

Academic Philosophy for Stamford School and Stamford High School

Our educational philosophy reflects the expectations we have of ourselves, as teachers, and of our pupils as learners. We believe that for our school community to thrive academically we must work in partnership with one another and with our parents, each of us taking responsibility for achieving **the best that we are capable** of in the classroom and beyond.

As teachers we see **the classroom as a place to inspire** pupils across our ability range. Our lessons are driven by curiosity about our subjects and passionate interest in them and we seek to pass this on to our learners. Lessons are varied in terms of style, content, breadth and use of resources because we believe that by taking a varied approach to teaching we will stretch every pupil and help them to achieve their potential. We believe that single gender classes between the ages of 11-16 enables us to deliver lessons which are more relevant to boys and girls and reduces distractions at a time when young people are maturing at differing rates. We need to have high expectations of all the pupils and to demand much of them. However, the pupils must not feel overloaded or that they cannot cope with the demands being made of them. Our primary objective is to encourage our pupils to enjoy their time in the classroom so that they will want to do well for themselves and so that they will become confident about their learning.

In keeping with this, academic departments offer a range of **extension activities** for pupils which take them beyond the limitations of the examination syllabus by providing enrichment opportunities through societies, workshops, lectures, language exchanges and educational visits which help to create and direct pupil curiosity.

SES recognises that this approach to learning needs to be supported by **excellent resources** both inside and outside the classroom and we ensure that investment to enable this is in place through our refurbished libraries, science labs, art studios, computer suites, theatre spaces at SHS, on-line resources and of our on-going building programme for the performing arts centre and the new sports complex.

Pupils at SES are encouraged **to take the lead in their own education** and to be proud of and committed to their own progress whatever their level of ability. We encourage pupils to develop a critical-thinking approach to the subjects they study and we expect them to use a range of skills in exploring the different worlds they encounter in the classroom. We believe that pupils should be motivated, energetic and confident. They enjoy learning for its own sake, not only because this will help them to achieve their own educational goals but because taking pride in their own achievements will empower them beyond their life at school. We take literally Eric Hoffer's words 'In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists'. As we go further into the third millennium we recognise that for our young people the world is changing rapidly and we seek to equip our boys and girls to cope with it and to relish its challenges.

We want our pupils to **move from being dependent to independent learners** and this will happen at different times according to their maturity and motivation. For those who have not yet taken responsibility for their own learning, these pupils require considerable support such as additional lessons and supervised study time to help them produce work to the standard of which they are capable. All our pupils benefit from receiving praise and encouragement and this is particularly true

for those who have not yet developed an enjoyment of learning. We recognise that the achievement of good examination grades which are essential so that pupils can access the next stage of their education or to start in the world of work must at certain times structure the manner in which they are taught. However, for this to be effective a firm foundation must have been built which ensures the pupils have excellent learning skills and high motivation.

Assessing how our pupils are progressing is important to us too. We have a formal and informal reporting programme in place which aims to support individual pupil development in an effective way through a timely provision of meaningful information to pupils, parents and tutors. Homework forms an important part of every pupil's independent learning and topic tests and internal assessment points are in place to ensure that teachers, parents and pupils know how individuals are progressing across the year. In keeping with our approach to teaching and learning, the nature of assessment is varied, diverse and appropriate to the development stage of each pupil.

The **SES structure of the working week, which is focussed on the needs of the pupils**, has been designed to provide the time necessary to allow pupils and teachers to explore subjects in lessons in their academic and real world context. Lessons are not didactically driven, and as such pupils have the confidence to voice their own ideas and to reflect on their own thinking. The school week also allows for the development of non-academic activities, whether sporting, dramatic, vocational or practical, which we feel broaden boys' and girls' enjoyment in life as well as giving them the opportunity to grow as rounded individuals. Our school week is busy and has purpose but it also provides pupils with a balance of work and play across our ten day timetable cycle.

None of the above is possible without the commitment of our parents. We expect **parents to be supportive of the school's educational philosophy**, working with us to ensure that their sons and daughters work towards taking responsibility for their own learning. Parents will support their children through having realistic though ambitious aspirations for their children which are their children's and not their own. They will provide an environment at home which is conducive to academic study and will show an interest in the work being carried out. Through attending parents' meetings and other events they will understand the work in which their children are involved and will have a good understanding of their child's attainment relative to their ability. They will discuss the information from meetings and from written reports with their children and this will enable them to offer praise and encouragement and also be able to bring any concerns to the attention of the school.

At SES we see that education is a **shared responsibility in which teachers show intellectual courage** in driving the educational process forward and pupils confidently embrace their role as thinkers and learners who actively seek to stretch their understanding. We hold our responsibility for delivering exciting, interesting and purposeful lessons dear, and as such invest in our own professional development and the development of our pupils so that they will be able to achieve ambitious goals together. Our parents play an important role in this and help us to produce assured and happy young men and women who will eventually take their place in the wider world.

July 2011