

## Welcome message from our Headteacher, Neil Wallace

Thank you for your interest in Stratford upon Avon School. This is no ordinary school. There are many excellent schools around, but they all have a very different feel. **We are a lovely school** with a genuine 'feel good factor' throughout. Our mission is summed up by 3 words, Engage, Enthuse & Inspire, which underpin what we're all about. As a result, visitors are invariably struck by the energy/enthusiasm of our staff & the excellent relationships evident with students. There has never been a better time to work at Stratford upon Avon School. We are recruiting additional staff as part of our expansion, but also as we seek to increase the non-contact time of teachers so they have more time to focus on doing an even better job. We:

- had a very positive inspection by Ofsted under the new framework
- are in the process of developing/expanding our site due to our increasing popularity and increased admissions applications. This will further enhance our already excellent working environment/facilities and provide additional opportunities for your future development
- are a genuinely inclusive school. People matter; everybody matters. We live and breathe by our values
- have strong leadership at all levels. This is a deliberate way of working and the school 'is well led by many'
- have a really strong pastoral system and structures, resulting in high levels of behaviour and buy-in from our students and parents
- have a talented, supportive staff who are share and uphold the school's values. They are committed to improving the school further and creating the best possible experiences for our students
- are part of a very special local community. Stratford upon Avon is a wonderful place to work.

Just as every parent wants a very good school for their child and every child deserves one; every member of staff wants to work in a very good school, and that is what we are. We have delightful students, outstanding facilities and an extremely bright future.

### We seek

- To enable young people to play a positive role in society by providing them with the knowledge, skills, attributes and qualifications to become educated citizens and flourish in the future.

### Our values are summed up in the following lines:

- We hold these truths to be self-evident; that everyone is entitled to feel safe, happy and successful. We believe in, value and care for young people and want to help them to become resilient, responsible, respectful citizens. We aim to engage, enthuse and inspire. We work better and are more productive when we feel good about ourselves and trust each other.

### Over the next five years we will:

- Introduce students to the best that has been thought and said and help to develop an appreciation of human creativity and achievement
- Provide meaningful, manageable and motivational experiences, enabling our students to acquire the knowledge and skills to Learn, Contribute and Lead
- Improve achievement and raise standards by adding value to students based on their prior knowledge and attainment
- Provide rich and deep educational opportunities to help understand and appreciate the wide range of social and cultural influences that have shaped our own heritage and that of others.
- Continue to review and revise our approaches to make them fit for purpose in an ever-changing world

- Set a balanced budget which supports investment in teaching and learning, development of facilities and provision of a diverse range of cultural experiences.

Stratford upon Avon School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school currently catering for over 1650 students, including approximately 260 in the sixth form. We anticipate having almost 1750 students on roll in September 2021. Our main school buildings and grounds, opened in 2002, have been really well looked after and are constantly improved. We believe that the environment has a significant effect on those who work within and I'm delighted that Warwickshire County Council have approved **£12.8million funding for the expansion of the school**. This is in response to the growing reputation and popularity of the school and anticipated additional house building within the surrounding area. Over the next few years, this would increase our capacity to approximately 2,050 students. There are 3 elements to this exciting news:

- The extension of the school Hall, kitchen and dining facilities (completed Nov 2021).
- The acquisition and development of the adjoining College car park to provide additional space (hopefully operational Sept 2022)
- Provision of additional teaching spaces by extending the front of the main school (hopefully operational Sept 2024)

We are in the process of working with the Local Authority and the architects to progress into detailed design of the development plans.

We believe that youngsters have an innate love of learning and their enthusiasm is ours to nurture and develop. Our job is to **engage, enthuse and inspire**; to create an environment where ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things. We have a talented staff and strong structures that enable people to thrive. Behind the scenes, careful husbandry has meant that the school is in a healthy financial position to enable us to continue to invest in our infrastructure.

Just as our impressive facilities continue to develop, so do our working practices. In March 2016 and November 2019, we were graded '**Good**' by Ofsted. However, the school has continued to improve since then and you will find a very positive atmosphere permeating the school. External examination results show consistently good performance across Years 11 and 13. In a nutshell, our intake comes to us at national average, yet leaves performing better than that and above national average. However, we are not an exam factory and certificates are just one element of educating young people. We take pride in ensuring that our students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Careers provision is exemplary, and the school has been awarded the gold standard Quality in Careers Award.

