



## Contextual and Theologically Underpinned Vision



### UNLOCKING UNIQUE POTENTIAL

Lived out through core values:  
faith | justice | responsibility | truth | compassion

Encapsulated in scripture:  
*What does the Lord require of you?*  
*To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8)

#### Detailed in Our Intent:

At Bishop Stopford School, our aim is that every student should realise their unique potential. Our Christian ethos and core values are expressed in all that we do: the culture is articulated through highly productive relationships and there is a strong sense of identity and belonging. As a result, our curriculum nurtures and challenges, prioritises individual worth and social cohesion, and fosters independence and interdependence. Character development goes hand in hand with our striving for academic excellence. We want students to leave us happy and healthy, with a strong moral compass as well as with qualifications which have integrity.

Aspiration underpins our curriculum: it is designed so that no student is left behind or left out because of social-, learning- or other disadvantage. Both the taught and the wider curriculum are carefully planned to ensure that not only are students' basic skills secured, but they provide the foundation for future success. We aim to develop highly literate, numerate and knowledgeable learners who are creative, self-regulating and resilient. They have opportunities to develop depth as well as breadth, and because they are socially equipped, they can engage confidently with the wider world.

#### Underpinning Principles

- Leadership of the curriculum is active, reflective and research-informed.
- Our curriculum is unapologetically academic and knowledge-driven, ensuring Bishop Stopford students are engaged and thoughtful learners.
- Our curriculum is holistic: the spiritual, social and moral imperatives are as strong as the academic.
- Key Stage 3 lasts for Years 7-9 to allow the range of subjects to be studied and to build secure foundations for the two year GCSE programmes of study.
- Curriculum is structured to ensure effective progression through the key stages and beyond academy to further study or employment.
- Our curriculum enables *all* learners to progress, through development of a rich language base and challenge in every lesson.

***The academy's work is driven by a contextually-appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision for education that reflects its foundation as a Church academy, meets the needs of the academy community, and enables people to flourish***

(SIAMS)

## **Who are we?**

Our identity has been formed over 60 years on the Headlands site, has evolved and will continue to evolve over time, so that we are an academy which is meeting the needs of those in our community 'for such a time as this'. (Esther 4:14)

## **Heritage and Purpose**

Bishop Stopford School's roots date back as far as 1535, when the rector of St Peter and St Paul directed one of his curates to "instruct boys of the parish". The Church of England went on to establish four more schools in Kettering including the parochial academy which was opened in 1819 and finally closed in 1965 when a purpose-built Secondary Modern academy was opened on the Headlands. The academy was named after the late Robert Stopford, who was the Bishop of Peterborough at the time. The academy soon introduced a Sixth Form and admitted its first full comprehensive intake in 1976. It has been oversubscribed almost ever since. The number-on-roll has more than doubled since 1965. Exam results have always been consistently well above county and national average, and currently, the academy's outcomes at GCSE places it in the top 2% of schools nationally.

Bishop Stopford School converted to Academy Status in 2011. Today, it is a forward-thinking and high-achieving organisation with a unique heritage and distinctive identity, providing high quality education with a strong Christian ethos. Just as the book of Proverbs summarises its purpose at the outset, so we can say Bishop Stopford School is 'for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair.' (Proverbs 1:2-3)

## **Church of England Status**

Bishop Stopford School is one of 4630 Church of England schools (228 of which are secondary schools) which together fulfil the Church of England's mission: '*deeply Christian, serving the common good*'<sup>1</sup>. The Church of England expresses this in more detail as '*promoting education in schools, colleges and universities that allows children and young people to flourish in the widest sense*' and summarises it in the following verse from John 10:10: '*I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness.*'<sup>2</sup>

In this context, Bishop Stopford School seeks to fulfil the vision of the Church of England to educate young people for:

- wisdom, knowledge and skills;
- hope and aspiration;

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<sup>1</sup> [Education and Schools | The Church of England](#)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

- community and living well together;
- dignity and respect.<sup>3</sup>

It is located in the Diocese of Peterborough, and there are another two secondary Church of England schools in the diocese. We work together to bring about academy improvement, not forgetting to 'do good and share with others' (Hebrews 13:16), and be 'willing to share burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2). The emblem of the diocese – the crossed keys of St Peter – is also the emblem of the academy. Students wear it prominently on their uniform and the academy summarises its vision as unlocking the unique potential of each student entrusted to its care.

