

## Welcome message from our Headteacher, Neil Wallace

Thank you for your interest in Stratford upon Avon 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 and 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 provide additional non-contact time for 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.
- have strong leadership at all levels. This is a deliberate way of working and the school 'is well led by many'
- have invested in additional teaching staff to reduce deployment so that teachers can plan effectively and make those extra things happen (we call this BOSS time)
- 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 fully committed to improving the school further
- received an award as 'Employer of the Year 2023' in The Herald Business and Tourism Awards
- 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 approximately 1840 students, including 250 in the sixth form. We anticipate having over 1900 students on roll in September 2024. We believe that the environment has a significant effect on those who work within. Our main school buildings and grounds, opened in 2002, have been really well looked after. Warwickshire County Council are financing a **further 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:

- 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 (summer 2023)
- Provision of additional teaching spaces by extending the front of the main school (hopefully operational Sept 2025)

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. We enjoyed our best ever GCSE results in 2023 and are quietly confident that will be repeated in 2024. In a nutshell, our intake comes to us at national average, yet leaves performing better than that. However, we are not an exam factory and certificates are just one element of educating young people. Our careers provision is exemplary, we take pride in ensuring that our students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

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 including some that don't count in the league tables. We promote the so-called EBacc combination for our more academic students, but don't force it. Students currently select 7 options in Year 8 & then refine that choice to 5 in Year 9, ensuring that they access a broad and balanced curriculum. 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 focused 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 endeavour to support colleagues in times of need, and consciously try to ensure our staff are happy and successful. We have a programme of staff wellbeing activities and benefits, including weekly yoga, badminton, running as well as seasonal flu jabs, an Employee Assistance Programme and favourable terms and conditions. BOSS time is another unique aspect. We also have an internal leadership development programme alongside opportunities to participate in NPQs or other qualifications. This includes voluntary in-house fortnightly breakfast sessions focusing on leadership development which usually have 50+ staff attending. 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 proved particularly beneficial during the coronavirus pandemic. Members of NASUWT have this year decided not to participate in the current 'action short of strike', because they feel that what they are asked to do in school is generally reasonable and that most of the issues of concern nationally don't apply to members working here. Not surprisingly, several former colleagues have returned to Stratford after experiencing life in other schools. This is a great place to work.

Finally, the town of Stratford upon Avon itself is a particularly desirable place to work and we are proud to be part of the vibrant local community, collaborating with local institutions including The Royal Shakespeare Theatre. 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 a school that is in a very positive place. 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

October 2023