

PIN OAK



ALUMNI SPEECHES

BIG ISSUE
Children and Choice

YEAR 7

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REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST DAY OF YEAR 7



As a new year begins at Oxley College, we are feeling self-reflective and a bit sentimental here at Pin Oak HQ. Matilda Lambie was our Year 7 correspondent on the ground, asking new and seasoned students what they remember from their first day of Year 7.

What do you remember from your first day of Year 7?

"Walking into Mentor group on my first day and feeling instantly supported and a part of the group that was already there. We played the usual icebreaker games, and despite their initial awkwardness, it ended up leaving me feeling like I already knew some people in the school which was good as I only knew a handful of people at Oxley when I started."

Jill O'Connell, Year 12

What did you find difficult on the first day?

"The thing that I think was the most difficult was probably finding the right classroom. It was pretty confusing, especially if the room got changed last minute."

Louisa Hogan Baldo, Year 7

"I feel like everything went fine - no advice needed except be yourself!"

Charlie Johns, Year 10

What are you most looking forward to this year/during your time at Oxley?

"I look forward to all the clubs and opportunities that'll be offered/given."

Zara Khan, Year 7

If you could go back to the first day of Year 7, what would be a piece of advice that you would give to yourself?

"Use your diary! It has the following great information: bell times, a map and school rules."

Daisy MacDonald, Year 10

"Surround yourself with loyal people and good friends."

Rusty Waters, Year 10

"You don't have to be an exact replica of everyone else to fit in. Part of being in a group is that there are many personalities and differences throughout the people, and that is what makes conversations interesting and unique."

Mollie Nash, Year 8



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HEAD OF COLLEGE'S REPORT



The Pin Oak that grows magnificently in the heart of Oxley College is a strong symbol of how our young people put their roots deep in the soil and branch out in a unique way, taking their own shape and becoming stronger and more distinct as they grow.

It seems fitting that this Pin Oak magazine is also named after our important symbol. Just like our students, we celebrate the diversity of thought and opinion which you will see within each edition of the Pin Oak. It is different to the transactional nature of many school newsletters and gives voice to our students and staff to not only celebrate what has happened in the school over the last weeks, but it is an exciting interchange of reports, news and opinions from all parts of the school. The most important difference is that Pin Oak is run by a team of students with new members always welcome and is written for students and parents to enjoy.

Just as our Pin Oak brings something special to Oxley so do our students - they bring the soul to the campus. It has been wonderful to see and hear the joy ringing out amongst the students as they make connections, welcome new friends, and commence learning. It has been so good to have such great numbers of students and staff at school.

Covid-19 cases are certainly present in our community, and it is quite challenging to predict how we may be affected. At this stage we are progressing as normally as possible, but we are reviewing some of our student activities to decide if we can actually run them in a Covid-19 safe manner and mitigate the risks involved. As always, our staff are working with students and families to support students and staff members as required.

Success is a journey not a destination!

At our first Senior School assembly on Friday, we invited two of our 2021 Year 12 students to share their insights and inspire our students in their academic endeavours. The two speeches were contrasting with Ava Lambie speaking about the importance of 'failing mindfully' and always asking the question - am I happy with this result/feedback/product and does this reflect my hard work? Jordan Butcher spoke about his philosophy of hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard and his journey from a student satisfied with low to mid grades with little aspirations, to someone who allowed themselves to take the chance to strive for success.

Both Ava and Jordan held the audience spellbound and while success for each of them looked slightly different there were common threads of a positive mindset and hard work in each story and feeling proud of reaching their goals. I would encourage parents to discuss these messages with their children and how they might look at their journey by being the best they can be. The speeches can be found on pages 8 & 9 of Pin Oak.

Wide Reading

One of the things which has the greatest impact on learning and success is encouraging our students to read widely.

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We think that reading is one of the great joys and vital skills for life in the twenty first century. In a world awash with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the Snapchat, all of which require a concentration span of about ten seconds each, the skill of actually sitting down and reading the pages of a book is more important than ever. Reading enlarges us, it opens our minds and lets us into the world of the writer and simultaneously exercises our own imagination far more than any other medium. It helps us understand the world and each other. This is true for both fiction and non-fiction. It is

a great pleasure that we can take through life.

Over the summer, we have re-furnished our library to create and enable an environment which will empower and encourage wide reading. The wide reading programme at Oxley is an integral part of Cornerstone and Junior School library periods, to encourage our students to open their minds to big ideas! Encouraging your child to hop off devices and away from the television each evening to spend 30 minutes reading before bed can only enhance their minds.

By Jenny Ethell, Head of College

HEAD OF ACADEMIC AND INOVATION



It is so good to be back on the wonderful grounds of Oxley, feeling daily the excitement of students and teachers as we have the opportunity to 'start fresh' in 2022. We begin with a deep sense of gratitude for all things that have brought us safely to this new school year.

Seeking Wisdom and Finding Joy

In my K – 12 role, it is always a joy to see our very very youngest Kindergarten students arrive in these early weeks. Their giggles, stories and smiling faces are a daily inspiration that inspire all of us in education to keep going, to keep fighting the good fight and to keep current with all the things that we can provide to make them fit and ready for their futures. The 2022 Kindergarten will begin their life beyond our school gates in 2035!

How will things change? What will school and work look like? Will there still be an HSC? Few of us will know the answer to these questions, but one thing we do know is that we continue to be very proud of our students, teachers, parents and community. A school like Oxley, full of much critical thinking, creativity and connection is one that will nurture all, children and adults alike, so let's seize the moment and get ready for the exciting ride ahead.

Challenging Learning

Oxley's pioneering spirit is deep in our soil. So too is our commitment to drive our learning and teaching in partnership with research, always striving to embody best and next practice. Thus it is pertinent that this year we will be working with global educator, James Nottingham and his Challenging Learning team to further hone our classroom pedagogy and enhance our common language of learning from Kindergarten to Year 12.

