

Liverpool College



# Intent 2022

*Outstanding to Transformative*

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Outstanding to Transformative



*Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality”, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.*

*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.<sup>1</sup>*

**Arundhati Roy**

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# INTRODUCTION

After two covid-induced lockdowns preceded by nine Ofsted outstanding judgments received between November 2019 and March 2020, an opportunity arose for reflection. This short document outlines a direction or next steps for Liverpool College in creating a framework for strategic development beyond Ofsted outstanding ratings and introduces a new criterion of judgment on the future development of the College based on its declared ambition to be a transformative learning community.

Intent 2022 is an invitation for stakeholders of Liverpool College to offer responses and ideas which can be developed into a plan for the further development of Liverpool College as a transformative school. Because of the covid-related restrictions, our plan is to gather initial reactions, ideas and responses at [intent2022@liverpoolcollege.org.uk](mailto:intent2022@liverpoolcollege.org.uk) and use these to structure the further development of strategy.

# Background

# I CONTEXT

Liverpool College is an outstanding all-through state funded boarding and day school in Liverpool. Since 2013, when it converted to academy status, the College has grown from 725 pupils to 1550 pupils. It is the most oversubscribed school in the Merseyside region, this year attracting more than 1700 preferences with more than 1000 first and second preferences for 145 places available in Year 7. In November 2019, the school was inspected under the new Ofsted framework and received all outstanding judgments in all phases and areas of school life. In March 2020 its boarding provision was inspected and received the maximum of three outstanding judgments.

At the time of conversion, the College expressed its intent to use its all-through provision, its history and experience as an independent school, academy freedoms and state funding to provide a unique and transformative educational provision to the young people of Liverpool without regard to their ability to pay fees. The stated strategy was to do this through a holistic approach to education. This intent led to a curricular ambition, codified in 2018 through the creation of the LCA+ curriculum model, which stressed the importance of a balanced curriculum to include an emphasis on what was termed “character education.” In practice this character education initially took the form of the maintenance and extension of typical independent school extra-curricular provision and school routines including

chapel, CCF and D of E, competitive games (including a full fixture programme with independent schools), and a very developed and extensive activity programme, mandatory from Key Stage 2 onward. The school's success in creating this balanced academic and enrichment curricular provision was recognised as "staggering" by Ofsted in November 2019.

Seven years on from the expression of this intention, and having become the only outstanding all-through state funded boarding and day school in England, the College is evaluating the extent to which its intent has been realized:

- Does the College offer a curriculum and experience which no other school can or does provide?
- Does every pupil receive a transformative education?
- What have been the most unanticipated or surprising elements of the College's transition to state school status?
- What are the obstacles to the achievement of the College's intent?
- What should the College do now that it is operating with the affirmation of nine separate outstanding judgments from Ofsted which endorse its approach?
- Is the College fulfilling its stated mission?
- Is the College having the impact on educational philosophy, practices and provision in the city and the country that it wants to have?



This short pamphlet aims to provide an invitation to further discussion leading to a considered judgment on these questions.

## II A CHANGING MISSION

The College's mission has changed in the last seven years. At the time of conversion, the mission was to offer an independent school-style education to all pupils in Liverpool without regard to the ability to pay. The strategy to achieve this was, and to a certain extent still is, based on the belief that the educational DNA of Liverpool College as an independent school with a tradition of a holistic education would, in and of itself, lead to provision and experiences for pupils which would be holistic, transformative and unique. To some extent this proved to be the case during the transition. The history of the College as an independent school with an established reputation in the city led to a flood of applications and requests for admissions. During inspections, in pupil voice exercises, and in surveys of pupils, parents, and staff, the array of enrichment activities, the breadth of curriculum, the relationship with teachers which were all a hallmark of Liverpool College as an independent school are still often mentioned as the unique and most noticeable characteristic of the school as a state school.

The College recognized the weaknesses in its provision as a state school, and began to focus on an agenda to improve teaching and learning and to become more inclusive. The teaching and learning agenda were driven by changes in cohorts which required different and differentiated teaching strategies and skills and by a desire to respond to the new regulatory framework in which the College was operating.

Leadership was revamped to achieve improvements in these areas. Focus was placed on the quality of teaching and the leadership of teaching. New and more carefully crafted schemes of work, marking policies, and regular CPD focused on improving teaching. A revamping of leadership structures in the primary phase, a talk for teaching programme, a new appraisal system, a rapid expansion of support for pupils with social and emotional as well as special educational needs, an increased record keeping and use of SIMS, and the development of new academic and pastoral interventions all absorbed the primary energies and intellectual capital of the College. Suddenly, the College was no longer only trying to be a state funded independent school which was available for all. It challenged itself to adopt, in addition, the best practices in teaching and learning as practised in the state sector.

Enormous strides were made in making the College inclusive. From behaviour policies to learning mentors, from provision for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) to staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD), from pupil premium interventions to the anticipated day boarding programme, the College set about making itself a truly comprehensive and inclusive school. This was summarized to an Ofsted inspector in the phrase “we are determined to make the College an instrument for the destruction of the effects of disadvantage.” The moral purpose of the College had become the moral purpose of any outstanding state funded school and the purpose so often proclaimed as primary and essential by politicians and regulators: ensuring that pupils who were disadvantaged were not educationally

disadvantaged and were able, through the efforts of the school, to overcome the effects of their disadvantage.

To some extent, this project became paramount and has shown the clearest results. Liverpool College has increased its percentage of pupil premium and free school meal pupils, pupils who were previously children in care, pupils who are in the care of the local authority and pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan every single year since the conversion to academy status. The performance of disadvantaged pupils at the College is better relative to the performance of disadvantaged pupils elsewhere. The performance of disadvantaged pupils at the College in national examinations relative to their starting points is very good. Within four years, the pupil body of Liverpool College became more ethnically diverse than the population of the city of Liverpool. The success of the College in increasing its inclusivity is recognized by Ofsted, the city and by parents and pupils.