As an academy which was a Voluntary Aided academy, there are a number of key characteristics which form our identity:

- Foundation governors (ie those appointed explicitly to uphold the faith ethos) are an absolute majority;
- Governors appoint and employ staff;
- Governors are responsible for admissions arrangements.
- Governors determine the RE syllabus which reflects the Anglican tradition and worship also reflects the Anglican tradition.

Governors and academy leaders are mindful of their significant responsibilities, and that 'when the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan'. (Proverbs 29:2).

## **Admissions**

The academy admits nearly 1500 students, with a Pupil Admission Number of 216 in years 7-11. 400 students are in the sixth form, and it is annually oversubscribed. Because there is continued evidence that there is a significant desire for providing an education which has a strong Christian ethos, admissions arrangements enable families of faith – Christian and other – to access our provision. This gives us opportunity to 'do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.' (Galatians 6:10).

As a result, the academy's population is not only drawn from the immediate locality but a wider geographical area – with families' religious affiliation as the key criteria – after places have been allocated to those with Education, Health and Care Plans, those who are 'looked after' (or were previously 'looked after') and those with social or medical needs. 'Looked After' children come from as far away as Huntingdon, Daventry and Luton. This is an indication of the esteem in which the academy is held by local authorities because of the careful attention to addressing and meeting pastoral needs. The principle of taking care of the marginalised is one of God's priorities, and the academy seeks to put into practice this biblical mandate in its admissions priorities. 'The LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause

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<sup>3</sup> ibid

of the needy.' (Psalm 140:12) and 'whoever is kind to the needy honours God'. (Proverbs 14 31)

### **The Composition of the Student Body**

70% students come from Kettering wards; the next biggest populations from Wellingborough, Northampton and Corby respectively.

There is a significant ethnic mix – a diversity which has increased steadily over the past ten years. While 'White British' is the dominant ethnic group at 59%, 41% of the student population is made up of other ethnic groups, with Indian and Black African being the largest groups (13% and 9% respectively).

In terms of faith, the student body overwhelmingly identifies as Christian (78%), and 4% Muslim, 4% Sikh and 3% Hindu.

In terms of social status, 6% of the academy's population is disadvantaged (attracting Pupil Premium) and 7% have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.

The academy is fully aware of the proportions of different groups within its student body, and strives to provide so that each individual can fulfil their potential. Inclusion, equality and diversity is a fundamental principle, based on the belief that everyone is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), everyone is loved by their Creator God (John 3:16) and known by him from before birth (Psalm 139). As a result, every individual is deemed infinitely precious, to be valued and afforded dignity and worth, and no-one is worth more or less than another human being. Following the commandments, we build our community on the reiterated biblical principle of loving our neighbour as ourselves'. (Leviticus 19:18 – also in the Gospels and the Epistles)

### **Outcomes**

Bishop Stopford School is a high achieving academy – and has a long standing reputation for very strong GCSE and A Level results. We are currently in the enviable position of being in the top 100 schools in the country. Students are not selected by academic ability, and there is a wide mix of ability in the student population. What is therefore critical is that each student is given the opportunity to fulfil their individual potential – and results show that they do. To make such magnificent progress, our focus is on developing staff expertise. We believe that 'whatever [we] do, we must do it 'heartily unto the Lord' (Colossians 3:23). We encourage students to emulate staff as they strive for their personal best and put to good use the skills and abilities they have – or discover they have during their time at Bishop Stopford School. Students and families recognise this is a crucial part of our identity as a community as we continually encourage them to use their God-given gifts and talents to flourish (Matthew 25:14-30).

However, we value other outcomes equally alongside academic success, and the development of character, moral values, resilience and strong, positive relationships is essential too. Parents, members of the public and alumni all testify to the impact of

the academy in these areas, and careful attention is given to build a sense of unity in community, so that everyone can live productively in harmony with each other (Psalm 133:1)

### **Staff Team, including Leaders**

While our focus is entirely on enabling our young people to succeed, building and retaining a strong staff team with a united focus and understanding is crucial to who we are. We are a staff team of over 200, with 88 teachers and 61 associate staff supporting the core function of teaching and learning. There are 7 Senior Leaders with a range of experience, and an approach to leading which is servant hearted, again following Christ's example to 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.' (Philippians 2:3-4) There is a strong pastoral ethos to people leadership, with the Chaplain providing additional capacity for our staff team as well as for our student body. Schools are highly pressurised environments at times, and jobs in education are demanding. We therefore pay significant attention to individuals' wellbeing as an intentional aspect of leadership, following the principle in Wisdom Literature: 'Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act.' (Proverbs 3:27)

Teaching staff appreciation is shown through loyalty to the academy, with 78% having between 10 and 40 years' service. Some remain at the academy for the whole of their careers. Further evidence of this commitment to the academy is that 19 former students now work at the academy, and that children of 56 staff attend or have attended our academy. (Staff children must meet the same admissions criteria as all others.) There is, therefore, significant commitment to the academy, its values and foundation amongst the staff body.