A particular focus will be on the sweet spot between comfort zone and challenge. Recent times have shown that goal posts shift, plans change and we never know what is around the corner. Students (and indeed adults) who succeed show courage, work hard and collaborate when the going gets tough. It doesn't feel nice to make mistakes, to encounter hard things, to be pushed to solve a wicked problem, but research says that students who embrace the challenge, push outside their comfort zone are the ones that grow and achieve the most. You will hear more about Oxley's use of the Learning Pit throughout the year, however in the meantime, if you are interested in the work, please explore: <https://www.challenginglearning.com/learning-pit/>

A Rich, Diverse and Distinctive Curriculum

It has been a delight to be involved in Parent Information Sessions this week and to listen to teachers and leaders speak about all that we do at Oxley. A particular celebration is the way that we continue to be able to blend a broad range of NESA courses with our distinctives, those that we provide to future-proof our learners. In 2021, our Year 12 students sat the HSC in 30 different courses, our largest offering ever. In 2022 we celebrate the return to our dream of having a K -12 Language programme, with the opportunity for Year 7 students to learn French, Latin or Japanese. Our flagship Cornerstone programme is already the regular place of circle time, inquiry, discussion and debate. I would encourage parents, of whatever age child to ask the question each night – what did you learn today? If the answer is nothing, please let someone know. Whatever any other answer, try and keep the conversation going, ask lots of questions that begin with how, why and what and see what happens! I hope you are looking forward as much as we are to the Oxley journey in 2022.

By Kate Cunich, Head of Academic and Innovation



HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL



It has been wonderful to see the College come to life in the past two weeks, with the return of students to campus and the commencement of new students in the Senior School. We began the year with our Welcome Day for new students and 'Meet the Mentor' Zoom meetings on the Friday prior to the start of term. This is the second year we have run these meetings and have found them to be an effective way both for existing students to reconnect and for students and families new to Oxley to build connections with the school. We have received positive feedback from our Year 11 students who participated in workshops with 'Burn Bright' (<https://burnbright.org.au/>) on that day. Burn Bright delivered a leadership and wellbeing workshop that encouraged and challenged students to reflect on their values, strengths and relationships as they step up into their senior years. Combining our Welcome Day and 'Meet the Mentor' sessions enabled us to hit the ground running on Monday of Week 1, by getting students into class and into routines quickly.

'Tweens, Teens and Screens': Parent Presentation – 7pm, Tuesday 15 February (ZOOM)

Dr Justin Coulson, parenting specialist, bestselling author and co-host of Channel 9's 'Parental Guidance' will be presenting on this important topic next week. Please join us online via the link that will be sent to parents via email on Tuesday morning.

COVID-19 Surveillance Testing

I would like to thank all families for engaging with the RAT surveillance testing over the past two weeks. I appreciate that it can be a challenge persuade your teenage child of the wisdom of sticking a cotton bud up their nose twice a week (!), but it is an important part of our collective armoury to limit the spread of the disease. We had a total of 1596 negative student tests recorded in the first two weeks of the term. In accordance with the advice we are receiving from NSW Health and the Association of Independent Schools (AISNSW) we are keeping classroom doors and windows open all day and using fans to promote ventilation as much as possible.

Saturday Sport – Spectators

This weekend we have our first ISA sports fixtures of the term. Parents and spectators are permitted to attend Saturday sports matches at Oxley, however we request that parents wear a mask at all times on campus and maintain physical distancing. With many more people on site this Saturday than has been the case for cricket matches over the summer, observing these Covid-safe protocols are important for the whole community.

Year 12 2022 Leadership Theme: Unity

Our Head Boy (Hal Canute) and Head Girl (Peggy Holmwood) launched their theme of 'Unity' at our first assembly of the year and it wonderful to do so on Elvo Lawn, in the heart of the school. Hal and Peggy also passed on some valuable advice to students in the Senior School – I have included extracts from their speeches here, as I believe their messages apply to all of us.

I would like to suggest a few ways you can start the year off on a positive note. I believe the key to working towards a positive mindset is to not sweat the small stuff. The phrase, of course is so much easier said than done. However, there are many strategies so please don't be put off. Monitoring your self-talk is a really important step in becoming more in touch with yourself and the people around you. When you hear the words "I can't do this" replace it with something like "I'm good enough" or "If I want to, I can". It is crucial for your mental health and overall wellbeing to not let your negative thoughts have power over you, take back your agency and remember that you deserve better than a nagging little voice at the back of your head. I think this year, with all its uncertainties, we

need to learn to be patient with ourselves and one another. Have empathy and take a deep breath and let go of yesterday's regrets and tomorrows worries and simply focus of the here and now.

Touching on our theme of unity this year, I'd just like to say that the word is in no way synonymous with conformity. The thriving and beating heart of a harmonious society is founded upon sharing and embracing our differences. What sets us apart whether it be political views, family backgrounds, individual identity – makes for a vibrant and lively society. So please, to the new Year 7 seven cohort, I hope you embrace and celebrate the beauty of difference and aim to make each other seen and comfortable throughout your first year here. And for all new students, wherever you have come from, please know that you are now a warmly welcomed member of Oxley. Onto Years 8 and 9, having a sense of togetherness will most definitely be important in forming strong bonds with friends and cooperating with and respecting the hard work put in by all your teachers. To Years 10 and 11, I think unity finds itself in your ascent to senior years, make sure to find pace and balance. And to Year 12, our last three terms of high school pose an exciting opportunity to find coherence with each other and clarity within ourselves

- Peggy Holmwood, Head Girl

As humans, what do we crave? Love and affection? Sure. Food for our mind and our body? Sure. But a deep craving, that has existed from the beginning of our time is to be in control of our lives. To be in control of our own decisions, and how our journeys take their course. And that, precisely, is why our world is in... well... turmoil. We can't control the fact that a pandemic will wreak havoc on the globe. We can't control the constant spreading of misinformation. We can't control the weather. So why not take control of what we can control - the common denominator in all of these situations - the thing that makes every day worth living: ourselves. Sure, to 'take control of yourself' is a very strange, elaborate idea. How do I do it? Where do I start? How do I know I'm doing it? Is there an end point? But these questions are not worth asking. For I am not asking you to actually take control of yourself. That is a meaningless request. What I ask you to do though is something so much more valuable. Be yourself. Be YOURself. Not the person sitting next to you; not the person sitting next to them; BE YOU. That's all that you can control and that's all that really matters. I am certain that if we miraculously had some way of asking Australia's current knights in shining armour: Dylan Alcott and Ash Barty, for a small sliver of advice, those would be their exact words. Be yourself.

