

## The Story of Turton: who we are, how we do things, where we're heading

*'Building on the knowledge of the past to help the children of today meet the challenges of tomorrow'*

Turton School is, and always has been, a community school; that exists to serve the families of the local area. It has a northern town demographic and sits on the climb northwards out of Bolton. The school is over-subscribed and its popularity resides in its reputation for having a calm, respectful and purposeful climate and for providing high quality teaching in a broad range of subjects.

As an 11-18 school, we have a thriving and high performing 6<sup>th</sup> form, offering students small class sizes in a broad range of A level and BTEC subjects. We are also a training school; we run a reputable and substantial School Direct programme for teacher training, with the purpose of attracting high quality graduates and training them to become excellent teachers for local schools. In addition, we operate a bespoke, in-house, four-year ECT programme to support all teachers to aspire to excellence.

The school's most prominent feature, making it the place where people want to study and work, is its ethos. Our values for education, school and life are clearly defined and guide us in all aspects of our work. These values imbue our ethos, and the ethos of a school matters: it is paramount because it is ubiquitous. The ethos is what gives our school its uniqueness, it's what binds us as a community and it is what guides our behaviour and practice. It makes Turton a place where people belong and can thrive.

### Values

**Humanity** puts compassion at the centre of every thought and action. We are the caretakers of one another and our environment. We are a positive force for good in our community, empowering others to lead a good life. An appreciation that through learning the best that has been thought, said and done, we can become better people ourselves.

**Wisdom** requires that we apply insight, experience, common sense and value to our knowledge. Its essence is discernment: right from wrong, helpful from harmful, truth from delusion. The qualities of wisdom allow us to see reality and its complexities, but remain steadfast and determined. Building on the knowledge and experience of the past, using the experiences and connectivity of the present, we make decisions and move forward into the challenges of the future.

**Courage** is about having the inner strength and resolve to do the right thing rather than the easy thing. It is required as a means of overcoming our natural fears and anxieties in order that we operate from a place of strength and determination to make progress.

**Justice** preserves human dignity, no matter the circumstance. It finds a collective, societal agreement on the moral line in the sand; creating circumstances that allow us to function freely within our social constructs.

**Temperance** is the value that helps us keep our equilibrium. It is the quality within ourselves, and our organisation, that allows us to step back, take a minute, and consider our response. It keeps us true to ourselves so that we neither become reactionary, when things don't go as well as we'd like, nor too elated when things go well: it grounds us. Temperance ensures we balance pride with humility, courage with restraint and transcendence with action.

**Transcendence** allows us the ability to see the bigger picture, to see the whole rather than the sum of the parts. It is the invisible threads that link to the past, the present and the future. Transcendence recognises the power of knowledge in search of truth. We believe in a liberal

arts education as oppose to a utilitarian view. Education in its own right is the end goal, going beyond any prescribed syllabi.

## **Purpose**

As leaders, we believe in the power of education to transform lives, to improve social justice and social mobility, and that through education we work together for a better society for all.

From the mountain-top perspective, we, as senior leaders, take a principled approach to school leadership, creating a culture that is values led: we are knowledge driven rather than data and process driven. Working constantly for the long game, we are never bound by the status quo nor swayed by the prevailing opinion. Instead we are focussed acutely on our own high standards and strong beliefs in what makes an exceptional education for all who come through our doors.

We are fluid and relaxed in style, which belies our rigid aspirations of all and a strong view of where we are headed. We have a 'river crossing' (Reeves et al., 2018) approach to our work together: with future ambitions that are clearly defined but open to experimentation and adaptability in terms of how we get there.

Our culture requires that who you are is on the table. We rely strongly on who people are underpinning what they do, such that everyone can realise our collective responsibility to be the best we can be. Culture activates pride, loyalty and enthusiasm amongst staff, thus removing the need for excessive monitoring.

This high-trust, values-led environment hosts an affiliative community with an academic outlook that builds personal empowerment, agency and satisfaction. It is with perfect equipoise that we tread two parallel paths, one foot in a path that is calm, purposeful, thoughtful and inclusive, the other in a white-hot path of academic rigour and high ambition.