From the perspective of mission, this situation begs the question whether this original mission of providing a holistic education within a broad and balanced curriculum which has been joined or conjoined by a mission to destroy the effects of disadvantage can be achieved. Is it possible to dedicate the level of staff and leadership resources, intellectual and emotional energy required to destroy the effects of disadvantage while delivering a broad curriculum of holistic education such as one usually delivered by independent schools which includes substantial investment of time and resources in developing and providing enrichment subjects and with substantially larger than normal enrichment and extra-curricular programmes than other state funded schools? Can

the College afford the staff and leadership to do both well? Has one part of the mission suffered when the College emphasized the other? Are the two related: i.e. does better enrichment also mean better inclusion and vice versa? Does the College's current vision of inclusion still rest on the broad and transformational educational experience which includes the "staggering" number of enrichment opportunities?

### III

## WHY TAKE STOCK NOW?

The College has changed not only in its facilities and physical appearance but in its staff, programmes, routines and activities. The College has added a Pre-Prep building, a sixth form centre, a middle school building and hall, a Prep School addition, a boarding house. It now has a staff of 192, with 130 of them employed from and after September 2013. The current Vice Principals joined after 2013. Purpose Passion Challenge, LCA+, activities, the Lerpoolian Learner, the Lerpoolian Standard, staff Learning Impact Meeting Time (LIT) , weekly CPD, Wilton Scholars, nurture groups, character programme, and many other academic and pastoral programmes and initiatives are relatively new. Constant and rapid change has been the order of the day for seven years.

For some time, the desire to move the school forward and embrace without equivocation or delay the requirements of its new state school status and regulatory framework in order to achieve an outstanding judgment meant that reflection on whether the College was achieving its stated intent was deemed a luxury and a process which would likely give rise to the expression of expectations and ambitions that could not be fulfilled. Now the College has a much clearer picture of what it takes to be an outstanding state school. It is therefore perhaps an opportune time to take systematic stock of the extent to which the College has met its own expectations. The College has now successfully completed its conversion to

state school status and can set an explicit intent to either perfect the curriculum, the programmes and the routines which have been painstakingly developed, often by trial and error, over the last seven years in pursuit of an infinite aggregation of marginally more perfect adherence to the Ofsted handbook in convergence with best state school practice, or it can decide to affirm an intent to innovate and lead the creation of new practice to create truly different, unique and exceptional educational provision in accordance with its stated intent at the time of transition to academy status.

In either case, the College can look back with some pride and look forward with much confidence. In 2012, all stakeholders of the College embraced the challenge of becoming a state school. There can be no doubt that collectively stakeholders have succeeded in doing this. The College is recognized as an outstanding school and enjoys several partnerships and growing relationships with other colleague institutions in the state and independent sector. It delivers an education which incorporates best practices in the state sector while preserving many of the programmes of its independent school history. The College has achieved this transition success through convergence; convergence of its history, talents, and provision with the practices of the best examples of state funded education. For the future, it must decide whether it can serve its likely future cohorts best by focusing on being an outstanding state school. Is the ambition to be and remain an outstanding school through convergence with state school best practice sufficient to achieve the intent to provide a truly holistic, inclusive education which is also an instrument for the destruction of the effects of disadvantage?

This is the strategically definitional question which the College can now confidently address.



## **Your responses, thoughts and ideas**

We need your help in developing our intent – we hope you will take some time to tell us what you think about what you read, what excites you and worries you about it.

What further questions come to mind?

What ideas do you have about how the intent can be developed further?

Do you have practical suggestions for implementation?

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# **The Transformative School**

## IV INTRODUCING A NEW CRITERION OF JUDGMENT

To introduce the concept of a Transformative School is to suggest a new criterion of judgment on schools. Following the example of Ofsted and the government, employees and stakeholders judge the school and any school as outstanding, good, requiring improvement or inadequate, not as transformative or conventional. Whether employees or volunteers of the College, parents of children who attend Liverpool College, pupils or students of Liverpool College, or residents of the city of Liverpool, the vast majority of interested people think, almost as a matter of axiomatic belief, that the basic structure, organization, routines, operations, activities and curriculum of the College are working and are good. There is good reason for this trust. Ofsted, committed as it is to the continuous improvement of schools through the vision of holistic education propounded in its latest inspection framework, has said the College is outstanding so, many people assume, it must be, at least until Ofsted says something else. The 1550 children who attend Liverpool College with pleasure and to their clear benefit overwhelmingly rate the school highly. Much great work goes on at Liverpool College. Pupils, parents, and staff, know from personal experience the amazing sacrifices, efforts, strategies, energies, and possibilities of the College. The vast majority of parents and pupils are satisfied with its provision. All these facts make the concept of the College's transformative

capacity appear irrelevant or moot. Instead, most people accept that the College can improve, marginally, even if they do not believe that it needs to focus on becoming transformative, capable of effecting great and substantial change in pupils, staff and stakeholders.

The starting point for this introduction of a standard of transformative capacity and impact at Liverpool College is not the clear good practice which exists in the school. It is rather a reconsideration of the purposes of school education itself and an assessment whether these purposes are in fact sufficiently transformative for all pupils and ambitious for all pupils and what would need to be done to make them so. Rather than listing the steps which can be taken to improve Liverpool College still further, such as those listed in the College's annual development plan, many of which have been tried or implemented, and most of which are obvious and known and part of every school's development activity, the starting point must be to enumerate and diagnose more fundamental and as yet undiagnosed practices and assumptions which impact the capacity and efficacy of Liverpool College, and by extension, most English schools.

