

The Canterbury Academy



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Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Canterbury Multi Academy Trust now has an annual turnover of nearly £14,000,000. It employs nearly 300 people (one of Canterbury's biggest employers). It oversees City View Nurseries Ltd; The Canterbury Primary School; The Cavendish ASD primary provision; The Canterbury High School; The Speech & Language Facility; the largest non-selective sixth form in Kent/Medway and is one of the largest of all schools (attracting many grammar school transfers in). It provides exceptional programmes for post-16 performing arts and sport; The Peter Jones Enterprise Academy; The City & Coastal College with programmes of study for 14-16 years olds in the area, who otherwise would have been permanently excluded by their schools; The Canterbury Youth Commission; and works with Adult Education. It is responsible for over 2000 children.

The Canterbury Academy suffered in 2015 when an Ofsted team downgraded the High School to 'Requires Improvement'. We formally complained. This judgement did damage the school because many people do not realise how whimsical Ofsted can be, how limited the view of any lead inspector may be and how inconsistent Ofsted's judgements will be. Some of these judgements linger for years. The Academy has deliberately worked to be different from most other schools. The Canterbury Academy believes that all children are good at something and that there is much more to education than schools simply becoming increasingly efficient examination cramming factories. This Academy tries to maintain a broad and balanced offer. There is academic excellence (its grammar school stream's academic results were outstanding); excellence in sport; performing arts excellence and excellence in practical learning with enterprise. Therefore, much as I have reservations about the Ofsted system, we should celebrate what this experienced and thoughtful team said about The Canterbury High School in November 2017:

- *The executive and senior leaders and the board of directors could not be more determined to give all pupils and students the best possible education and confidence in their futures.*
- *The curriculum, facilities and resources are outstanding and the choice of subjects is exceptionally varied and rich.*
- *The school offers a grammar stream for the most able pupils in Years 7 to 11, and also provides highly effective education for pupils who struggle in mainstream education or academic work.*
- *Almost all the parents who added written comments to their questionnaires praised the school in glowing terms, such as, 'It's a gem of a school with amazing staff.'*
- *The board members are proud that the school is now oversubscribed and increasingly the first choice for parents of high-attaining pupils. They are equally delighted that the specialist sports and performing arts attract so many pupils and students.*
- *The sports academies involve pupils from Year 7 up to the sixth form...leaders identify pupils who have the potential to achieve at county or national standard. Specialist provision swings into action with a careful eye on the balance between work and training.*
- *Sixth formers and pupils of all ages are regularly involved in the numerous theatre productions, musicals and concerts within the performing arts academy. Keen dancers experience ballet, jazz and tap within the four dance studios, and vocalists, instrumentalists and songwriters all enjoy the music facilities, including a state-of-theatre recording studio.*
- *It is difficult to separate extra-curricular provision from the wonderful range of subjects that permeate the curriculum. Several classes are delivered after school hours. These might involve an external specialist teaching a modern foreign language that a small number of pupils want to study, or extension activities for the most able pupils.*
- *In 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE 'standard' (equating to a grade 4 on the new scale) in both English and mathematics increased to over 50%. It was below 40% in 2015. Almost 100% of the 79 pupils in the 'Langton' grammar stream attained the same qualifications – a very strong outcome. The proportion of the top grades (7 to 9) also went up.*

In partnership with Simon Langton  Grammar School for Boys to provide a grammar school band for boys and girls in a comprehensive school for all the talents

City View Pre School & Nursery

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Canterbury CT2 8PT

Tel: 01227 784694

The Canterbury Primary School

City View, Franklyn Road
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Tel: 01227 462883
Fax: 01227 769270

The Canterbury High School

Knight Avenue
Canterbury CT2 8QA

Tel: 01227 463971
Tel: 01227 464872 (Student Line)