Year 12's theme of Unity is an amazingly complex idea. It requires so many different objectives to be achieved. And often, it is the overall picture that we look at. Work together. Inspire one another. Search for harmony. And the neglect often occurs in the smaller parts. The details. The things that we really can control. Ourselves. We need to find pride in who we are, no matter if it is our first day of our first year here, or our first day of our last year here. Be proud of you. And be the best version of yourself. Aim high. Why not? Why not aim higher than that. It's your life. Don't you want it to be the best it can be. So, as the holidays end, and for many of us, reality hits, think about the controllable. The virus might continue for who knows how long. Russia might invade Ukraine. The rain might never stop. We don't know. But what we do know is how to be ourselves. How to be the best version of ourselves - you know how to be you. And please, go and enjoy the last of this beautiful summer air.

- Hal Canute, Head Boy

By Mark Case, Head of Senior School



Weekly Awards

Learning Journey

K: Charlie Motycka
Yr 1: Amaya Sorensen
Yr 2: Eliza Galwey
Yr 3B: Drake Ford
Yr 3R: Maggie Mooney
Yr 4A: Zara Finlayson
Yr 4W: Bianca Bode
Yr 5M: Madison Chamley
Yr 5N: Maeve Ryan
Yr 6H: Harry Keats
Yr 6S: Daphne Hutchison

Oxley Values

K: Christo Galwey
Yr 1: Albie Fisher
Yr 2: James Barnett
Yr 3B: Heidi Sinclair-Hill
Yr 3R: James Gregory
Yr 4A: Chase Holmes
Yr 4W: Lucas Hill
Yr 5M: Augustus Moore
Yr 5N: Ivy Bacon
Yr 6H: Anna Clark
Yr 6S: Digby Bryant

Learning Journey

K: Grace Barnett
Yr 1: Emil de Haas
Yr 2: Jordan Pope
Yr 3B: Xavier Halstead
Yr 3R: Angus Kean
Yr 4A: Cassius Black
Yr 4W: Luca Sicari
Yr 5C: William Carioti
Yr 5N: Pixie Hanson
Yr 6H: Fraser Wisken
Yr 6S: Brayden Anstee

Oxley Values

K: Saskia Aston
Yr 1: Violet Burrows
Yr 2: Harry Officer
Yr 3B: Clara Hardwick-Jones
Yr 3R: Abigail Cullen
Yr 4A: Harper Anstee
Yr 4W: Beatrix Pearce
Yr 5C: Lexi Mendes da Costa
Yr 5N: Bailey Fox
Yr 6H: Scarlett Curr
Yr 6S: Ben Gregory, Marshall Devlin

SRP Reps Semester 1

1S: Hugo Tait, Evan Callan
2B: Finn Kean, Amelia Gaunt
3R: Zoe Choo, Felix Chamley
3B: Clara Hardwick-Jones, Frankie Russell
4A: Tatenda Jamba, Charlie Halloran
4W: Beatrix Pearce, Ollie Coram
5M: Augustus Moore, Sienna Patruno
5N: Ivy Bacon, Andy Clothier
6H: Anna Clark, Orson Francis
6S: Ben Gregory, Piper O'Sullivan



JUNIOR SCHOOL NEWS

Happy Children Learn Better

We have had a wonderful start to our school year and the playground and classrooms are a buzz with laughter and chatter!

For many years, gaining knowledge was the reason children were sent to school.

In today's fast world and overwhelming information, we see many children in school that have great knowledge but not the ability to succeed in their schooling.

Research completed in Britain by psychologist, Carmel Rodgers presented the effect of emphasising children's emotional wellbeing on their academic achievements. According to her, creating a welcoming environment at school improves learning and reduces misbehaviour.

The research found that the following factors increased children's academic achievements:

1. Emphasised relationship and the wellbeing of staff and children
2. Emphasised staff collaboration
3. Encouragement of children to express their views

Carmel Rodgers said:

As every teacher knows, in order to learn successfully, children must feel happy and secure within the school environment.

Schools make a difference and can significantly reduce the impact of the risk factors and increase children's capacity to develop into emotionally competent adults.

I decided to put this to the test and ask our students how they went on their first week back – the results are below. We had a fantastic week, happy students, teachers and lots of engagement in learning and wonderful connections being made here in the Oxley Junior School!

Welcome to 2022 to both our existing and new families.

Kindergarten: We love big school. It has been fun eating and playing with our buddies. We like all the things we have to play with in the classroom.

Year 1: "I was happy to see all my friends and play tip. I made a cake in the mud kitchens and Xander bought them before work. Money is the green and yellow leaves near the sandpit. In Art I made a beautiful crab painting which got put up in my classroom. I feel proud and happy after my first week" – Emil de Haas.

Year 2: "I think this is a great class to learn hard things and try new things." Em Hunt

"I found out I like the slide." James Barnett

Year 3: "I feel excited, happy and nervous. I think I will enjoy this year and I know I'll make friends." Hannah Cochran

"I am excited that I am in Year 3. I know I am going to be good to others." Felix Chamley

Year 4: "PE was great. I have become faster at running this year." Chase Holmes

"I loved all the activities on Monday learning about other people in my new class." Luca Sicari.