In short, Liverpool College should use the **standard of transformative impact** above and beyond Ofsted ratings or comparative school data to measure its success in achieving its intent. In some respects, the covid crisis and its concomitant lockdown have provided an impetus and encouragement to the pursuit of this exercise. The covid crisis revealed that the way things work and had worked in Liverpool College is not necessarily set in stone and is not necessarily as good as it might be. Necessity, the College has experienced directly, is

indeed the mother of invention. The College has adapted to the covid crisis by changing many things that it does, sometimes drastically. In the process, pupils, staff and stakeholders have discovered that customary and usual practices can not only be improved marginally, they can also be challenged, interrogated, discussed and studied. If found wanting, they can be changed, and at times done away with and replaced with other practices. This experience of substantial trial and error and change in schools during covid has affected the College by making it more open to change, including substantial and fundamental change. It is from this experience that the introduction of a new criterion of judgment or a rediscovery of the original criterion can arise.

As a state school, Liverpool College is not the arbiter of the purposes of education. These purposes are held in common by society and are not often deemed controversial. The most generally agreed consensus definition of the purposes of schools can be found in an unlikely source: the speeches on the purposes of education by school ministers. Liverpool College must undertake any evaluation of its transformative capacity in relation to these purposes. **A transformative school is a school which can substantially and consistently improve the personal trajectory of all its pupils within the context of the educational purposes.** This is not, unlike Ofsted's data measurement of schools, a relative measurement of outcomes or progress against the outcomes and progress of similar pupils in other schools. It is a measurement of the effect of a school's activity on the pupil viewed holistically and in the context of the purposes of education.

*The Purpose of Education*

The purpose of education is a topic about which philosophers and policy makers have disagreed for millennia. A summary of the typical consensus of these purposes of education is set out in a speech by Nick Gibb MP, the current schools minister. In 2015, Mr Gibb addressed the Education Reform Summit and set out his views on the purposes of education<sup>2</sup>.

Mr Gibb identifies three key purposes.

The first is to prepare pupils for successful participation in the economy. He states that research shows this is best achieved through a knowledge-based curriculum (in a subsequent speech in 2017, he reiterates his conviction about this idea further<sup>3</sup>). He alludes in his 2015 speech to the lamentable track record in productivity growth in England. His view is that the economy of the country and the economic life of its citizens is held back by the failure of schools to prepare pupils. He points out that schools should base their primary activity on a knowledge-based curriculum which will enable pupils to participate in what he terms a demanding economy.

A second purpose is loosely termed culture which for no stated reason Mr Gibb sees as separate from the knowledge-based curriculum. Schools must ensure that pupils are able to participate not only in the economy but in the culture of the country and have the ability to enjoy intellectual and cultural life. He points an accusing finger at those who believe schools are merely for rote learning. Research, he claims, has revealed that schools are essential in developing young

people into citizens who can to access, participate in and enjoy cultural life and the life of the mind.

The third purpose is preparation for adult life, which for reasons that are unclear, he views as separate from the life of culture. He alludes to the work of researchers like Robert Putnam, Angela Duckworth, and James Heckman (all Americans) which has revealed that character, resilience, grit, and aspiration are essential ingredients to pupils' success in school and in life. Putnam's research for example reveals that the lack of access to extracurricular activities may be a factor in the failure of pupils from disadvantaged communities to make educational progress and be successful later in their lives.

The entire speech, rather typically for any discussion of the purposes of state funded education, is placed in the context of education as having a moral purpose in delivering social justice and social mobility by ensuring that every child, regardless of ability or background, is encouraged, guided and able to maximize their intellectual and personal potential.

It is not difficult to see how these three purposes are reflected in the regulatory regime of the Ofsted handbook for inspections<sup>4</sup>.

### *Healthy Schools*

For an organization like a school to pursue and achieve its purposes it must operate as a functional, effective or "healthy" organization. Measuring a school against its transformative capacity is therefore also to measure its culture and ethos against this standard of health and effectiveness. Extensive research has been undertaken into what makes

schools healthy organizations. As early as 1987 Hoy and Feldman had developed and published on OHI, an organizational health inventory framework for schools. The College has adopted Graham Lowe's 2003 definition of a healthy organization and applied it to schools:

*Healthy schools are those whose culture, climate and practices create an environment that promotes pupil and employee health, well-being and safety as well as effectiveness in achieving its purposes.*<sup>5</sup>

In a healthy school, these purposes of education as outlined in Mr Gibb's speech would be consistently achieved in a sustainable manner through a culture, environment and practices which inspired and enabled pupils and staff to achieve them. Only a healthy school could be a transformative school and achieve its purposes through a culture, practices, and an environment which ensured the well-being of employees and pupils. It is axiomatic that the purposes set out by Mr Gibb cannot and would not be achieved if the culture, practices and environment of the school in which they were being pursued did not promote the health and well-being of the people who make up the organisation. This insight has belatedly entered the Ofsted inspection handbook which now defines staff workload, for example, as an inspectable matter. There is much research to suggest that all effective organisations are effective precisely because they are healthy. The management consultants McKinsey, for example, have studied decades of research on organizations which show how the achievement of mission or purpose is reliant on certain management and leadership practices which promote well-being.



### *Characteristics of a Transformative School*

It is therefore possible to list some characteristics of a transformative school based on the uncontroversial definition of a healthy school as well as the uncontroversial and mainstream purposes of education enunciated by the government which funds state schools:

#### **1. Achievement, Curriculum and Outcomes:**

In a transformative school, all pupils follow and master a knowledge-based curriculum which provides maximum intellectual challenge and knowledge content. They are successful in their learning of a knowledge-based curriculum through the systematic and maximized development of cognition (the what), metacognition (the how) and motivation (the why).

#### **2. Confidence and Aspiration:**

A transformative school produces pupils who have the ability and confidence and resilience to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life of their city and country.

#### **3. Habits:**

A transformative school develops in all its pupil the habits of personal success and fulfilment: grit, self-regulation of behaviour and conduct, teamwork, independence, leadership, self-knowledge, reflection, generosity and self-efficacy.

#### **4. Social Justice, Social Mobility and Social Cohesion:**

A transformative school is an instrument of social justice by contributing to social cohesion among a diverse group of

pupils and stakeholders. It is a substantially effective organization for the destruction of the effects of disadvantage. In a transformative school, disadvantage does not have an effect on progress, next steps, or outcomes.

