

**LAWRENCE SHERIFF SCHOOL**

**A National Teaching School**

**RUGBY**

**SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

When I applied for the Deputy Headship of the school in 1997 I remember being particularly impressed by the statement in the information pack that ‘a happy school is a successful school’. I became headteacher in 1999, and over the years that have followed the school has gone through a period of substantial change and development. However, I still believe that this statement lies at the heart of our values. In 2000 we became an Investor in People and this title points to something much more than a kitemark. We believe in the importance of investing in the development of every person within the school. Results clearly matter a great deal, but more fundamental still is helping every person within the organisation to achieve all that they are capable of.

I must admit that when I was appointed I never intended to stay 23 years as headteacher. However, so much has happened and the school has proved such a rich place to work within, the idea of leaving has never been one that I have seriously entertained. It is my sincere hope that my successor derives as much pleasure and satisfaction from being headteacher of Lawrence Sheriff as I have.

The 21st century has been very kind to Lawrence Sheriff. Results at all levels have steadily improved year on year and on three separate occasions we have topped national tables for GCSE performance. Progress scores are also high and at both KS4 and 5 consistently place the school in the top 10% nationally. Academic success has been mirrored by the four inspections that the school has experienced during my headship. In November 2007 Ofsted assessed the school as outstanding in every category with no key issues (the lead inspector, who had previously overseen a large local authority, told us that this was the first time she had graded a school in this way) and this judgement was confirmed in 2013. In the years that have followed the school has enjoyed a period of sustained development and success on many different fronts – becoming first a Teaching School and now a Teaching School Hub, a licensee delivering the national professional qualifications across the West Midlands, successfully applying to be a primary school sponsor and introducing co-education into the Sixth Form, with the potential for further growth over the coming years.

Innovation has been a characteristic feature of the school throughout that time. Whether it be a three year Key Stage Four, the early adoption of vertical tutoring, two thirty minute enrichment periods delivered to vertical groups who choose from 30-40 different options or a school day that begins with teaching and finishes with assemblies and form time, the school could not in any way be described as a conventional grammar school.

The successful candidate will take on the leadership of LSS at a time of continuing growth and development. Our foundation relationship with Rugby School offers the school significant additional funding each year, which the governors have sensibly chosen to largely invest in the capital development of the school. In 1997 the Griffin Centre was completed, offering a new dining room, sports hall and teaching block for English. In 2001 we completed a new Sixth Form Centre, offering state of the art common room facilities and specialist teaching areas. In October 2008 the Learning and Resources Centre was built, establishing a new library and a specialist area for the teaching of mathematics. Our playing fields (about a mile from the school) have also been extensively re-developed and new facilities have been completed for music, technology and art.

As might be expected, demand for places has become very high, and the school is now five times over-subscribed. In response to this and the continuing growth of Rugby, we successfully bid for Grammar School Expansion funding in 2018. Having submitted an ambitious plan to further develop our provision for disadvantaged students, the school was awarded just over £6 million to add a fifth form of entry through a new science teaching block and the extensive refurbishment of the rest of the school site. Despite the turbulent 2020 and 2021 that we have all experienced, we are still on track to complete the new building by September 2021 and the refurbishment of the rest of LSS by September 2022. When the expansion is complete the school will have grown from 650 in 1999 to approximately 1200.

The future is exciting both within and beyond the boundaries of the school. In 2012 LSS was in the first cohort of schools to be awarded Teaching School status. A sign of our success in this role is our recently announced designation as one of the 81 National Teaching School Hubs. The full range and scope of this new role is still emerging, but it is clear that in the future LSS will need to continue its outward facing role, promoting collaboration and partnership across a broad educational landscape. The new headteacher will not be required to lead this process, but they will be expected to support and take an active interest in all that the designation involves.

I suppose I can be accused of having rose tinted glasses, but in my view the chance to become headteacher of Lawrence Sheriff is a golden opportunity. We are blessed with a talented and highly committed leadership team who work in a proactive manner, showing initiative and modelling the highest standards of leadership to other members of staff. Our experienced and highly qualified staff are committed to the values of LSS and have consistently shown a willingness to go the extra mile to support the values that underpin the school. We have an astute governing body that whilst being very supportive also understands its strategic role and is not afraid to ask questions and scrutinise. Last, but most definitely not least, it is a privilege to work with a group of students who have such a positive attitude towards learning. I regularly remind both myself and my colleagues that the chance to work at Lawrence Sheriff is not something that should be taken for granted.

As might be expected from a headteacher with a doctorate in school culture, I have always placed great emphasis on Deal and Kennedy’s crisp definition of the term as ‘the way we do things around here’. So, after 23 years, how would I define the way we do things around here? Placing an emphasis on academic success? Certainly, but I would say that is a by-product of our broader approach, not our central aim. Focused upon innovation and showing a willingness to take the road less travelled? Definitely, but this is balanced by our conviction that people matter, whether they be pupils or the adults that work within the organisation. My letter of appointment 23 years ago told me that my central aim should be to ‘foster happiness!’ (and yes, the exclamation mark was included). I think that still stands as the central plank of ‘the way we do things around here’, because the governors share my belief that if we get that right, everything else will follow. In the light of this, I wish whoever is appointed success and, above all else, great happiness.

Peter Kent

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