Year 5: "I enjoyed becoming friends with the new students and sitting with them at lunch." Flor Pereira Merlini

Year 5: "My first week of Year 5 was great and I look forward to the rest of the year." Markus Simonsen

Year 6: "Our car stopped, I opened the car door and leapt out, hauling my heavy bag onto my back before saying goodbye to my mum. Then I ran off to hug my friends, delighted to see them again after the lengthy school holidays." Grace Kean

Year 6: "Coming back to school has been so much fun because I have been able to see all of my friends. We have had a great time playing tip, basketball and using the new table tennis table." William Kennedy

By Jane Campion, Head of Junior School

Editor's Note: Please look out for an interview in the next Pin Oak edition with Jane Campion and a video message to parents.



JUNIOR GALLERY



Oxley Alumni Speeches

Ava Lambie

Good morning students, staff, Mrs Ethell and the Executive. I must admit, it feels most unusual to be standing here in mufti on the other side of the lectern when I spent so many Friday mornings myself sitting in assembly in the third or fourth row. I hope what I have to say today may provide some of you with some motivation or inspiration to take forward into 2022.

But first, a story. My year eight French yearly exam. It was my last exam, and the term was almost finished, and – sorry to any French teachers out there – French was not, by any measure, my favourite subject. So, I shouldn't have been surprised when I walked into that exam room knowing I was utterly underprepared. But I was. I had somehow convinced myself that some late-night procrastination watching *Ratatouille* and Buzzfeed-quizzing which French pastry I was amassed to proper study.

For the first time in my life, I opened the exam paper, and drew an absolute blank. It was like I was looking at a foreign language... well, I was...but this feeling was something I found really difficult to describe. It was like my stomach was flipping and my whole life, my whole future, depended on my performance in this exam. No amount of bonjour, croissant or merci was getting me through that paper.

Fast forward a bit over four years, and while I have no recollection of my mark in that exam, I can still remember that feeling as if it were yesterday. That was, for me, the feeling of failure. I remember that churning sense of disappointment in myself far more vividly than any excitement that comes after a great mark, or win at a sports game, or co-curricular award. And to this day my strongest memories throughout school are not of success. They are of failures, both big and small. The French test. The time I forgot my PE uniform. Not doing my homework. Calling a teacher 'Dad' (yes, it happens to all of us).

But you know what? For each of those failures, I grew far more than for each proportionate success. What good does getting full marks on an exam do you? It doesn't tell you how you can improve further. It doesn't motivate you to do one better next time, and it can cause you to place excess pressure on yourself and – in turn – fail. Eventually, I came to a point where the only question I asked myself after receiving a mark back was... am I happy with this? Does this reflect my hard work? If the answer was yes, then great! But if the answer was no, then it only compelled me to work harder.

I read somewhere that Bill Gates once said, "I failed in some subjects in exam, but my friend passed in all. Now he is an engineer in Microsoft and I am the owner of Microsoft". I think this perfectly encapsulates my first message to you all today – embrace failure – but I want to suggest a little tweak to this all-too-common mantra. Embrace failure but embrace failure mindfully. I know it is easy to be discouraged by a negative outcome – I have been there myself – but by being aware of the circumstances that brought about this failure, and taking the steps to improve next time, we are indeed setting ourselves up for the best possible chance at success. We thrive as humans not when we have done it all, but when we still have more to do. We can see this in Olympic medallists: silver medallists have a far greater focus on follow-up competition than gold medallists. We can ever see it in the gambling industry, and Scratch-It tickets:

these have a high rate of 'near wins' and so compel people to return time after time in search of a victory.

But how do we fail mindfully? It's about reframing failure, and what it means within our society. Interestingly enough, the word 'success' is derived from a Latin word meaning 'to come from underneath'. Theoretically, then, we should not be able to succeed without failure. Without 'coming from underneath'. I challenge you to use your next failures as benchmarks, and throughout the year focus on how you can best improve and score that extra mark. Run that little bit faster. We've heard of Steve Jobs being fired from Apple, and Albert Einstein failing school. The key difference here is their failures motivated their future successes. Who is to say the next Jobs or Einstein isn't sitting amongst us all here today? By capitalising on our vulnerabilities, we can implement practical measures to eventually succeed.

Back to year eight me. Many of you will know just how important my schoolwork was to me, and so to realise I had failed to live up to my own standards of achievement in that French test was one of the most important lessons I learned throughout school. It taught me that success is not a 'fluke' or endowed only to those who are 'smart' or 'sporty' or 'talented'. It made me realise that I needed to work hard throughout everything I did, to avoid that feeling of disappointment in myself I'm sure we all recognise. I encourage you to ask yourself that simple question: Am I happy? By doing so, you can fail mindfully and realistically, or succeed with acknowledgement of the hard work you put in. I urge you: don't stop until YOU are proud.

My final advice is to maintain the balance. We all have that thing that makes us smile. For me, it is going for a run, or hanging out with my family. For you, it could be the gym, or a good book, or a Netflix series. It is through these periods of rest we can recharge our batteries and prepare ourselves for what lies ahead. Again, this advice is cliché, but it has survived because of its value. I think the importance of 'time out' is embodied in the procedures undertaken by surgeons before an operation. Right before surgery, the medical team takes a 'time out' to ensure correct patient identity, correct procedure and correct surgical site. This allows the whole team to pause, reconnect, double-check and focus. It was introduced after multiple wrong-side operations or incorrect procedures were performed, and to this day is used almost universally.

We can apply the same principle of taking a step back and refocusing to our own lives. Having those intermissions between periods of intense focus or stress allows us to refocus our perspective and improves our wellbeing. While you'll feel compelled to charge forward it's often a gentle step back that will reveal to you where you and what you truly seek. There are boundless opportunities here at Oxley to pursue those time-out activities: sport, drama, music, service, spoken word, and I implore you to give something a try because I promise you, speaking from experience, you don't know what you've got until it's gone.

I wish everyone all the best for 2022 and beyond, in both an academic and personal sense. Make this your year. Be brave. Fail mindfully. But also know when to take a breath. Thank you.

By Ava Lambie, Year 12 2021

Jordan Butcher

Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard.

This is the philosophy that I carried throughout my HSC journey and showed me how I was able to develop from being a student, where I often heard the words anxious, lazy, and unmotivated, to becoming someone who achieved an ATAR to be proud of.