### **5. Well-being and Sustainability:**

A transformative school promotes the health and well-being and safety of pupils and employees sustainably and over time so that the purposes of the education the school provides can be pursued and achieved consistently.

## **Your responses, thoughts and ideas**

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**Outstanding but not Transformative**

# V

## A GENTLE BENCHMARKING OF THE COLLEGE AGAINST ITS TRANSFORMATIVE AMBITIONS AND INTENT

A case can be made that the five characteristics of the transformative school are found at Liverpool College in demonstrable and developed forms. It is the view of the regulator<sup>6</sup> that this is certainly true relative to many other schools.<sup>7</sup>

It is not true however, in absolute terms or in terms of the experience of many pupils, that Liverpool College has done all it can to promote or achieve the five characteristics of a transformative school. This is particularly clear when the provision of the school is benchmarked not against the practices and outcomes of other similar state schools but against the intent of the school to be transformative for all pupils.

### **1. The nexus between curriculum outcomes and confidence:**

It is accepted and customary that in Britain many pupils do not pass exams, and therefore do not master the curriculum. Ministers and exam boards pride themselves on controlling pass rate rises. On many GCSE exams about a third of entries are not awarded a pass. Society seems to accept this fact with a shrug of the shoulders.

At Liverpool College, such percentages of failure are lower than the national average, primarily because of the intake and cohorts coming through the school and the exceptional efforts of teachers providing teaching and support to pupils

beyond their contractual obligations. Even with a statistically significant positive added value, large swathes of the College's pupils do not master the curriculum they follow. Currently 1 in 5 of our pupils do not pass 5 GCSEs including English and Maths. For boys this is more like 1 in 4. This means that these pupils have in fact experienced failure in the activity in which they spent most time at school. Disadvantaged pupils at Liverpool College do relatively better than in other schools, but their outcomes remain outcomes of failure in absolute terms. More than 40% of disadvantaged boys at Liverpool College fail to obtain 5 GCSEs including English and Maths. This compares favourably to disadvantaged pupils in other Liverpool schools but it can hardly be a sign of the transformative capacity of a school when so many of its pupils fail to meet the pass standard after 12 years of formal education. It is therefore not true to say that mastery of a knowledge-based curriculum as proposed by government is a universal experience at Liverpool College. This is despite the focus, attention, intervention, and structure of the school day, year, and routines and the efforts of teachers and the pupil him or herself over the preceding 12 years.

It may be argued that what should matter in a transformative school is not whether all pupils pass all exams but how they do in exams relative to other pupils like them. This view fails to consider the personal and often dramatic impact of following an inappropriate curriculum on a pupil's confidence and the effect that failure to achieve has on a pupil's ability to realize some of the other purposes of education. Failure is a blow to confidence. It is interpreted by the young person who fails after 12 years of mandatory education as an

indication or intimation that they are unlikely to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of their community to the same extent as pupils who have been successful. This is because the psychological and developmental effects of failure have been researched and have been found to extend beyond the specific failure.

*The ‘winner effect’ is a term used in biology to describe how an animal that has won a few fights against weak opponents is much more likely to win later bouts against stronger contenders. As Ian Robertson reveals, it applies to humans, too.*

*Success changes the chemistry of the brain, making you more focused, smarter, more confident and more aggressive. The effect is as strong as any drug. And the more you win, the more you will go on to win.<sup>8</sup>*

To be a transformative school, pupils need to experience success in that school. When success at school is defined primarily in academic terms and activity at school is focused and structured primarily or exclusively for academic success, a school limits the ways in which a pupil can experience success and places pressures on itself and on pupils to succeed in a narrow system which is in fact designed to make a substantial percentage of pupils fail. As a promoter and source of well-being, as an incubator of confidence and ambition, a school where failure is common because academic success is deemed most important, as it is in almost all non-selective state schools in England, may be outstanding but is not and is not able to become a transformative school.

*When animals, be them tadpole or human, win at something, their brains release testosterone and dopamine. With time and repetition, this signal morphs the brain's structure and chemical configuration to make successful animals smarter, better trained, more confident and more likely to succeed in the future. Biologists call it the Winner Effect.*

*The not-yet-named Loser Effect is equally cyclical: contrary to Nietzsche's adage, what doesn't kill you often makes you weaker. In one study, monkeys who made a mistake in a trial – even after mastering the task on par with other monkeys – later performed worse than monkeys who made no mistakes. "In other words," explains Scientific American, they were "thrown off by mistakes instead of learning from them." Some research similarly suggests that failure can impede concentration, thereby sabotaging future performance. Students arbitrarily told they failed compared to their peers later displayed worse reading comprehension.*

*Finally, when we fail once, we're more likely to fail again at the same goal – and sometimes more catastrophically. In one study, dieters fed pizza and convinced they'd "ruined" their daily diet goal ate 50% more cookies immediately afterward than those not on diets at all. When we fall short of our goals once, our brains say "Abandon ship!"<sup>9</sup>*

## **2. Marginal progress in overcoming the effects of disadvantage**

The College's Vice Principal Teaching and Learning has repeatedly recognized and pointed out the gaps in opportunities to gain cultural capital, in habits of reading, and in access



to technology which separate our disadvantaged pupils from our non-disadvantaged pupils. These gaps in opportunities have an effect on confidence and aspiration in those pupils. The College's attempts to address these through the pursuit of current best practice in state schools are not likely to close this gap substantially as these gaps exist in every school in the country and do not appear to be closing dramatically despite the implementation of many innovative practices in many settings and substantial funding to address these gaps. One researcher has argued that the rate at which the gap in educational progress of disadvantaged pupils is closing means it will take 500 years before the gap is indeed closed. There is further evidence that since the introduction of more challenging GCSE examinations, the gaps were in fact growing not closing.<sup>10</sup>