## **Curriculum and Pedagogy**

Fundamental to the educational offer at Turton is our curriculum, which is academic in nature and hosts a broad range of subjects. Our curriculum provides a balance of subjects within the broader domains of science, humanities and arts. It is carefully designed to capture the essence of all disciplines, with a coherence that embodies the three ways of the Trivium. Students begin their seven year journey by learning knowledge (the best that has been thought and said in each discipline). As knowledge builds and becomes embedded, through dialectical teaching, students begin to understand more deeply and learn to discuss and debate key concepts and ideas, thus learning to formulate connections and opinions, leading to a greater understanding of the world. The curriculum has relevance in our locality and in current times: this relevance is made explicit through the dialectical aspects of learning. It is also through dialectical teaching in subject areas that students engage in current affairs and personal development (CAPD). These aspects of curriculum rely on the knowledge of the past to help students make sense of the world today, including an understanding of the human condition. This enables them to develop good character through a deeper awareness of themselves and others and leads to personal empowerment and the capacity to go on to lead a good life.

As students develop over time, the rhetorical aspects of learning guide students towards coherent expressions of their learning. This includes the mediums of essay writing, performances, extended writing, finished products, completed artwork, complex problem solving and exams. The measure of all learning is made evident through rhetoric.

Good teaching requires a deep understanding and high level of skill in all aspects of pedagogy. We have a collegiate and collaborative approach to professional development that operates through our Triad structure. The purpose of this is to enable all teachers to review, reflect and

constantly develop their pedagogical practice, with the over-arching ambition that if everyone improves their practice and performance year on year, this will lead to effective school improvement.

Turton has a set of routines and classroom practices known as the Hive Switch, adhered to by all, that support curriculum delivery and pedagogy. It requires us to apply our collective energy to a set of key practices, in all classrooms. Through this unison of drilling routines, the Hive Switch benefits each of us as individuals, but also has a community effect, where collective interests predominate. In this way, students learn personal accountability and social responsibility. Our collective endeavour, around the Hive Switch, improves engagement, well-being, safety and performance.

## Vision

*'When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.'*  
John Muir

By a recognition of the connectivity of everything and everyone, we work to synchronise all aspects of our figuring and reconfiguring into a vision that reflects our 'inescapable network of mutuality' (MLK jr.). With bold ambition our vision has its sights set on the building blocks of character, a life well lived and long-lasting achievement.

Our vision is realised through the following current, strategic approaches:

- We share living, breathing values that are present in all of our work together. These guide us to high standards of personal integrity, such that we all behave in a way that is for the good of everyone.
- Staff: Our Triad structure has a sharp focus on pedagogy and achieving excellence in classroom practice. No matter what additional responsibilities a teacher may have, their primary responsibility is always their classroom practice. Our Triad structure combines performance review with perpetual professional development. In this way, we realise our ambition for school improvement, which is brought about by everyone improving their teaching year on year. This reflects our culture of high trust and professionalism, guided by rigid aspirations. In this way, teachers gain a sense of their agency in affecting change and bringing about improvements that are both personal and collective.  
All support staff are critical to achieving the school's vision, integrally working in-service to the core business of teaching. We are unique in offering an onsite mental health provision, as well as a strong team of pastoral mentors who work directly with students and families. This works seamlessly with our SEND provision, ensuring that students have access to appropriate support.
- Our ethos, climate and practices support our vision for all staff to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment in their work, to have a sense of purpose and the knowledge that they are working for something greater than themselves.
- Students: In essence, we aim to broaden the minds and horizons of our students. We do this through a broad and deep curriculum; high-quality teaching, and through the routines of our Hive Switch, which develop a sense of personal accountability, a strong work ethic and excellent learning habits. Students must leave Turton with good qualifications and good character as their passport to their future.
- We recognise that our effect, as teachers, is far greater for those students who are disenfranchised, than it is for those who are privileged. Our work in classrooms to include and engage students who are disenfranchised, is less about identified groups and intervention and more about ensuring that our planning, pedagogy, delivery and routines are continually adjusted and reformed to include those students who are on the periphery of learning in our classrooms. Teachers are aware of their own agency in creating a group relationship within the classroom. This group relationship has a more powerful effect on well-being and inclusion than one-to-one relationships. Teachers use their agency to identify which children are on the outside of this group relationship, then work to include them.

- We create financial safety through the financial efficacy of a tight budget. All our work is under-pinned by strategic and effective financial management. We take a visionary and creative approach to the delegation of resources, always using public money for the greater good.

\*There are many reasons why students may be disenfranchised, these include: poverty, abuse and neglect, lack of parental support, feeling different, introversion, anxiety, substance misuse, lethargy and boredom, to name a few. Knowing the reason for disenfranchisement is less important than knowing that students aren't included and seeking to include them.