Hello everyone, my name is Jordan Butcher, as some of you may well know, and in my TED Talk today I would like to share with you my Year 12 journey, in a year full of many challenges. With COVID being the biggest perpetrator, it was safe to say that the cohort of 2021 had its fair share of challenges.

I hope that my journey from a student satisfied with low to mid grades with little aspirations, to someone who allowed themselves to take the chance to strive for success, can be an example for everyone here today.

Throughout my junior years, I never really tried, always shying away from opportunities presented to me, going from period to period, wondering what teacher wouldn't catch me playing cool math games. Looking back, I think I was a poor student, unmotivated and unwilling to change. This was ultimately reflected in my assessment marks and reports.

At the start of Year 11, I decided to change my habits along with my attitudes towards my education. I knew that I was going down the wrong path, and a change was desperately needed. I forced myself to improve, to prove to myself, as well as those around me, that I was able to push myself and academically succeed.

I am nothing special, and everybody has the potential to change their attitudes and beliefs, with this being the fundamental steppingstone to achieving success. I found this very important in my journey and it can apply to everyone; recognising that something is wrong or its not working and taking proactive steps to change it. Year 11 was very important in my HSC journey, as it provided a strong base for me to work from, allowing me to develop important routines and techniques, vital to long term success.

To me, the ATAR was more than just a mark, as it represented my work ethic. This can apply to any goal in life no matter how big or small, as, however cringey, it showed me that I was able to push myself out of my comfort zone and achieve something that I honestly had never dreamt of. This can apply to everyone, as, with a little commitment, we are all able to push ourselves further and exceed our own expectations.

Staying committed to the process was crucial in defining my success, and is another fundamental that everyone can apply to their school life, no matter what goal you are working towards. This can allow you to reach your maximum potential, just as I did.

The saying, you get out of Oxley what you put into it, stands very true to my HSC journey, and should do to everyone here. Try to overcome your fears and be prepared for failure, because without failure you can't succeed and if you do succeed without failing, you're not trying hard enough.

I realised that commitment and responsibility go hand in hand, and I decided to be accountable and commit to a purpose. I wasn't 100% certain where I would end up, but I decided to give it my best shot. I learnt that you could achieve greatness even if you are not naturally gifted, but through hard work.

I never used to take any notice of the school propaganda; however, I honestly believe that this rings true to my Year 12

journey, and every student's schooling journey. If you are able to strive, through a willingness to make change, stretch, by setting an ambitious goal, and finally to stick, through hard work and commitment, then you can all achieve goals you never thought imaginable.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge Oxley College for giving me the opportunity to strive for my best. The support Oxley provides is simply unmatched and should definitely not be taken for granted. The community within this wonderful college allows everyone to flourish and maximise their potential, but ultimately, it's your decision.

And so, on a Thursday morning, when I woke up to an ATAR of 85.20 I was shocked. I thought only academically gifted students got those types of numbers. A couple of years ago, I would have honestly been happy with a 70!

"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard"

This is the point I am trying to get across today. You don't need to be a stellar student to succeed, all that is needed is a hunger to improve. There will be many people in this room much smarter than me... some are even teachers; however, everyone has the opportunity to achieve.

This mindset can be applied to all of us, whether your first day at school was last week, or you are in your final three terms of your schooling career. Use the amazing facilities and help networks available to you – it's all there for the taking – it just depends on how bad you want it.

And so, if you are to take anything out of my speech today, it would be this; enjoy the journey and be committed. If I am able to find success, then there is no doubt that everyone here can do it as well.

Thank you.

By Jordan Butcher, Year 12 2021

OLD OXLEYAN

Kirsten Coupland 2002



Now that you're off in the big wide world, what have you made of yourself since finishing school at Oxley?

I'm a biomedical scientist and I love it! I get to design and implement experiments to answer questions that I want to know the answer to, with the goal of improving the way we manage disease. It exercises both my hyper-organised and creative sides at the same time.

My research focusses on molecular neuroscience. That means that I try to understand at a sub-cellular level what is driving diseases that involve the central nervous system. After completing my undergraduate studies at the University of New South Wales, I accepted a PhD position at Neuroscience Research Australia investigating the genetic contributors to idiopathic neurodegenerative disease. From there I was offered the incredible opportunity to work at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden where I led a project developing an immunotherapy to treat an inherited vascular dementia. While in Sweden I got to hang out with Nobel laureates, attend several lavish PhD defences, and mix with some of the brightest minds from around the world. From there I secured a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Newcastle, Australia where I am currently investigating stroke and developing new therapies to improve stroke outcome. My particular focus is the composition and dynamics of cerebrospinal fluid and how this can influence stroke outcome. We are still trying to understand exactly how cerebrospinal fluid circulates. Isn't that weird?! It is 2021 and we don't know exactly how this bodily fluid circulates. These are the kind of interesting questions that are so exciting to investigate.

What is your biggest achievement since high school?

The move to Sweden was a big leap of faith. I moved to a country where I had no contacts, and I didn't speak the language for a job that was not guaranteed to pan out. I risked a lot professionally and personally by moving to the other side of the world. It was a steep learning curve but one that taught me that I can overcome just about any obstacle.

Were these things that during high school you expected you would end up doing?

I have never really been the type to map out a life plan or have goals that I need to achieve by a certain time. I have always pursued what interests me until it no longer does. I just do what I enjoy and see where it takes me.

How did Oxley prepare you for your future?

Oxley was a safe community where I had the freedom to explore a wide range of academic and extra-curricular interests. It is where I first realised that, while I am not a fast runner, I am a pretty determined long-distance plodder! I also loved the annual Shakespeare week. Taking part in that prepared me for the significant amount of public speaking I now do, and I like to think it has helped me bring a bit of dramatic flair to my talks. I also discovered my love of science thanks to my amazing science teachers.

Is there anybody from the Oxley community who inspired you throughout high school?

Have to thank Mr Copland (a.k.a Pappa Smurf) for getting me excited about Science. He encouraged open enquiry and loved it when we came to him with wacky science questions.