The Canterbury Academy Sixth Form

Knight Avenue
Canterbury CT2 8QA

Tel: 01227 463971

The Enterprise & Employability College

Knight Avenue
Canterbury CT2 8QA

Tel: 01227 463971

The Youth & Community Service

Knight Avenue
Canterbury CT2 8QA

Tel: 01227 463791

- Leaders and board members would agree that it is difficult to encapsulate the school and its philosophy in a few words. One headline statement, 'As much as possible, as often as possible, for as many as possible' is a good starting point. However, it does not include the school's key values of 'courtesy, responsibility, honesty, equality, respect and morality' or the belief that, 'Every child is good at something'.
- **They oversee a unique, large, vibrant and increasingly popular school, with a quite exceptional curriculum delivered in outstanding facilities. They never sway from doing what they believe is right for a pupil, regardless of any reduction to their headline measures.**

It is children that matter, not league tables or the performance-related pay rises for executive head teachers or Chief Executive Officers. Individual children are more important than manipulated statistics and dubious comparisons with national averages. For children who have academic gifts then these should obviously be celebrated but not all children are inclined to scholastic excellence and that does not make them second class students. They will be good at something else. They have other gifts, talents, aptitudes, skills and abilities. There is too much snobbery in education, especially in Kent with its selective system of educational apartheid, and too many educational leaders look down their nose at vocational qualifications – until, of course, they need a plumber. In any school a child's normality is their reality and, thus, just as students at The Canterbury Academy may not realise how fortunate they are and how many opportunities they get, students who are not at the Academy do not realise what opportunities they are not getting. At the extreme some schools now merely aspire to polish the ordinary, crunch the curriculum, smash children through as many GCSEs as possible, however inappropriate that may be, and dance to the tune of most recent and daft government ideas, many of which may well do real damage to children.

Let's have it right. Academies and free schools, of themselves, don't make any difference to standards or education. They are just a different organisational, business and financial model which is nothing other than a policy of centralising power, denuding local authorities and a possible step toward remodelling public sector pension provision. Academies have nothing to do with the local authority. They are under the control of the secretary of state through an organisation most people are unaware of (The Office of the Regional Commission) which is managed by individuals most people have never heard of. Parents and local communities are marginalised as academies are fundamentally unaccountable. Large academy chains may offer economies of scale but they may do nothing to serve the local community if they are not based in, or part of, it. Irrespective of what one may have thought about the efficiency and effectiveness of local education authorities they did at least have a commitment to their communities and were, however imperfectly, accountable to them. The accountability model imposed upon schools has forced leaders to focus upon some things at the expense of others and this will quickly mean focussing on some children at the expense of others. There are no two ways about it; the curriculum has narrowed, students who are vulnerable have suffered and examination results at 16 for some have become more important than education for all. Under this model Kent's grammar schools must be a success because their results will always be impressive. But grammar schools don't automatically have the best teachers, the best leaders or the most advanced pedagogy. They select those children at age 10/11 who are most likely to do well in examinations and when these children take examinations at age 16 they do well in them. These children (despite all the twaddle about social mobility) still generally, and will always, come from the more affluent families. Why is that a surprise to anyone? Repeatedly parroting the mantra that grammar schools increase social mobility doesn't make it true – this is, I'm afraid, 'fake news.'

Some parents should be worried. The rise of academy chains is bad news. Some practices in academy chains are very dubious and appear corrupt. The suggested return of selection, in areas that mercifully are presently spared it, was lunatic. Political interference in education based upon personal experience, with a disregard for professional opinion, has been extremely unhelpful. Under-funding is a reality which leads to schools 'filling their boots' by taking more children – some grammar schools take children who are not grammar assessed and some church schools take children who are not of that church and for whose parents and staff faith is an optional extra. There is a head teacher shortage. There is a teacher shortage. It would be hard to recommend a career in teaching to anyone but those with a martyr complex. The pursuit of scholastic excellence at the expense of other forms of achievement is limiting. The confusion of education with examination is dangerous. The measuring of schools through statistics is soul-destroying. The marginalisation of students with SEN, or who are in other ways vulnerable, is happening. The rise in children with mental health issues is alarming. The number of children being home-schooled is rising. The off-rolling of students to protect GCSE league table positions is, whilst understandable, morally reprehensible. The removal of grammar school students who are deemed unlikely to enhance their school's shining reputation for academic excellence at the end of Year 11, or mid-way through an A level course, is morally repugnant.