There is more to life than Ofsted inspections. However I am nevertheless delighted with the first sentence, indeed the first word, of our latest report: '**Everyone** at SuAS is committed to ensuring that pupils feel safe, happy and successful. This is achieved very well.' That feels like a ringing endorsement of the positive culture that is embedded throughout the school.

We are proud to offer the **advantages of a large school** with an array of courses, trips and extra curricular opportunities that few other places can match and hope that is something you might add to. We offer all the traditional academic subjects as you'd expect. Whilst there are ways some schools can manipulate their position in league tables by restricting choice, we offer students a **genuinely wide choice** with some 24 options for GCSE. We promote the so-called EBacc combination for our more academic students, but don't force it. Enabling the right people to do the right courses for the right reason is important to us & helps youngsters succeed.

Despite being a large school, we have systems in place to ensure that it feels like a small school. We have a **split vertical tutoring system** whereby every afternoon students meet in mixed age groups. We have Lower School tutor groups of Years 7-9 and Upper School ones with Years 10-13. This ensures we have 'family feel' that is a feature of the school but allows activities / assemblies / discussions to be more focussed and age appropriate in tutor groups. We work very hard to ensure that a big school has the feel of a small school. Those relationships and pastoral care are really important to us and a strength of the school.

The little things matter. We have very strong operating systems that ensure **behaviour is very good at the school**. Visitors are always impressed at the focus and behaviour of classes, the positive relationships evident between staff & students, and the lovely atmosphere. This doesn't happen by accident, but by the attention to detail, including giving a 1-5 behaviour grade for every lesson every day. Any student falling below expectations, whether completing insufficient work or for behavioural reasons, is kept behind that day by their form tutor at the end of school. It has certainly enhanced the focus of students during lessons as going through the motions really isn't good enough.

We are a genuinely comprehensive school. Our students are lovely, regardless of whether they are Oxbridge and Russell Group applicants, whether they are of broadly average ability, or whether they find learning difficult in some respects or come from a dysfunctional home background. **We are an inclusive school who try to do things the right way**, that is genuinely welcoming and valuing all people. We don't make things difficult for certain types of learners or families. We work very hard to get the balance right, ensuring that those who need additional support have bespoke packages, both on and off-site, delivered by specialist staff to enable them to learn, but also to ensure that they do not hinder the learning of others. As a result, Behaviour/focus in lessons is very good. But it is the manner in which we deal with students that makes the systems so effective. It's not just what we do, but how we do it!

New staff quickly settle in often remarking that the school has a very different feel to whatever they have experienced previously. We try to **look after and develop members of staff** whether you are starting your career as an ECT or joining us as a more experienced colleague. We have an internal leadership development programme involving 60+ members of staff alongside opportunities to participate in NPQs or other qualifications. I'm particularly proud of the fact that colleagues administer their own Staff Survey, giving them a voice in the running of the school, and that the responses reflect how this is a great place to work. We are proactive with dealing with any concerns and are willing to listen and adapt in order to keep improving our working environment. Staff appreciate the levels of planning, organisation, communication and support evident throughout the school and know they are part of a very strong team. This has proved particularly beneficial during the coronavirus pandemic.

Finally, the town of Stratford upon Avon itself is a particularly lovely place to work and we are proud to be part of the vibrant local community. We work closely with local institutions including The Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Stratford Literacy Festival. We are delighted to feature as 'Bond Street' on the Stratford Monopoly board and are proud of contributing to our local community.

In essence, this is a lovely place to work with a great combination of **very effective structures implemented with a human face**. There's a professionalism, personalisation and a passion in what we do. I hope you are particularly excited at the prospect of joining us as we strive to develop further. You will be joining the school at a really exciting stage in our development. If you want to be part of that, then please submit a completed application form and supporting letter by the closing date. I look forward to hearing from you.

Neil Wallace, Headteacher

January 2022