What would you say you miss most about being at school?

I have to admit that I don't really miss being at school. Spending cold winters outside in the playground and having to participate in the athletics carnival (as I said – I am a plodder) was not exactly fun. School was the first place where I was exposed to a wide range of people that reflect my best and worst personality traits. As a result, I grew a lot, but that growth was uncomfortable. I did silly, embarrassing things that my brain likes to remind me about 20 years later. Interestingly, I recently reconnected with two people from my Oxley years and despite the 20-year gap in our contact there was an instant reconnection and a shared history that brought us together. It reminds me how many incredible people I was lucky enough to spend those years with.

What would you say to your fifteen year old self?

Be your fantastic, nerdy self. And don't be afraid to push yourself outside your comfort zone. New skills take time to develop, and you can master anything if you are determined enough.

INSPIRATION



FILM

Encanto

Encanto, meaning charm, is Disney x Pixar's most recent film, it focuses on a society in the mountain ranges of Colombia, with the gifted, 'Madrigal Family' at the centre of the 'Encanto'. The musical opens with Alma (Abuela) Madrigal telling the story of the miracle, a gift given to the family granting them with the magical house, 'Casita Madrigal', that holds the core of their Encanto society, as well as their individual magical gifts. Each member of the Madrigal family has a unique gift, such as strength, healing, sonic hearing, and shapeshifting. Throughout the film, the audience follows protagonist Mirabel, voiced by Brooklyn 99's Stephanie Beatriz, as she encounters threats to the miracle, as the only Madrigal without powers she finds herself under constant pressure as she attempts to be part of the family. Under the surface, Disney is beginning to incorporate more controversial themes into their pieces, Encanto explores the struggles of family dynamics and generational dilemmas, whilst also illustrating the issues surrounding immigration and refugees.

The trauma of immigration and refugeeism played a big part of the Encanto refug. The theme was brought across through the many challenges the characters faced, from how the family was brought about through the harsh disruptions in living situations, to trying to celebrate their Colombian culture. Abuela Madrigal shared the trauma of her familiarity and experience as a refugee, stimulating her increased fear that the Madrigal family could potentially be forced out of their haven. Although Abuela was able to reflect on this harrowing experience, spreading the culture around and creating a more positive upbringing for her children, avoiding the perpetual effects of immigration ("better life").

By Hannah Zupp & Leah Halstead, Year 11



GAME

Star Wars Battlefront

A not so long time ago in a lounge room not so far, far away, my dad was bored... Cue the epic Star Wars music.

As I pass Dad my deluxe PS4 camo controller, a feeling of excitement settles upon me.

We begin.

An onslaught of laser bolts. TIE Fighters dog fighting with X-Wings in the smoke ridden sky. The rumbling of a Star Destroyer exiting hyperspace. We ferociously try to stop the advance of Imperial Stormtroopers as the earth explodes upwards from TIE fighters beginning their bombing runs. We must stop the Imperial forces from breaching Rebel defences!

Star Wars Battlefront is a 1st/ 3rd person shooter game. For those of you who are a fan of Star Wars, prepare to be amazed! Take your place in the epic struggle for the galaxy as either a soldier for the Rebel Alliance, fighting for freedom, or bringing order to the galaxy as a Stormtrooper for the Galactic Empire. The game is set in wide open landscapes, from the ice planet of Hoth to the forest moon of Endor. These battlefields are littered with interesting landmarks, amazing scenery and mind-blowing power ups, including rocket launchers and proximity mines.

Star Wars Battlefront is rated M so, for those younger gamers out there, you may need to check with a parent before playing. For those of you who can play, you have the opportunity to live out your Star Wars fantasies. With over 20 game modes to choose from you can stop formidable AT-AT's from destroying Rebel bases, crush the Rebel Alliance in epic starfighter battles (my sister is a master at flying an X-wing) and/or play as your favourite Star Wars character to aid your chosen side in the galactic civil war!

So grab your X-wing pilot helmet and... Chewie hit the hyperdrive!

By Thomas Clark, Year 9



BOOK

Illuminae series

The Illuminae series or the proper name 'The Illuminae Files' is a great interplanetary story told through a messaging system and is quite lengthy. The story is remarkably dense for the gimmick of messaging, and the main reason for this is the mid chapter breaks which occasionally have a first-person point of view from a security guard aboard the ship they are on, who transcribes events which happen on camera and allow you to see action even when its dominated by the messaging idea. The overarching story is about a home planet in a distant universe being conquered by bioterrorists, the people of the planet flee into two massive carrier ships where a dangerous self conscient artificial intelligence resides. The ship destroys the other carrier ship with the knowledge of a dangerous virus brought by the bioterrorists. The rest of the story is show of the degrading morale of the people aboard this ship and the slow but rampant outbreak also aboard the ship. An undertone of this story is the two lovers who are separated and put through hell aboard this dangerous and toxic ship which trying to kill them constantly. I personally had this placed in my top 3 series for a while before I found greater stories, which really in my opinion shows how much I liked this series, although in this review I only covered the first part of the trilogy, there are two other books which follow different people in the same universe who eventually meet up in the final book, in my opinion the second and third book are not as good as the first but are still relatively good and necessary to carry the plotline.

By Jackson Wolstencroft, Year 8



Children and Choice

In the holidays Oxley students have done all sorts of things. From skydiving, to reading the new Rick Riordan book, learning to cook a roast to starting their first jobs. Me? I accidentally attended a freedom protest.

Now I'm sure we're all aware of the protests happening across the country, revolving around the issue of freedoms being restricted because of the virus. However, as I was walking through Sydney with my family, I was not aware that one of these events was happening mere metres in front of me. My Mum and sister were discussing the merits of visiting the Mr Whippy van and I was occasionally chiming in to try and distract my sister into dropping the matter.