The combination of a lack of cultural capital, poor or mediocre academic performance or ability, and lack of time and opportunity to learn and experience what adults do in the world of work and lack of experience of agency and independence in actually doing things in the community, lead, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, to a lack of confidence and enthusiasm about their future participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the country. The government believes such lack of confidence and ambition can be overcome through an aspirational school culture and proper careers advice, such as proposed by the Gatsby Benchmarks<sup>11</sup>. There is little doubt that careers advice makes a positive difference but pupils lacking in confidence are not what employers are looking for, even among university graduates;

***What skills are employers looking for?***

*When it comes to recruiting graduates, attitudes and aptitudes are often seen as more important than formal qualifications.*

*Although technical and basic skills are required to get past the initial application stage, other aspects such as personal qualities, attitudes, and general aptitudes are then seen as far more critical.*

*Resilience is frequently cited by employers as an essential quality for young people to possess – the ability to cope with setbacks and criticism, be motivated to overcome obstacles, and stay calm under pressure.*

*A positive attitude to work, punctuality, flexibility, verbal communication skills, and the ability to make a professional introduction are all crucial when deciding whether to recruit a young person. Nearly half of employers stated that they had not hired a young person because they felt they did not have the right attitude.*

***What skills are missing?***

*A significant number of employers say graduates lack basic skills in numeracy and literacy. A weakness in basic skills can affect performance in everyday tasks, for example, the ability to draw out information from written texts and instructions, produce written reports, or work through calculations and make sense of numerical data. Employers are also concerned that applicants lack appropriate skills in problem solving, communication, teamwork, analytical thinking, self-management, and resilience (able to cope with change and pressure in the workplace).<sup>12</sup>*

Universities are not terribly different.

*These are the seven qualities that you should try to illustrate in your university application.*

- *A positive attitude towards study...*
- *A passion for the chosen course subject...*
- *An ability to think and work independently...*
- *An ability to persevere and complete tasks...*
- *An inquiring mind...*
- *Good written English.*
- *The ability to work well in groups.*<sup>13</sup>

A review of what employers or universities want as attributes or skills in their students or employees makes clear that pupils who are not academically successful or strong are right to feel less than confident about their next steps and their future. Careers advice and academic qualifications do not by themselves create the skills needed for success in the next steps. This is because the non-numeracy and literacy skills and attributes such as verbal communication, teamwork, and resilience, are not systematically and explicitly assessed and developed in schools to give pupils who are not strong academically confidence that they are in fact able to contribute to the workplace and succeed at the next level.

### **3. Does Liverpool College improve health and well-being?**

Schools nationally and in Liverpool have seen a serious increase in mental health problems among pupils. The increase is by no means limited to pupils who are disadvantaged in some way and was marked even before the arrival of the covid pandemic. Simultaneously, young people across the

country identify as the least happy teenagers in Europe in repeated surveys.<sup>14</sup>

They lay the blame, or at any rate list as a main source of their unhappiness, the culture of high stakes and low frequency assessments in their school, the paucity of time their parents spend with them, as well as the fact they are more likely to be bullied than pupils in other countries and feel that their friendships and school relationships generally are not a source of strength and resilience for them but rather a source of anxiety.

Physical activity and rates of participation in organized sport are down across the country and in Liverpool. In most of the developed world, including Britain, more than 70% of pupils are insufficiently physically active.<sup>15</sup>

Britain has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in Europe. In 2018, around one in 10 children aged four to five were classified as obese, and around one in five children aged 10 to 11 were.<sup>16</sup>

The College offers quite a bit of physical education and opportunities for fitness, but many pupils are minimally active.

Average screen time on phone and computers in the UK is now over six hours per day in late adolescence. Few pupils meet the required time for sleep and exercise.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of secondary school pupils report that they use their phones especially after school. More than 90 percent of our College's mums and dads work making the period after school a time of "drift" in many teenagers' lives. The majority are not using this time before their parents come home from work to exercise, read, write, or even build face to face

relationships. This problem is somewhat curtailed at primary schools because of the offer of after school clubs. No such targeted provision exists in most secondary schools. Because timetables of secondary schools, like Liverpool College secondary phase, do not base themselves on the working schedules of parents, many pupils spend substantial periods of their day unsupervised and unproductively.

The school curriculum, timetable and calendar are not balanced nor conducive to the pursuit of a transformative school with the five characteristics listed above. Physical exercise, while more common in the College than in many other schools, is relatively infrequent and limited and often not made mandatory in later years in the College curriculum. There are certainly many pupils who move little in any given day. There are unhealthy food choices available and many pupils make extremely poor health and well-being choices outside of school, the very opposite of good habits.

The proportion of time spent on academic subjects which will be examined compared to time spent on other educational and cultural developmental activities is approximately 4 to 1 across the College. This is despite the extraordinary opportunities afforded through the College's activities and enrichment programmes. A pupil will spend, on average, in a 14-year career at the College, four times as much time on English and Mathematics than on music, physical activity and art combined. The activities which are accessible to children of lesser innate academic ability and some of the ones in which they excel are systematically devalued by not being examined and not being developed into proper schemes of work with clear challenge and outcomes. The title which they

are given: “enrichment”, or “+”, betray their secondary status, despite the fact that research reveals that the purposes of school can only be achieved if pupils are confident, resilient, and have a solid understanding of the operations of their society and have developed good habits. The LCA+ curriculum model has been helpful in making explicit the College’s holistic vision for education, but the division between A and + both in leadership and in curriculum development is now an obstacle to further integration and balance. Frequently + subjects, topics, activities or sessions which can help a pupil develop these attributes are taught or delivered at the end of a day without the same care, structure and accountability as an academic subject. There is very little group work in the curriculum and few opportunities to work in the community when compared to traditional or conventional teaching and classwork.

