



Academy Principal's Welcome



Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to introduce myself in my new role as Academy Principal. It is a privilege and pleasure to have been given this responsibility to lead the operational day-to-day running of St Simon Stock Catholic School. Many of you may already know me in my previous capacity as Vice Principal of our school, a position I have held for the last fourteen years. In fact, I have worked as a teacher in Catholic education for thirty years. Prior to joining St Simon Stock, I worked for sixteen years at St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School in Tunbridge Wells as a teacher of History, Head of History, and Assistant Headteacher.

I would like to wish Mr Wall the very best in his new role as Executive Headteacher, working for the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership (KCSP) to provide strategic leadership for our school and for St Gregory's in Tunbridge Wells. Mr Wall has taught me much in the eight years since he joined our school, for which I am very grateful, not least the fact that leadership is about service. I have learned from Mr Wall that one of the most important attributes of a school leader is humility. This is of course especially important in Catholic schools, which place the Gospel Values of Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do. I will of course continue to work very closely with Mr Wall, who will divide his time between the two schools, as he explained in his letter to parents and carers last week. Learning is a life-long journey, and I look forward to learning much more in this new working relationship between the two schools under Mr Wall's guidance.



In my opening assemblies to all students, I focused on the meaning of the school motto, 'Work with Love', and our school's mission statement, which is at the end of this letter. Whilst there are many strands within our motto and mission statement, I emphasised three in particular.

Firstly, academic success and learning arises from hard work and resilience. Intelligence is grown through grit, perseverance and a readiness to learn from mistakes, which provide opportunities for growth. We must believe in ourselves and have a can-do mentality, often called a growth-mindset.

Secondly, an academic education by itself is of little value without the Christian values of love and service, hence our motto 'Work with Love'. We want our children to leave us at the age of eighteen equipped not just with qualifications but with a determination that they will improve our world. In my assemblies I reminded the children that we are a Lasallian school, and one of the five core principles of St John Baptist de La Salle, the patron saint of all teachers, is Concern for the Poor and Social Justice. We have recently introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in to our school curriculum, with increasing participation year on year. I urge our students from 14-years and older to join this scheme, which is an internationally recognised award of service, skill and most important, perseverance.

Thirdly, and closely linked to the above, I emphasised how important it is to have an international outlook. This is especially so in the context of recent world developments. More than ever, the world needs young people with a global outlook, who will be part of the solution to our world's problems, not part of that problem. This is an exciting year for St Simon Stock in which we aim to become an International Baccalaureate school. In a year's time we will be introducing into our Sixth Form curriculum the International Baccalaureate Careers-related Programme of which you will hear much about this year.

I wish all our students the very best for the new school year and thank them once again for their outstanding attitude last week, which made the start of our school year so joyful. There were many smiling, confident faces, which was a pleasure to witness. I also thank you, as their parents and carers, for all that you do to support our aims from home. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the home-school partnership and what a



difference it makes when parents are in full support of our busy teachers and support staff. Finally, I know that you will join me in thanking our teachers, support staff and school leaders, who work tirelessly so that your child can achieve their full potential in a happy, safe environment.

There are of course many other things I could say in this first letter to parents or carers, and I am sure that as soon this letter has been sent on its way I will think of something that I have forgotten. If I have, I apologise. It is my intention to create an 'Academy Principal blog', with a link from the home page of our school website. This letter will be the first entry and I can write my after-thoughts in subsequent entries!

And so, our school's mission statement...

"St Simon Stock is an excellent school guided by Gospel values and our Catholic tradition. We are a community of learners aspiring to reach academic excellence, while helping each person achieve their full potential by using their gifts to lead a life of love and service to others.

"We want our students to have an international outlook with an understanding of other cultures and ideas. Our intention is to develop our students to be confident, self-motivated with a commitment to life-long learning and personal growth."

Best Wishes

Jon Malone, Academy Principal