There was loud music echoing through Hyde Park, and I was starting to get excited — after all, what better time to break into spontaneous dance than a music festival in a city where no one knows you? Until I saw the signs. It was a kaleidoscope of bright colours and bold fonts that read:

FREEDOM

TRUTH

YOU'VE DONE THIS

MY BODY MY CHOICE

At this point my grin had faltered and the conversation over soft serve ice-cream had ceased. In front of us there was a crowd of people singing along to a song about freedom and truth. Flags of all colours were being flown through the crowd and police were huddled in groups around the outskirts.

Mum was making some joke about the situation, texting my Dad to let him know that he was totally missing out on a free concert- albeit a political one. We were making our way through the crowd, trying to laugh off the tension in the air and then the singer said "this one's for the children, who we need to fight for because they can't speak up for themselves"

Suddenly I was angry.

Very angry.

Here I was, casually walking through a park on a school holiday, and this man who had never met me or my peers was suddenly claiming he was fighting for us. My classmates were being used as a tool to push an agenda they probably have never participated in. Worse yet, my relatives were being spoken for. My young cousins, my sister, my neighbours: their youth was being used as a guilt trip.

It felt so degrading. For the measure of my existence to be summarised as something to capitalise on purely because I wasn't old enough to make my own opinions clear. There

was this strange sense of irony: these people were deciding upon my emotions and my safety, so they could fight against a government they claimed was doing the exact same. One of the children that they were so concerned about was standing directly behind them and they paid me no mind while they sung about how they must act to save me.

I'm always very wary about writing political articles, because I am well aware that I don't quite have the perspective to make them credible. I vaguely understand the political environment in which I live, and I have very firm moral boundaries which I monitor my actions with. However, I don't think I need those morals and beliefs to be political just yet. Of course, I want to be aware of my future and how my country is being run, but I don't believe I need to form firm opinions on topics that I am not thoroughly educated on.

So, if I'm so cautious about what I say using this platform because I don't want to speak about something I'm not ready to speak about, why does an adult have to do it for me? Why do my wishes and views have to be formed so they can be fought for? Surely, as a minor, I have the right to learn about the world before I try to change it. Surely, as a young person, surrounded by young people, I should have the choice to not take part in the conversation.

If children are not ready to take part, why should we be a point of discussion? After all, if you don't believe we're ready to stand up for ourselves, why do you make the assumption that we want someone to stand up in our place?

The point of this article, this concept, is not to criticise people having beliefs that don't align with mine. I respect the fact that their views were formed due to circumstance, just like mine are. All I ask is that neither side use my generation's youth as a tool to further their cause. I don't care if you're trying to sell dog food or fighting for vaccination rights, minors should be left out of the conversation. It's like sitting down for a discussion with your opposition and an empty chair, claiming you have the chair's best interests at heart and will speak for it. I'm not saying you should break the chair, or not consider it, but acting as though it's active in the conversation, or would want to be is ridiculous.

To summarise, using children is not protecting them. If your argument isn't strong enough without assumption, then you shouldn't make it. And if you're trying to speak for someone, first consider if they want to be spoken for.

Or, as my little sister would say "who cares about that stuff, you should talk more about Mr Whippy."

By Violet FitzSimons, Year 9

SENIOR GALLERY



GOOD & OTHER NEWS



Oxley Bee Keeping Club

Bees at Oxley? Yup, you read that right, Oxley is getting it's very own beehives and beekeeping club. This term the school will be receiving two hives that will be looked after by a student-led club. It's a great opportunity for anyone who's interested to join and learn about the fascinating world of bees and how to keep them yourself. No experience is required as all training will be provided during lunchtime sessions on Thursdays where will cover equipment, procedures, pest and disease management etc. This will be complemented by hands-on activities like inspecting the schools own hives to cement your understanding of concepts. Truly an exceptional chance for anyone interested in sustainability, beekeeping or agriculture in general to get the principles and know-how behind one of our most important industries, as well as picking up a new fantastic hobby. So, if fun and picking up a great new hobby appeals to you, join the beekeeping club – meeting Thursday lunchtimes.

By Liam O'Connell, Year 12

Ash Barty vs Australian Open

World number 1, Ash Barty is loved by all Australians and many of her competitors. As Mel Jones has said: "a little bit of Barty in us all couldn't be a bad thing." While we are used to watching big characters take on big sports competition, it is a breath of fresh air to see Ash, an Indigenous Australian, take the court and be true to herself the whole way through the match.

While she won many of her matches without much of a challenge, she would quickly punch the air, followed by congratulating her competitor. Watching Barty in her interviews immediately after the game was inspiring. She just played a full game of tennis but was able to say amazingly inspirational words about her competitor and who she was about to take on.

When Ash made it through to the final, I was very excited, but in a way nervous that this might be the one that Ash wouldn't get. She won the first set pretty easy, 6-3, and I thought for a moment that she may win this with as much ease as all of her other games. But my mindset was quickly changed when Barty was broken early on and was 5-1 down. After this, something came over Barty and she continued to persevere, and she won the next couple of games, which turned the final set into a tiebreak. Collins only needed to win one game and the match would have gone to a third set – Barty was not letting this happen. The tiebreak was 7-2 and, just like that, Barty had won the AO. Barty let out a huge scream, which is something she must have been holding onto the entire game.

"A little bit of Barty in us all couldn't be a bad thing". This statement rings true, Barty is a truly inspiration sportswomen and Australian and despite not being able to play tennis in the slightest of ways, she is definitely the person to look up to when times get tough.

By Olivia Bow, Year 12

The Emotion of Sport



Sport is emotional. Nowhere else in society will you witness more males crying and hugging each other than on the sporting fields and arenas of the world. Whether you are a player, coach, parent or fan, sport conjures up a wide range of feelings for a variety of reasons.

I recently read an interesting article titled "It's Not Just A Game". It outlines how on the most basic level, sport pulls groups of people together to coach, spectate or compete in a game whose outcome has little impact on our day-to-day lives. And yet, the emotional highs from victory, coupled with the lows of heartbreaking loss, are not easy to forget, no matter how much time passes. We often tout "in the end it does not matter if we win or lose", who in reality, it does. It has a direct bearing on our emotions in the present and immediate future.