The school calendar is very sub-optimal for retention of knowledge as it focuses on the maximization of long summer holidays (seven or eight weeks and at the very time when our campus is best used for outdoor learning), during which time most knowledge learned is lost. For disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils this long period of no contact with school is particularly problematic.<sup>18</sup>

This calendar is a product of an agricultural society or a society where most mums were able to spend most of the summer with their children. These tasks of supervision and care are now handed on to a combination of grandparents, child carers, and summer camps as mothers work. Every school experiences that its staff and pupils struggle towards the end of any longer term. Misbehaviors increase, as does

staff absence and pupil anxiety. Some terms are longer than others. Teaching pressure falls on Michaelmas and Lent term. Teachers and pupils complain of the relentless pace of the academic structure in a school day. There is a lot which must be done in a short period of time each day, leaving less time for breaks, for conversation, for relationships. The combination of calendar and timetable, as well as the lack of variety in experience of school is a source of fatigue and even boredom.

The routines and timetables of the College are similar for pupils whether you are an 11 year-old just arrived at Liverpool College secondary phase or a 16 year-old in her 12th year at the College. This lack of age appropriate differentiation in routines, structures and timetables was highlighted during the covid lockdown. The College does not currently develop its timetables and routines in order to tailor its provision to the needs of a particular age or stage of pupil development and to deliver a more balanced and relational curriculum.

The trend in admissions and cohort composition which will affect Liverpool College is clear. The percentage of our pupils in receipt of pupil premium increases every year. The number of pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan, are children who are looked after or previously looked after, or have a social, emotional or mental health need or special educational need continues in absolute and percentage terms to rise. The overall ability profile of the intake in school is slowly moving towards resembling a more comprehensive, average picture, as would be expected in a non-selective school with an intake across the demographic and geographic areas of Liverpool. It is our stated intention to welcome this breadth of academic ability and social economic

background in our cohorts. In the future, we may suppose, the realities of the ways Liverpool College does not do everything in its power to be a transformative school, some of which are outlined above, will become “more of a reality” not “less of a reality”. The challenge to change in order to create a healthy school culture which can sustain a transformative school which meets the actual needs of all its pupils will increase in size and scope.



## **Your responses, thoughts and ideas**

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What further questions come to mind?

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## **What Pupils Need**

## VI

# A STARTING POINT FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE SCHOOL

The government and Ofsted rightly focus on the academic curriculum and the quality of teaching as the primary drivers of improved educational experience and outcomes for pupils. The view is that a focus on curriculum and teaching will allow pupils to achieve the purposes for which school exists. There is research to support this that but there is also research to support the view that pupils have a range of other needs, primarily emotional, which must be met by school if school is to be transformative for them. These needs are competence, being able to achieve, relatedness, having stable and safe relationships and connectedness to others, and autonomy, being able to make responsible choices.

### **(i) Pupil need for consistently high-quality relationships: the basis of a transformative school**

The Relationships Foundation has been doing research on the importance of relationships in school.

Relationships matter.

Surveys and pupil voice exercises at Liverpool College and elsewhere point out that the single most important factor in a pupil's experience of school as transformative is the quality of the relationships they form with adults and with peers not curriculum or teaching quality.<sup>19</sup>

The College as an all-through school with admission preferences for siblings has a unique opportunity to build

*What enables people to flourish as they go through life? What we know from decades of research from institutions like Harvard or Cambridge, lessons drawn from tens of thousands of people, and hundreds of studies, and a myriad of the brightest sociologists, anthropologists and neuroscientists in the world, is that relational wealth, not material wealth, is a stronger indicator of happiness throughout our lives, and that loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of premature death.*

*“People who are more isolated than they want to be from others – people who are socially excluded – find that they are less happy, their health declines earlier in midlife, their brain functioning declines sooner and they live shorter lives than people who are not lonely” (Robert Waldinger, Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development).*

*Research shows that having a range of close relationships is beneficial to physical and mental health. It tells us that well-connected people live longer and more productive lives than those who are socially isolated; that they are happier at home and at work; that they experience a greater sense of belonging; and that they both participate more in their communities and require less support from social and health services over time.*

*Better relationships between people – what we might call relational health – also improve individual and group well-being, self-esteem, motivation and social engagement. In turn, these enable people to overcome disadvantage and achieve better outcomes in a range of areas, including academic attainment and educational achievement more broadly.*

[www.relationshipsfoundation.org](http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org)

relationships with pupils and families. The all-through nature of the College can be leveraged and linked to the intent to become a relational school and a school with a fully articulated curriculum.

Because it is difficult to measure the quality of relationships in an organization, schools rarely discuss or measure the quality of relationships within the school and how these can be systematically improved. The Relationships Foundation has developed ways to measure the strength and impact of these relationships and how schools can strengthen and improve the quality of relationships.

In order for pupils to experience the school as transformative, they need to attend a school where the quality of relationships is central to the school's transformative intent. This intent can lead to the development of school practice which places relationships at the center of school development and effectiveness.

**(ii) Pupil need for achievement and success related to effort and commitment:**

There is, as cited above, a biological reality of winner effect. Achievement and success breed more achievement and success. A transformative school creates this effect in its pupils. When achievement is narrowly defined or the curriculum is exclusively academic or experienced as exclusively academic and other school activities or goals and targets are not part of the recognized curriculum many pupils will not experience achievement and success. Pupils need a variety of ways to achieve which are recognized as valid and important by the school. These various paths of achievement offer pupils

with different interests and talents a way to be challenged, to achieve, and to be recognized as having achieved.

### **(iii) Pupil need for balance and variety**

Like adults, pupils do not thrive in environments of constant change. Nor do they thrive in repetitive environments of no variety. Studies have shown that absence of variety leads to poor behaviour. Liverpool College, like any school, constantly seeks order or balance in its operations and provision. Some research suggests that there is a correlation between structured variety and happiness and well-being. The key is to balance variety with a structure within each day, week and term, in a way that allows for experiences of productivity and effectiveness.

For a school, there is both the danger that a lack of variety in any given day leads to boredom, poor behaviour and demotivation and that a school day or school year filled with frantic activity is likely to lead to poor relationships and feelings of futility and frustration.

