

My Vision for Colmers

When I arrived at Colmers in 2011 I was surprised that the school did not possess a motto. That surprise turned to excitement that we could create something, a few short words, that would capture the spirit and the goals of the school. This is where “Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together and Challenging Mind-sets” came from in the summer of 2011.

I am fully aware that straplines, mottos and mission statements are considered nonsense by many and meaningless by others. Maybe they are right and we have to tolerate a whole range of feelings about such things.

But, for me at least, it's valuable to capture in words and language what the whole point of Colmers is meant to be about. My colleagues work extremely long hours - 50 or 60 hour weeks are not uncommon and the vast majority of teachers work all through their weekends, into the evenings, through holidays and do all that whilst balancing other commitments to family, friends and having a life of their own. We need to believe that all of that endeavor is worth something bigger than ourselves, we need to feel we are part of a grander plan, an important mission. We all need to believe that the sacrifices we make are worth it.

And this applies to students and their families as well. Being reminded of the point of education and why Colmers is and will remain a special place in this community is worth thinking about, writing about and sharing with the community.

This is the reason behind the creation of a mission statement back in 2011, known as Vision 2020. It was written some years ago now when 2020 seemed a long way away... But the messages and the goals remain as significant as ever and I encourage you to read on and reflect on the sentiments and the aspirations.



Colmers' Vision 2020 Mission Statement

In 2011 the school introduced its first motto or strapline: **Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together and Challenging Mind-sets**. The motto was closely related to the Mission Statement that sets out what is meant by those three terms. The purpose of the Mission Statement was to communicate the values and beliefs held by the school and how they ought to determine the future direction of the school. The full Vision 2020 Mission Statement appears below, alongside a student friendly interpretation of its key messages.

Introduction

Colmers School will remain a focal point of pride and optimism in the local community which it serves. The momentum of Colmers' progress will be sustained through the pursuit of a world-class educational experience for every student that joins our community of lifelong learners.

In sixty or seventy years, our retired students must establish a link between the strong foundation created at Colmers and the joys and successes they have experienced throughout their life. That job, that friendship, that relationship, that discovery, that eternal contribution to the world they entered, should in some way be attributed or linked to the person that emerged from their education at Colmers. Their memories of other students and of staff should be rich and packed with both nostalgia and affection. In short, they must remember their time at Colmers as amongst the best days of their life – a time when they were encouraged to become their best self and face life's hurdles and hardships with optimism, self-belief and passion.

The future of Colmers students, and therefore the school, rests on all students, regardless of background, achieving excellence by belonging together and challenging their mind-sets.

Achieving Excellence

The potential of our students is unknown and limitless. Countless evidence exists that proves a child can surpass every expectation if he or she dares to dream and if he or she is nurtured and supported by great teachers and outstanding learning.

The school's greatest resource is the quality of education taking place in every classroom and learning environment. Learning, in all classes and at all times, must be characterised by a joyful and exciting journey of high expectations and innovative experiences. A 'can-do' culture must emanate from all teaching staff and affect the confidence and willingness of students to become their best selves.

Colmers will never shy away from the need for high levels of achievement being an intrinsic part of a world-class education. The future of each child, and the local and national community, is enhanced and strengthened by the development of highly achieving students.

This is why every single student will be expected to achieve the highest standards; surpassing their own and others' expectations.

It's the school's job to serve the local community.

We want kids to fondly remember and feel glad they went to Colmers.

Kids are too young to have fixed futures.

Everything must feel possible at all times.

High levels of engagement are essential.

Belonging Together

Our unfaltering humanity must be self-evident every day. No-one has the right to expect less than the complete fulfilment of each student's potential. When a student expects a less exciting future for him or herself, we must swiftly, patiently and unwaveringly unite around that young person to challenge that self-defeating mind-set and rekindle their childhood promise and their faith and belief in the power of a close community. Anything less is to disadvantage a child and burden him or her with a lifetime of disappointment and dreams of what could have been.

The ability of a child to fulfil their infant dreams and their own childhood promise rests on a relentless belief amongst every adult committed to that child's future: parents, staff and governors. Aspirant children are surrounded by aspirant adults with an unwavering faith in their potential.

Disengaged children have begun to lose faith in their ability to transform and to learn. We, the adults, play our part in that loss or gain of faith. It is these children that must be our relentless focus because the rewards for that child, our community and ourselves are enormous - if we succeed.

Being a parent or carer at Colmers must mean something very special. Early contact, early intervention where necessary, early dialogue and communication of values, beliefs and expectations must be unparalleled. Every parent or carer hopes their son or daughter's life will be more successful and fulfilling than their own. We must reach out early, often and effectively to build a relationship and provide support for parents in the social, physical, emotional, moral and academic development of their children. These things cannot be left to chance.

Motivated children and supportive parents and carers alone cannot thrive without a body of staff with the skills, attributes and confidence to transform children's lives. Too often, staff development is neglected and taken for granted. If we invest and sincerely support the development of teaching and associate staff we will unlock our own capacity and potential for greatness. We, too, are learners on our own journey, with our own needs, insecurities and ambitions.

This is why student achievement and lifelong fulfilment rests on each child being, and feeling, part of a caring and dedicated community of adults, who are themselves aware of being part of something unique and special.

Challenging Mind-sets

Our personal futures - and Colmers' future - is flexible, elastic and unseen. Excusing, tolerating or predicting low aspirations and low achievement plays no part in a world-class school. Our past or present must not be used as a simple predictor of our future. It is how tomorrow is pursued today that matters most. Our unflinching belief in a happy and successful future for every single student must permeate every lesson, decision, assembly, interaction and policy at Colmers School.

We need to swoop in when a child begins to fall behind.

Encouraging optimism is key.

We have to re-kindle their self-belief when it falters

Families are going to need our help sometimes – we must be ready.

Time and space for staff to develop is very important.

A community of committed adults around each child is essential.

We have no right to make excuses for our students.

If our Colmers children are to believe in their potential, every adult with influence must share that belief and be ready to pick the child up when his or her own faith wavers. Exciting, powerful, prosperous, dynamic, creative, daring, innovative and magical life journeys are as much the right of Colmers children as any other. As the adults, it is not our right or responsibility to limit a child's belief in their future.

We cannot be blind to the challenges facing children - but we can use our collective judgement and wisdom to help children understand those barriers and solve how they will overcome these obstacles in both the short and the long term. At the heart of this journey must be a relentless emphasis on self-awareness and self-motivation. Each child must be able to self-consciously understand how to overcome each academic, social or moral challenge – and deliberately make the right choices to succeed in every aspect of their life. In time, every child must extend that leadership of self to the leadership of others; either explicitly or implicitly as a role model for others.

In this respect, the successes and failures of each child must be seen as the product of a child's stage of development. We are all, but especially children, works of art in progress. Every failure and success is an opportunity to learn.

This is why a truly outstanding and world-class school challenges the mind-sets of every learner and every adult with the privilege of playing a part in his or her journey of self-discovery and learning.

The Journey

A world-class school does not emerge behind the figure of a single or a few mesmeric leaders. Iconic leadership can be effective, in the short term, but ironically encourage reliance and low self-confidence. Instead, this journey and fulfilment can only take place when each member of our community, including the students, becomes a leader in their own right. We cannot afford passengers; everyone must be crew.

We have no right to limit their ambitions or expectations.

We need to equip children with the knowledge, understanding and skills to get through all that life may throw at them.

Children will make mistakes – it's the definition of childhood.

The way we think isn't fixed, it can change.

When searching for someone to solve the problem, first look in the mirror.