Sports are incredibly powerful in this regard. They can bring individuals, families, groups, schools, societies, and generations together for a unified cause. We often take ownership of sport teams or groups titling them "your" or "our" team, this personal investment can remove the objectivity of sport, making it very difficult not to succumb to raw emotional responses to the actions or outcomes of the team as opposed to the process.

This is an extremely powerful element of sport, but can work against our development as an athlete just as much as it can work for our development. Emotional intelligence was first used in the business world to assist in recognising different emotions of individuals at given times for mutual benefit, it is now used heavily in sports. Emotionally intelligent people get themselves into the appropriate emotional states for the demands of the given situation. In sport, this would be seen as the athlete self-regulating their emotions based on the ever-changing situation of a game. A skill that can be trained but requires a strong sense of self-awareness. You would only have to look at some of the top athletes in the world who in the heat of competition demonstrate this consistently. In this regard, Ash Barty and her recent win at the Australian Open is a shining example of this. She seemingly manages to elevate her mood when required, yet calm himself down depending on the point-by-point situations she finds herself in. Her confidence and attitude in seemingly tough game situations in Tennis are testament to this.

In our society sports serve as a beacon of hope. They provide us the opportunity to become invested in something far greater than oneself, which is why we can feel so personally and emotionally attached to the result. It is using this for our mutual benefit that everyone involved in sport needs to teach and learn. At Oxley College, our sport program aims to foster the development of life skills so students can flourish both today and in the future. The learning that our students receive through Sport is far greater than just the physical domain, the ability to develop emotional intelligence and resilience only add to its importance as a part of the education at Oxley.

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/emotionally-attached-sports>

<http://believeperform.com/performance/emotional-intelligence-in-sports-the-game-within-the-game/>

By Tom Kindred

GOLD DUKE of EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD REPORT

No time to relax at the end of a hectic year, the Gold group off to the mountains for four days! An eclectic play list, soft pillows, a maccas brekkie, box of cherries and distant views of snow-capped hills kept us all interested on the bus that first morning...

A short, but steep uphill hike on a sun-drenched evening, saw us camp above Dead Horse Gap in sub-zero temperatures, before setting off early in freezing fog, bound for a remote location at the start of the Main Range ridge. Leaving the well-trodden Kosciuszko track, we travelled cross-country through the murk. It was a laborious process having to stop every few metres to check compass bearings, but eventually the trig point on Mt Stillwell emerged from the clouds and we celebrated being on top of our first summit! We hurried down towards Charlotte's Pass, only for Sarah to take a tumble and twist her ankle! We were well short of our objective so had to find an emergency campsite from where poor Sarah could be evacuated the next morning. It was a glorious evening, the mist clearing to reveal stunning views of Australia's highest peaks. We woke up to sunshine and blue skies suddenly we felt thoroughly elated. Stepping across the sparkling waters of the Snowy River, we made solid progress towards Blue Lake, then up along the ridge towards Mt Townsend, hampered only a little by stagnant snow drifts that covered our trail. Superb views were enjoyed all the way and this third day culminated in hilarious 'luge' runs in plastic sacks, down a particularly good snow patch! After dinner, everyone enjoyed a magnificent sunset and the promise of fair weather for the final leg of our journey. How disappointing it was then, when we discovered the clouds had descended during the night. Once again, we trekked in the cold, damp and mist, hoping not to miss our ultimate prize, the top of Australia. We made it and huddled with glee round the pillar which marked the summit of Kosciuszko! A severe weather warning hurried us along and we dashed back down to the valley and hence on to Dead Horse gap and our waiting bus! It was a great accomplishment to complete the Alpine loop and to start a well-deserved holiday! Thank you to a wonderful group who made this a fun trip to remember. For most it was their final Duke of Ed Journey and my word, how they celebrated on the long trip home!

By Tim Dibdin



SILVER DUKE of EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD REPORT

First day of the holidays... Most people would be sleeping in. Some would be travelling excitedly to a holiday destination. Others relaxing. Doing leisurely activities.

But not us...

... a group of Year 9 and 10 students reluctantly made the early morning journey down to Murrumbidgee National Park for a 3 day, 2 night hike and paddle, traversing a section of the NSW South Coast.

Following a debrief at Bawley Point, where navigation plans were made, we were off... a short first day belying what was to come over the next two...

Next morning came, and I joyfully celebrated being the only one who had packed up before a La Niña-induced downpour woke the rest of the group at 6.15. We traversed a total of 23km and 350m of vertical ascent that day, which took just over 9 hours, during which we entered the Murrumbidgee National Park and ascended then descended the mighty Mount Durras. The tracks were still recovering from the awful bushfires, and we were forced to walk in single file along former fire trails.

The final day included a short walk over a steep headland onto the beaches of Beagle Bay, then towards North Durras, where we abandoned the trails for the extensive coastal lagoon that is Lake Durras. Following a two and a half hour paddle, we finished at a bridge on the aptly-named Mount Agony Road.

This journey may have been difficult and uncomfortable at times, but this was not the whole picture. Overall, the expedition developed our characters and give us an appreciation for the natural environments that are only a stone's throw away from the Southern Highlands. The picturesque landscape and almost perfect walking weather will make this hike one to remember for a long time to come.

By Oscar Greenfield, Year 10

BIATHLON SUCCESS

Congratulations to Chilli Sparke, Year 9 who placed 5th in the Sprint event of the Austrian Cup as part of the Australian Biathlon Youth Development team. Chilli travelled to Europe by herself for six weeks as part of the team representing Australia.

Also congratulations to Phoenix Sparke, Year 10 who has been selected to compete in the Youth World Biathlon Championships in Utah. This selection is off the back of the incredible results Phoenix received whilst training and competing in Europe. He came 2nd in the Austrian National Championships and 2nd in the Austrian Cup. An incredible effort competing against the standard of European competitors in the U19 age division.





tweens,
teens,
& screens



OXLEY COLLEGE

TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY, 7:00PM

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