Nonetheless the Academy has had a stunning couple of years. It really has. I doubt that people realise this. The nurseries are both rated Ofsted 'Good' and The Canterbury Primary School is Ofsted 'Good' with outstanding features. It now has the best accommodation and facilities of any primary school, with a new building, a forest school, The Cavendish Centre (a statement of this Academy's commitment to inclusion) and a new Multi-Use Games Area. It is now a Teaching School. Bev Farrell is a National Leader of Education. It was expected to fill in 2020 but it is growing quickly with less than 100 places left. The High School has had a couple of exceptional years. It has a brand-new building to house increasing numbers of children. It will be oversubscribed again. It, too, received Ofsted 'Good' with many, many outstanding features – which one hopes will undo the damage caused by the last report, since the school is not fundamentally different. The school achieved some of the best examination results in the

area. The grammar school stream managed almost 100%. Our City & Coastal College is recognised as a model of outstanding practice. Its students all had positive destinations and its results were amongst the very best in Kent. Of great interest is its nationally regarded Bike Project which has helped young adults, attracted interest from the DfE and raised nearly £10,000 in funding. The Sixth Form grew to over 600. There are now over 50 students jointly taught with our partner Simon Langton Boys' Grammar. Last year its results were the best ever with over 100 applying to university. This year it will be over 150, including applications to Oxbridge. All this proves that the Academy performs well academically at all levels and that this can happen alongside a commitment to 'as much as possible, as often as possible, for as many as possible'. Schools should not have to choose between academic excellence and other activities: they can successfully offer both.

Sport, Performing Arts and Practical Learning, with enterprise, are important. They really are and more people should be making more noise about their disappearance from the 11-16 curriculum. The primary school now has elite tennis players. It also has super talented gymnasts Daniel Nolan & Benjamin Lyons (Gold), Leo Macklin & Abdul Alsoufi (Bronze); Alice Hobbins/Harrison Stroud (Bronze); Josie Cooper/Jay Ledner (Gold); Hollie Edwards & Amelia Okao (Bronze); Chelsie Robinson & Corey Young (Gold) in national competition. The primary school took to rugby for the first time and won the local competition. Ross Johnstone (Year 11) has been selected for Kent u16 Football Team. Archie Hatcher (Year 7) has been selected for the Kent School's u12 Football Team. Tamara Fournillier-Onadeko (Year 10), Sam Alajiki (Year 10), Tunde Oyerinde (Year 13) and Jonathan Brown (Year 13) have been selected to train with England age group basketball squads over Christmas. Elliot Bailey (Year 14) received national recognition in the Elite Academy Basketball League by being named Player of the Week. Bradley Goldsack (Year 11) and Taylor Chandler (Year 13) were selected as associate members of Kent Cricket Academy. Ed Taylor (Year 12) has been selected as an associate member of Sussex Cricket Academy. Lewis Marsh (Year 9) made the quarter finals of the county u16 table tennis competition. Leo Mapp, Marcus Mattioli, Amelia Bundock, Micky Barratt, Luke Mattioli and Shem Onadeko all came first in their categories at a regional gymnastic competition. Ayla Payten (Year 12) and Erin Payten (Year 11) represented England u18 at touch rugby over the summer. Ciaran Brewer (Year 11) won the Kent u14 Tennis Championships in August. Tom Patterson (Year 7) has been selected for the Kent u14 Golf squad. Ben Bayfield (Year 10) has made the podium in National Junior Supermoto Championship riding events. Interestingly enough, the Canterbury Academy and Simon Langton combined elite rugby squad contained 9 students from the Academy in their last fixture.

