

BETTER TOGETHER

Warm relationships are at the heart of local school partnerships, says *David Neill*, deputy head of co-curricular at Canford School

It has been a decade since Canford began its partnership with The Bourne Academy. It's something we are hugely proud to do. Working together has benefited staff and pupils at both schools not to mention the wider community. And even after 10 years, it really does feel like we are only just at the beginning of a significant collaboration with exciting possibilities to come which could inspire other schools to do the same.

Canford's involvement came after several years of poor examination results and falling numbers at what was then the nearby King's High School.

In 2008, we were approached by the Department for Education (DfE) and agreed to fully sponsor the school by offering time, expertise and support without any financial input. Renamed The Bourne Academy, the school opened its doors to students in September 2010 with many new staff, a new principal and a distinctive black, white and pink uniform, as voted for by the students.

A £10 million investment programme followed, which included major building and refurbishment along with 21st-century state-of-the-art IT. The building works were completed in September 2013 and coincided with the opening of a new sixth form block.

A key part of the vision for the new academy was that it would be at the heart of the community of East Howe, offering local families an excellent education, new opportunities and facilities available to all. Raising pupils' expectations, building their self-confidence and teaching them appropriate skills that allow them to build a successful career and contribute to society were, and remain, central to the academy's aims.

Canford's belief that good education depends crucially on the relationships between staff, pupils, parents and key stakeholders was another core part of the vision. Mutual support, pride, ambition, trust and high expectations combine to allow impressive academic achievements against a background of respect.

Since the Academy opened, exam results and student outcomes have improved dramatically. After five years of A-level results, the Academy had 20 per cent of A-level students progress to Russell Group Universities and 18 per cent embark on medical degrees. The school was also very proud to be named 'School of the Year' in the 2021 BTEC Awards. However, success is more than a measurement of results and reports. As Bourne's

Principal Mark Avoth says, 'how do you measure the impact of some of our most vulnerable students designing and building a Greenpower car that ranked 27th in the international finals at Silverstone (a project first held and supported by Canford)?'

Mr Avoth adds: 'Or the impact of an opportunity for all our sixth form students to have access to an individual Business Mentor (Bourne Ambassador), or the value of a Reading Programme that has been purposely constructed so students are exposed to a range of reading sources that offer a high value of cultural capital. This is a particular necessity in a state school like The Bourne Academy that serves a disadvantaged community.'

The success of our link with The Bourne Academy is evident not only through impressive attendance records and examination results, but also in the joint enthusiasm and engagement from staff and pupils in each school both in and out of the classroom.

We see it at a personal level too: Year 9 pupils at both schools share a book club. During lockdown, laptops were donated by Drilling Systems to support home learning, thanks to Mr Battsby, Head of Simulation at 3t Energy Group, which includes Drilling Systems. Mr Battsby's son Scott, a

current Canford pupil, spent his free time configuring the laptops. Now we look forward to building on the first decade in the coming years, dedicated to offering prime opportunities for those in the school communities.

David Neill is deputy head (co-curricular) at Canford ■



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