A starting point for the development of a transformative school is an evaluation of the daily, weekly and annual experience of school for a pupil. Schools, as institutions, are hard wired to sacrifice the human need for variety of activity and experiences for ordered and predictable structures.<sup>20</sup>

### **(iv) Pupil need for health and well-being promotion and skills**

A transformative school promotes pupil and employee health and well-being because these are essential to achieving the characteristics of a transformative school. Physical activity

*In [our research], we looked at the effect of variety of our activities on overall happiness. We found that over a day or a week or a month, variety – perhaps consistent with people’s perceptions – leads to greater happiness. However, over shorter periods of time than a day, such as an hour, 15 minutes [or a] half-hour, when variety actually does get experienced as multitasking, it actually becomes fairly stressful, and instead of variety increasing my happiness, it makes me less happy.*

*This is not necessarily just in the workplace. This is even at home. [For example], on a weekend – as you brought up in an article you co-authored – you could be at home with your kids but you’ve got to cut the grass and fix something on the back deck or something like that. When you have all of those things melding together, it could [become a] negative.*

*Mogilner: Right. It [could] be a negative or a positive. For instance, you [could have] a high-variety Saturday. You could do chores. You could cook dinner with friends. You could watch sporting events. However, say you spent that whole day on the couch watching different sporting events, that might be low-variety Saturday.*

*Our results find that a high-variety Saturday ... makes people happier. It’s squishing those activities into a shorter amount of time that undermines people’s happiness. It’s really driven by this sense that you haven’t produced anything. When you’re trying to do too many things at once, you feel not very productive. And feelings of productivity are crucial for feeling happy and satisfied.<sup>21</sup>*

is extremely correlated with well-being, the experience of variety, a sense of achievement and a reduction in boredom in pupils and staff even if there is no body of evidence to suggest that physical activity is a cause of academic success. More affluent pupils typically engage in more physical activity. Schools can address this inequality.<sup>22</sup>

A transformative school structures its operations with this truth in mind. Pupils need to move, and, according to the research, move sufficiently to alter their physiological state. The sedentary lifestyle of the British teenager should not be reinforced by sedentary schooling.

#### **(v) Pupil need for cultural confidence not just cultural capital**

Pupils know they will not be in school forever. Schools sometimes seem less focused on the days after their pupils' schooling ends. Experience of school, not only talk in school about future experiences, should prepare pupils for life outside the school gates. Schools should present themselves to pupils not as closed systems or as institutions which operate for their own sake but solely as "preparatory". The extent to which their family background and the school's assumptions and prejudices influence a pupil's preparation for this transition is a subject of some controversy.<sup>23</sup>

*If the definition of cultural capital remains narrow then we risk a paradox: some children will gain the keys to advancement and this will help to maintain the status quo.*

*'This leaves us in the paradoxical position that cultural education can simultaneously be a route to personal*



*advancement, while entrenching class division at the level of society. This contention is clearly evidenced by the fact that the poorest state schools lack arts provision, while private schools invest heavily in the arts.’ (John Holden, Visiting Professor University of Leeds, Cultural Fellow, King’s College, London)*

*The Cultural Learning Alliance believes strongly that this new Ofsted requirement constitutes an opportunity for schools to define the cultural capital that their children need and to think more widely than existing ‘legitimate culture’. This will ensure that their pupils are confident creators, able to be the ‘cultural omnivores’ that can make informed decisions about what culture they consume and participate in, and can articulate why it has value.<sup>24</sup>*

## **Your responses, thoughts and ideas**

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# **From Intent to Implementation**

## VII STRUCTURE OF IMPLEMENTATION

The assessment of the current transformative impact of a Liverpool College education and the formulation of plans for implementation of Intent 2022 will require the considered and structured input of a number of stakeholders and the exploration of ideas in a number of areas. It will also require time. It is reasonable to assume this process would take up the calendar year 2021 with pilots and targeted implementations starting in the Lent term of 2022 and an implementation of plans beginning in September 2022.

### **1. Educational Philosophy Development:**

A transformative school needs an explicit, accessible and shared philosophy of education which supports development of its intent, programmes and practices. At Liverpool College currently, this philosophy is a combination of state school practice and independent school ethos. Theorizing about education is not always helpful because it often produces bromides of such generality that nothing particularly distinctive can be based on them. A philosophy of transformative education focuses on the understanding of the needs of the pupil in the school setting and the role of the educator in bringing about substantial positive change in the personal, intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual and artistic capacities of the pupils. In developing an explicit and unique Liverpool College philosophy of transformative learning and education, the College will be able to judge its own effectiveness

and evaluate the implementation of its intent. Some theoretical framework is necessary in the creation of an intent. In the past, the College has published a vision, a mission, a learner profile, a behavioural standard, and a series of beliefs but never an educational philosophy. Such a philosophy can help to clarify the transformative intent the College wishes to place at the centre of its development and to support a cohesive staff induction and pupil induction programme.

## **2. Curriculum Development:**

The development of the College's all-through curriculum is the most important strategic challenge to be addressed in pursuit of the creation of a transformative school. In the context of the College's stated intent, the aim should be further and meaningful integration of enrichment, personal development, leadership development, and physical activity on an equal basis and with equal resources into the curriculum and timetable. This integration would bring variety, balance and sustainability to the school day, mixing project, personal development and group work, and competitions with traditional subject instruction and study and creating much more accountability for quality teaching and learning in both academic and other subjects. An ambitious target would be the development of a curriculum in which 33% of lesson time is devoted to personal development and non-national curriculum academic subjects. This is best achieved by the deliberate and careful development over time of an LC Diploma or LC Portfolio Diploma consisting of experiences, as well as qualifications for each year or key stage, creating a sequential and careful programme of academic, physical, cultural, and

personal development activities and qualifications for each pupil in each year group. Some of this work was partially begun but has been hampered by the constraints of timetable and the lack of integration into the academic curriculum as well as the view taken in the past that enrichment involved pupil choice and taste rather than a structured curriculum. Accountability for the delivery of this integrated curriculum would lie with a teacher in the same way that the teaching of an academic subject does. The development of the form teacher's or house mentor's role and responsibilities and the form as a learning group will be essential in this integration. One target would be that every pupil does substantial physical exercise every day. Activity periods could disappear, replaced by diploma or portfolio periods and competition periods. Each member of staff would be expected to lead a form and to coordinate the progress of pupils in the integrated curriculum.

