of leadership. We have recently developed a bespoke leadership course for our older girls. They have listened to advice from successful business women, they have practised networking with high powered executives, they have debated leadership styles at breakfast meetings and a particular hardy bunch survived the 'bottom field assault course' at the Royal Marines training centre at Lympstone. They have the skills, they have the ability but unlike boys, they often get hung up on the things they cannot do rather than the things that they can. We therefore encourage them to heed the advice of Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, by 'leaning in' a bit more and put themselves forward **to lead**.

The 8 skills are underpinned by the nurturing of a strong work ethic. We are pains to point out that that the world owes them nothing, that it is routinely unfair and that working hard rather than hoping for a lottery win is the best way to improve their life chances.

We hope they will use the 8 skills to fulfil the aims of our school; to achieve academic excellence; to develop rounded, balanced individuals who go on to make a positive contribution to their community. Academic excellence is a by-product of skill development and contrary to popular belief, is not the sole objective of a school like ours.

There is no doubt that the current experience at Torquay Girls' is a vast improvement on the past, but proper care and attention must be taken to prepare our girls for a hostile world. We hope that if they leave with the right skills, they will have the chance to thrive and we will have done our job.

Dr Nick Smith
Headteacher
Torquay Girls' Grammar School
August 2014.

| 14-21 AIMS | 16/17 Actions Lead staff in bold |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Academic Achievement Girls leave having made, at least, the expected academic progress.</p> <p>They continue to be eager to learn and are equipped with the learning skills to do this effectively.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards the <i>2017 exam targets</i> where subjects aim to achieve an ALPs grade 4 (Very good) or above at GCSE and A level representing progress in line with the top 40% of similar schools. NS • Implementation of our new monitoring and intervention strategy for <i>PP students</i> JGY • <u>Increased tracking and intervention at KS5 SEC/SB/EB</u> • <u>Application and rigorous monitoring of new whole school Assessment Policy</u> JGY/DH/HODs • The continuation of the <i>whole school literacy</i> programme HBT • Application of our Teaching and Learning framework through; <u>a focus on developing a growth mindset in students and staff</u>; the development of <i>digital teaching</i>; a coordinated teaching <i>INSET programme</i>; active involvement in <i>SWAT</i>. JGY • Enhance the provision of <i>assessment data</i> using SIMS/ALPS/SISRA and KAW. Target setting and aspiration to focus on 'striving to be your best.' DH/JGY • Digital tracking of SEN progress and measured response to national changes ZB |
| <p>2. Personal Development Girls develop into rounded, balanced individuals.</p> <p>The girls are well-adjusted and comfortable with who they are. They have developed good sense, good judgement and the mental toughness to be successful. Their learning skills are well developed.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The further development of our 'Well Beings' programme;</u> -the continuation of a 9 week <i>mindfulness course</i> in Y9. CJC -<u>Delivery of a coordinated programme of PPP learning skills in Y8 & 9</u> CJC -<u>Management of KS4 study programme</u> SEC • The embedding of the <i>Enrichment Award</i> in KS3 which encourages the girls to develop holistically, encouraging growth in areas of health, participation, citizenship, helping others & leadership CJC/SF • Further improvements in our <i>pastoral support system</i> by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Definition of distinct <i>Lower and Upper school</i> entities CJC/SEC -Further training of pastoral team on stress/CP/<i>mental health issues</i> JGY -Consistency in <i>tutoring</i> procedures HOYs - Implementation of a coordinated <i>PHSE & Careers</i> programme SEC/CJC/GAN & HOYs -Utilisation of <i>SIMS information</i> for progress, praise and behaviour JGY/DH • Further develop the <i>student leadership framework</i>. Integrating opportunities for leadership with the 'Dare to Lead' course NS,CJC,JGY • Continue large range of <i>trips</i> and activities as well as the promotion of national and international collaboration. NS/CJC/GAN |
| <p>3. Caring Attitudes Girls make a positive contribution to the community.</p> <p>The girls take every opportunity to improve their world through their careers, relationships and interactions at a local, national or global level.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of our <i>citizenship</i> programme, AQAbacc enrichment & charitable activities SLT • Coordination of all elements of <i>safeguarding</i> across the school EC • The positive promotion of <i>STEM</i> opportunities and establishment of TGGs as a regional centre for women in stem KB/NS • Develop a cohesive integrated <i>careers programme</i> by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The development of careers awareness activities such as careers conferences, lectures & lunches, careers dating, area specific programmes and the use of our independent careers advisor GAN |
| <p>Underpinning themes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff; Development of <i>staff leadership</i> activities JGY Enhancement of <i>staff voice opportunities</i> JGY • Continue to improve the <i>school environment</i> and its capacity NS/SW/MC • Remain <i>financially solvent</i> through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prudent management of staff and resources SW/NS/NT -Increasing Sixth Form numbers and ensuring rest of the school is full SEC/NS/LR - Development to grow the school fund, develop our brand and encourage alumni support CHB • Enhance our <i>communication/consultation</i> with parents/pupils/staff through use of digital media such as SIMS, the learning gateway & on-line surveys JGY/NS • Develop the use of <i>digital technologies</i> by staff and students and support through staff training and investment in infra-structure JGY/GAN/KP • <u>Support students beyond our gates</u> through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Being a major contributor to <i>SWAT activities</i> that support struggling schools JGY -Developing our interaction with primary schools through the <i>PLO role</i>. NS/LC |

Sustaining Excellence at TGGGS 14-21

The 14-21 development plan was produced after an in-depth review of the past 7 years. The programme of self-evaluation culminated in an extensive on-line stakeholder review. During a follow-up development day at Dartington, teacher, support staff, governor and parent representatives analysed the findings and from this the 14-21 development plan was born. It re-affirms the aims of our school and outlines the key actions we believe will develop our excellent practice further.

For TGGGS to sustain excellence, more than anything else we need to focus on the things that made us outstanding in the first place: maintaining the right ethos and culture; ensuring that teaching is of a consistently high standard; and ensuring that behaviour is well managed and the school calm and orderly. We will maintain a sharp focus on rigour and consistency in the basics, while innovating and developing the provision further to bring new gains in students' learning and achievement. We will not overstretch ourselves and will be careful not to jump on bandwagons. Leaders will have a thorough understanding of which developments are right for us and which are not. We will scrutinise new ideas and developments and ask hard questions about what value they will have for our students' learning and achievement. Crucially, we will know the capacity the school has to support innovation and development (and actively work to strengthen it). We will not be afraid to take risks, but the risks that we do take will be careful, calculated and considered.

Anything that we do will be carefully planned and meticulously implemented. We can deliver this if we continue to develop;

- A leadership culture true to the aims of our school
- A strong team culture where new staff are quickly aware of the 'Torquay Girls' way' and aims. There is a collective drive for improvement. Weaker areas are just seen as needing more support. There is constant reinforcement and rewording of key messages and priorities. We always ask; Why are we doing this? What will it achieve?
- Teaching and learning as our most important activity;
Lessons continue to be at least good. Monitoring of lessons is extensive. Lesson observation of colleagues by colleagues is routine. There is structured professional development at all levels.
- Internal leaders
Through succession planning, internal appointments, identification of leadership skills, and training opportunities.
- The appropriate curriculum
By ensuring a quality core delivery and by only changing if we are sure it will make a difference.
- The systems of tracking and intervention ensure there is 'No deviation without intervention'.