

# Celebrating Women Leaders at Cranbrook



CRANBROOK SCHOOL



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In celebration of International Women's Day 2024 on Friday 8 March, we are proudly profiling our female leaders at Cranbrook as part of our commitment to championing diversity and fostering inclusion in education. This year's theme, 'Count Her In: Invest in women. Accelerate progress', underscores the importance of celebrating the invaluable contributions of women in the teaching profession. By spotlighting female educators, we are sharing their inspiring stories, and showcasing the diverse perspectives they bring to the classroom, whilst instilling a sense of belonging and empowerment for us all.

### How long have you worked at Cranbrook and in what role/s?

I started in 2007 as Social Science teacher after some time off teaching. In 2013 I had an acting Assistant Head of Department role, then in 2014 I was appointed Culter Housemaster. I was in that role for seven years before moving into the newly created Director of Student Wellbeing in 2022. That adds up to about 17 years.

### What do you love about your job and the School?

It is a privilege to witness students develop intellectually, emotionally and physically as they progress through the Senior School. During my time as a Housemaster the satisfaction of contributing to the growth of the students in my House, and the impact I had on shaping future generations were significant and not taken lightly. The sense of community within our school and in our House system is very strong and we really missed that connectedness during COVID 19. Getting to know families added to these connections.

As a classroom teacher there is never a dull moment and I constantly learn from being around young adults, I also appreciate that I have the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of my students, so I take any chance to look at issues beyond the curriculum when they arise. In my role as Director of Student Wellbeing, I can use my experience and knowledge to shape our policies and procedures around wellbeing. All research shows that students who feel seen, heard and valued achieve at higher levels so putting their wellbeing at the centre of all we do is vital.

My colleagues also make Cranbrook such a great place to work. I am surrounded by dedicated and inspiring teachers who contribute to a fulfilling work environment. I am also very fortunate to work with a visionary Executive Team, led by the Headmaster, who are consistently working to make Cranbrook a more diverse and inclusive place for students and staff.

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### **How has the education sector changed for women in your time in teaching?**

I have been in the profession for a long time and over the years I have been extremely fortunate to have strong female line managers. These managers have ensured the workplace is family friendly and accommodating to a range of personal needs. As a result, it has enabled both male and female teachers to balance the demands of teaching and family commitments. It also means that we do not lose exceptional female teachers when they decide to have a family. Teaching has predominately been a female profession however we know that when you look at Senior Management in boys' schools there is still a gender imbalance. That imbalance is starting to correct itself as schools understand that diversity is vital in leadership and that differing perspectives is a key component of great schools. I have met some amazing female educators over the last few years both here at Cranbrook and at other independent schools around the country.

### **What changes do you hope to see continue to happen in the future?**

I think the introduction of girls into our school is going to be such a refreshing time for us as a community. We will only grow from the change and the benefits of fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, promoting well-rounded social development, and preparing students for real-world collaboration is very exciting. Allowing young men to see and be a part of women's success will ensure that they can challenge gender stereotypes while still at school and once they are in the workforce. Future generations are the solution to social change and allowing students to think critically and envisage ways to make profound and necessary change is one of our key educational aims. Our students are fortunate to have opportunities through their education which we hope will foster a desire to make the world a more equal place.

### **What's your funniest/most memorable moment of teaching at Cranbrook?**

When you are out of the classroom and learning through experiences, that's when I really appreciate how lucky I am to work at Cranbrook. I have been very fortunate to experience Service tours to Central Australia where I have watched the sun rise over Kings Canyon and set over Uluru while having conversations about the meaning of life with students. I recently was lucky enough to travel to Ladakh as part of CETOP. The magnitude of the Himalayas was awe inspiring and witnessing the joy the students experienced playing cricket in the afternoon with the local kids demonstrates how easy it is for language barriers to be overcome when young people come together over sport.

### **What advice do you have for anyone starting their career in teaching?**

The first few years are really hard as you develop confidence in your subject area as well as your classroom management. I would encourage any new teacher to reach out to other colleagues and seek mentorship and advice as we have all been there. You also need to be flexible and adaptable as even the most thoroughly planned lessons can go sideways without warning. Teaching is now much more than delivering content, so building positive relationships with students is vital. Sometimes you need to go off on a tangent if there is a teachable moment involved. When you have good lessons, enjoy them, and reflect on why other lessons don't work out as planned. Most importantly new teachers need to know that their chosen profession is so important and that they cannot discount the impact they will have on young adults. Spending time building rapport and mutual respect is just as important as teaching content so spending time getting to know your students will make for a safe and inclusive learning environment where all students have the chance to thrive. ■