



# ST JAMES

Senior Boys' School

## Aims & Ethos Policy

### AIMS

- To foster the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical development of boys as fully as possible.
- To enable boys to develop into open-hearted young people who will be able to lead full and useful lives in the service of others.
- To build good character by providing boys with moral and ethical values.
- To provide training in self-awareness, stillness and attention.
- To provide the boys with teachers who love their subjects, set high standards, inspire and encourage.

### ETHOS

#### Background

St James was founded in 1975 by Leon MacLaren in order to provide an education that would nourish the whole human being. He believed that the highest aim of human life was the search for truth and that this could be found in the peace and stillness of unity. The Philosophy of Unity (Sanskrit - Advaita, or non-dual) holds that there is no difference in the essential nature of all creatures. An education which provided for spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical development would bring fulfilment. Today St James continues to promote an ethos based on the Philosophy of Unity, supported by Mindfulness training for both teachers and pupils.

## **Philosophy**

Practical philosophy lessons are provided once a week for all year groups. The focus in Years 7 and 8 is on service, character and self-awareness. In Years 9 – 11 philosophical, moral and religious themes are explored with a view to broadening the mind, considering moral and ethical questions and developing reason. In Year 11 opportunities are given for debating moral and topical issues. Years 12 and 13 have their own programme of philosophical issues relevant to the practical needs of young men in society. Mindfulness training is delivered in Year 7 and again in Year 9.

## **Quiet Time**

There are two periods of Quiet Time every day. These are usually taken by the form teacher of each class after registration in the morning and in the afternoon. The whole school practises Quiet Time together when whole school Assemblies are held (usually once a week) or in separate Year Groups. The main focus of these periods of quiet is to provide the boys with the opportunity to rest in the peace of the present moment by becoming still. Boys who have learnt to meditate practise sounding their mantra in their mind during these periods, and those who wish to silently pray or practise any other spiritual method, are encouraged to do so. The majority of boys will practise one or more Mindfulness techniques, connecting to the senses or the breathing.

Boys are offered the opportunity to be introduced into the practice of mantra-based meditation at the School of Meditation should they so wish. They attend a Welcoming Ceremony with their parents held at the School of Meditation, usually in the Summer Term. Follow-up tutorials are given in a group setting in the Meditation Room during a Form Period.

## **The Pause**

A Pause is practised at the beginning and end of every lesson. The boys are asked to sit balanced and upright and to close their eyes. Keeping the body as still as possible, the mind is brought into the present, either by connecting with the senses, such as touch or listening, or by giving attention to the breath as it enters and leaves the body. After a short period of time the teacher sounds a traditional dedication in Sanskrit which Years 7 and 8 repeat. The words are 'Om Paramatmane Nama', meaning 'to the Universal Self a bow'. This is followed by the Sanskrit word 'Atha' at the start and 'Iti' at the end of the activity. The idea is that the activity is offered as a service to the universe.

## **Assembly**

Full school Assemblies are held once a week (occasionally twice) and split assemblies (Lower, Senior and Sixth Form) once a week also. A pause, dedication and traditional prayer are usually followed by an address by the Head, Quiet

Time and then a hymn.

## Mindfulness

Since 2015 St James has embraced the opportunities offered by the development of Mindfulness. The Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) has provided the *.be* eight-week Mindfulness training (Foundations) which is offered to all staff. There are currently three teachers trained to deliver the *.be* course to pupils and one member of staff who has completed the School Mindfulness Lead course and is trained to teach adults. The School Mindfulness Lead also takes a parents' mindfulness group for the eight-week course.

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