This commitment is staggering, and never taken for granted by leaders, and staff 'find satisfaction in their own toil' – a God-given satisfaction. (Ecclesiastes 2:24). For many, this is also a Christian vocation, choosing to 'work heartily as to the Lord'. (Colossians 3:23)

### **Accountability**

The academy was deemed to be Outstanding in its previous SIAMS inspection, and the impact of its Christian character was commended highly: "A sense of responsibility to live out God's love for all individuals characterises the way in which this academy cares for its pupils" and "Staff, pupils and governors readily give examples of how senior leaders demonstrate their belief that God values and intends fullness of life for each individual."<sup>4</sup> This ethos has been strengthened further since 2018, and there has been significantly widened participation in partnerships with the Church of England, para-church organisations and other Church of England schools and academies. For example, our parent leaflet about what it means to attend a Church of England academy has been commended as a pioneering document which outlines the history of Anglican education and how this guides our actions and our policy making.

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<sup>4</sup> SIAMS Report Feb/March 2018

Until June 2022, Bishop Stopford School was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. In its inspection of June 2022 (reported November 2022), the academy was judged to 'Require Improvement'. Areas for improvement included personal development, behaviour and attitudes and leadership and management. As there were concerns about the conduct of the inspection and the conclusions drawn, the academy sought to 'act justly' (Micah 6:8) and challenged the inspection. As a result, we are the only academy which has been the subject of a Westminster Hall debate in Parliament and we subsequently contributed to the Ruth Perry Commission and a number of other inspection reviews where there were concerns about Ofsted's practice. We are pleased that we were able to contribute to national challenge and ultimately system change, as we balanced our desire to 'Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression' (Isaiah 1:17). However, while we have serious questions about the inspection's validity, we have not ignored the findings of its own report, but brought about change and strengthening through addressing the Areas for Improvement with those who can offer us wisdom in these matters ("Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise." Proverbs 19:20).

We are a Single Academy Trust, but with a strong emphasis on partnering within the educational community locally, across the diocese and beyond. Our governors are committed leaders, with an effective and sacrificial focus on support and accountability in the best interests of the young people and the academy community they serve.

We contribute to a number of local and national initiatives, such as providing Leadership courses for regional schools and CPD for the Woodard Schools – a family of independent and state Anglican schools. We also partner with organisations which can help us to deliver work which is not our area of expertise, such as in mental health. Where we have expertise, we wish to share it, and not to 'neglect doing good' by doing so (Hebrews 13:16). Where we don't have it, we are always eager to learn from others – or to let them take the lead with their strengths. We will 'Listen to advice and accept instruction, that [we] may gain wisdom in the future.' (Proverbs 19:20)

## **Community**

Our academy operates within a number of communities:

- a) Local/geographical  
Each day sees an influx of c1500 into the Headlands community – a residential area which is, in effect a cul de sac. Next door is the fire station for the area. We constantly strive to 'love our neighbours' and work hard with parents, students and the local PCSO and community association to minimise negative impact on local residents.
- b) Parish  
We are situated in the parish of Ss Peter and Paul, and maintain our contact with the local parish. We conduct our carol service at the church, and the Rector is the diocesan representative on the Members' of the Academy Trust. We contribute practically to charitable work of the church, such as the food bank, and offer a placement for any curates at the parish church.
- c) Wider faith community

We maintain relationships with all faith leaders, inviting them in to academy at least annually to consider their role in Admissions. In addition, we are delighted that many from local clergy and other Christian traditions participate in delivering acts of worship – assemblies, supporting Chaplaincy events and communion.

d) Educational Community

We are active in local, regional and national education communities, and play our part in delivering both education and training to colleagues in other schools. We are renowned for excellent leadership training, including conferences and placements, receiving highly positive evaluations for work in this area. We support the local Teaching Academy Alliance, the Headteacher being an Early Headship Coach. We contribute to diocesan initiatives for secondary schools and also play a respected part in the Woodard Corporation's work – a family of Church of England state and independent schools.