Extending, deepening and multiplying partnerships with other educational institutions and with groups and organizations, including The Lerpoolians, which can contribute to this integrated curriculum will be an essential ingredient in creating a transformative curriculum. It may be possible to offer pupils dual enrolment and to develop specific curricular provision and experiences for pupils through external partners.

### **3. Staff Recruitment, Development, Induction: A Leadership Model**

The development of staff is the key to a transformative school. If the College is to become a transformative school

with a unique curriculum, ethos and practices and educational philosophy based on a focus on relationships, the development of our staff in what amounts to a new paradigm of school, leadership, curriculum and of teaching will be crucial. A possible basis for the development of the College staff in a transformative school are the Nolan principles of public life<sup>25</sup>. These principles are usually associated with governance and leadership of public bodies but could form the structure of staff development beyond the national teaching standards. The development of this programme of staff recruitment, development and induction for the creation of a transformative school is the task of the Principal of Liverpool College. Staff should have more opportunity to comment on, discuss and assess the development of a healthy school and be given more explicit and sustained training in the philosophy, practices and expectations which constitute a transformative Liverpool College education. Much successful work has been undertaken in developing the pedagogy and skills of teachers and support staff. A transformative school can only be created or developed when the staff share an understanding of this intent and its implications for their roles, practices and approach. This means that all staff must also be developed within an explicit transformative leadership model, such as Shackleton's Way<sup>26</sup>. This is particularly necessary when relationships are of central importance and practices diverge from other state schools. Much of this staff training programme has been developed and is in place, although not explicitly in the context of an intent to be or become a transformative school.



#### **4. Timetable, Calendar, Routine and Policy Development:**

In forming its intent, the College should explore timetabling options which allow for staggered starts and split lunches across the College and which provide maximum flexibility for sixth formers. A target will be to provide a varied day with an integrated curriculum for each pupil including time for supervised study and prolonged contact with a mentor/form teacher. For teachers and staff, the aim is a sustainable and varied workload consisting of contributions to the well-being and welfare and independent academic work of their form, academic teaching, contributions to diploma or portfolio teaching, faculty or year group LIT and CPD time, as well as opportunity to participate in physical exercise. We anticipate this may require some lengthening of the school day for Key Stage 3.

Research has repeatedly pointed to the best calendar for learning, for safeguarding, for mental health of pupils and especially disadvantaged pupils and teachers. This calendar provides for a minimum of two weeks off for every six weeks on. Our intent is to develop for recommendation a calendar which provides a 36- week academic year supplemented by five weeks of “one -week camp” across the five breaks for vulnerable, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are not able to access meaningful activity from home. These camp weeks would allow for many more and much more meaningful experiences of the world outside the school gates, improving confidence, motivation, variety and cultural capital. Staff would not be required to participate in these camps. The calendar would also contain a three week break at Christmas and between Lent and Summer term. This would mean that

summer holidays were five weeks in duration limiting learning loss and lack of contact with school.

The camps would be periods when trips, intensive revision, academic intervention and longer outings can be organized and undertaken. Disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils would be provided with the sorts of cultural capital opportunities the lack of which we know is an obstacle to their confidence and success. These camps would be funded through philanthropic donations and pupil premium funds.

At the heart of the creation of an increase in the transformative impact of school are healthy relationships between pupils and pupils, between adults and adults, and between pupils and adults. Indeed, the College's intent is to create a transformative school by becoming a relational school. Relationships require time to develop and current practice does not always provide that time. The intent must therefore be to review every aspect of the College's operations and policy from the perspective of creating a strong culture of relationships. The College will seek the support and input of the Relationships Foundation in studying and proposing how this can best be achieved within the context of each of the schools or phases which make up the College. Too often Key Stage 3 pupils are not certain of their relationships with adults in the school and are asked to make a transition to secondary school routines and structures at too rapid a pace for them. Transitions from Key Stage 2 to 3 and from 3 to 4 take place during a three-year period which, for educational, curricular and human developmental reasons, often determines the educational experience and success of a pupil. The intent is therefore to develop and recommend a model for Key

Stage 3 education in the College which more closely resembles our Prep School and other primary school structures than currently including routines and timetables which are separate from Key Stage 4. This would include being taught in a limited number of classrooms by a limited number of teachers. It would include ample time and opportunity for a structured educational relationship with a form teacher who is coordinating the progress of pupils in the form.

### **5. Resources and Facilities Development:**

Liverpool College will need to find funding to become transformative. It seems, prima facie, likely that a transformative school will need to be able to tap into resources beyond those provided by government funding to deliver the curriculum and programmes required. All plans deriving from Intent 2022 will be carefully costed and aggressive and systematic development efforts will be undertaken to fund them.

## **Consultation and Development of Implementation Plans:**

It is proposed that any changes to policy, curriculum, routines, calendar, or timetable would not be made until after extensive consultation with all stakeholders regarding specific implementation plans and not before September 2022.

## **Your responses, thoughts and ideas**

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## IN CONCLUSION

Liverpool College is an outstanding, heavily oversubscribed school. It is in a strong position to reanimate its intent to offer the young people of Liverpool a truly distinctive holistic transformative education. It can do so by implementing its intent to move from outstanding to transformative, to exceed the restrictions which convergence with conventional state school practice places on its ambition for what it provides for each pupil. In order to do this, fresh thinking and bold plans of great specificity and detail will need to be developed in consultation with all stakeholders. No school in the country is better placed and more able to undertake this challenging task than Liverpool College is today.

**Hans van Mourik Broekman**  
**Principal**  
**January 2021**

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