In the performing arts things continue to be exceptional. There is a new sixth form Film Academy creating a film project in Scotland at request of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The Academy will have a partnership with a professional agency for performers. Our Cascade dancers were the opening act for The Canterbury Festival. The newly launched Primary Institute for Performing Arts launched in September was in the local press. Year 12 Performing Artists have delivered their Pantomime tour of local primaries and care homes which was the best received yet. Maizy Theze, yet again, is National Champion several times over. Students from the Acting Academy are appearing in professional films like 'Christopher Robin' starring Ewan MacGregor and on BBC1, Children In Need. Roberta Cashman, Year 10, performed at RADA Studios in London. Eight students performed in the West End through our partner the Pauline Quirke Academy. Olivia Laing is one of 20 children nationwide to be selected for the elite RSC programme. And, if anyone wants to know why the performing arts are important then all they had to do was come to this year's Christmas Cabaret. It had primary, secondary and sixth formers performing – it was magnificent and in total nearly 250 students took part. That is simply stunning.

Practical Learning and Enterprise continues to offer much to students whose skills and talents are not academic, sporting or performing arts. Positive destinations are helped by students going on to work in hair and beauty, catering, construction, child care and other areas where practical skills are at a premium. More students are benefitting from our working relationship with Lloyds Bank, providing more work placements and offering employment for some of our students. Sixth form Students have travelled to Latvia and Germany as part of the EU's Erasmus Project to look at employment and education. Students in our Chef's Academy visited Bakkavour who produce food for Marks and Spencer in Tilmanstone to complete a day's course for Food and Hygiene at Level 2. They all passed and got to have a tour and look around the company. Practical learning can transform lives. Casey Warren, a member of the Chefs Academy, has started a 4 month work experience placement in the Alps for Ski Season before returning to complete her course and go to University. This year the great innovation is that we will be the first school in the country to partner with The Peter Jones Enterprise Academy. For too long schools have been told they must provide the employees of tomorrow – partially right and very wrong – there is no reason why schools should not be encouraging the entrepreneurs and employers of tomorrow.

It is a pleasure to report that this Academy works with a charity that helps orphan children in Uganda. They are always desperate for help. This year the students have managed to get pledges for a significant amount of money to support the charity build a maternity clinic to promote better health amongst the rural population. The greatest gift any of us can give is help to others less fortunate than ourselves.

School will end on Wednesday 20th December with a final assembly finishing at 1pm at the High School. Buses will unfortunately not be available from school. Children will leave the Primary School at 1.15pm. The new term starts for the children (but not for me) on Thursday 4th January 2018 as a normal school day with normal timings.

Finally, this is my last letter after 27 years at the school. 'Je ne regrette rien' except that I wish I could have done more. The Academy is based upon some simple ideas. Education is about opportunity, 'as much as possible, as often as possible, for as many as possible', which is provided on a university style campus for children offering 'cradle to grave' learning based upon academic excellence, excellence in sport, excellence in the performing arts and excellence in practical learning. The campus is a magnificent educational provision. All children are good at something. Academic achievement is important but there are also other important forms of achievement. Education should be inclusive and every child should matter. The Academy belongs to its children and its community. It has never been mine; my name does not appear at the gates or on the notepaper, as I have merely held it in trust. I shall miss the simple things: 'Good morning, sir' or 'Did you teach my dad?' My one overriding memory will be of the children's energy, their willingness to try, their positive nature, their growing sense of self belief, their successes, their sense of humour, their openness and their unpretentiousness. They have brought the Academy to the excellent place it is. They are the reason for its continual improvement. They are both the creators and beneficiaries of what it can offer. They are the reason for this remarkable journey and a remarkable success story.

I have never really been bothered about Ofsted 'Outstanding' under the present system. I always wanted the Academy to be exceptional. At the end of the Ofsted debrief, we asked the team to give us a verbal and 'unOfsted'-like opinion of what they thought of us, since they were all experienced educationalists. They asked, 'As a school?' and we responded, 'No, more as a concept or a vision.' The answer will stay with me forever:

'Remarkable really, we have never seen anything quite like it.'

I wish Mr Watson, his team, the staff, the Academy and, most importantly, its children, every success in the future.

I wish you all well.

My regards and a happy Christmas.

Thank you.

It has been my privilege.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Karnavas', written over a horizontal line.

Mr. P. Karnavas
Executive Principal