## **Pastoral Care**

Unsurprisingly, pastoral care is high on the agenda. After the pandemic, we carefully reviewed this aspect of our work, and increased capacity significantly by appointing non-teaching Heads of Year with all of their time devoted to their year groups.

Our approaches are widely valued by parents and students alike, and provide a backbone to all of our work in positive ways. The model of the Good Shepherd (John 10) and Psalm 23 shepherding underpins our pastoral model. We believe that we have a duty to provide excellent care and guidance, so that in conjunction with parents and carers, we 'Start off children in the way they should go', so they will not turn from those good ways (Proverbs 22:6)

We also are mindful of Jesus' role modelling when it comes to adult interactions with children, and we accept that those entrusted to our care as educators can, in fact, be our greatest teachers: "He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 18: 2-5)

## **Chaplaincy**

At the heart of our school is the Chapel and Chaplaincy. Located physically at the centre, its position reflects its importance to us – 'so that in everything [Christ] might have the supremacy (Colossians 1:18). The leadership of the Chaplain reflects our core mission, purpose and values, providing pastoral leadership to the headteacher, students and staff, and working with the headteacher to ensure that statutory responsibilities are carried out effectively in relation to the vision for Church of England education and the school's local vision. Guiding relationships, activities and all aspects of Chaplaincy is a determination to 'do it all for the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The Chapel is a vibrant hub of activity, providing a range of activities for students and staff to explore faith and to confirm their faith. It is a place of solace and welcome and it is a space for reflection and encouragement too.

As in all other aspects of school life, Chaplaincy is carried out in a spirit of humility and crucially one of partnership. As Jesus chose 12 disciples, as the apostles' missions were in teams, so our Chaplaincy relies on partnership and fellowship in serving our community. Ordained Chaplaincy Advisors, the Diocese, local faith leaders, governors, parents and students all contribute to the work of Chaplaincy to build a community of grace which of itself is effective in deepening [our] understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (Philemon 1:6).

The work of the Chaplain is to maintain the balance between providing a distinctively Christian offer, whilst being inclusive of those of other faiths and those with no faith. This work is not exclusive provision for students of the Christian faith or members of the Church of England, but reaches to all, mirroring a God who 'so loved the world' that he sacrificially 'gave his one and only Son'. (John 3:16). The spirit in which this is done is gentle and humble, 'Do[ing] nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.' (Philippians 2:3), but also with a bold confidence in God's calling and his mandate: to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world' (Matthew 5: 13,14) by standing courageously: 'For God has not given us a Spirit of Fear, but of power and love and a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7-8)

**a) Growing those of a Christian Faith**

When it is used as a place for Christ's followers, the Chapel is a place where 'the message of Christ dwell[s] among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3: 16). For those of the faith, it is also a wonderful training ground, with opportunities to lead faith groups and events in school as Chaplaincy Ambassadors or in other roles. The Chaplain takes the role as custodian of the future seriously, and we invest in work with the Church of England to support young people to become the faith leaders of the future seriously. Succession and legacy are critical, and so we intentionally follow the example of the apostle Paul and his mentee Timothy is vital to us: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity...Do not neglect your gift..." (1 Timothy 4: 12, 14)

**b) Nurturing those of other faiths; challenging those of none**

When its work is for those who are of other faiths or none, the approach is always invitational. Students are invited to 'Come and see', just as Jesus' disciples invited those around them to have their curiosity piqued by him (John 1:46).

**c) For the whole community**

Chaplaincy and the Chapel are spaces for all to be supported as we journey through the realities of life as expressed, knowing 'There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens' (Ecclesiastes 3:1). We strive to ensure that adults, children, parents, those of the Christian faith, those of other faiths and those of none can consider the blessings of the Sermon on the Mount as we journey through life's vicissitudes together – in times of mourning, weakness, strife and difficulty, as well as in the joys and celebrations of life too. (Matthew 5:3-10)



## **The Unknown**

It is important to acknowledge that communities change, and our academy is always in a state of flux. We do not know the individual circumstances of every member of our community at all times, nor the shades of variation of personal circumstances which may change because of individual, family, local, national or international issues. We do not presume to be comprehensive in our knowledge, but acknowledge there will be gaps in knowing the depths of our community and we seek to conduct ourselves by 'walking humbly with our God' (Micah 5:8). However, we believe that we can conduct ourselves by the general principles of Scripture which enable respectful living and highly productive relationships. When we know, we can 'rejoice with those who rejoice' and weep with those who weep' Romans 12:15, and we consistently apply the golden rule, and 'Do to others what [we] would have them do to [us]'. (Luke 6:31)