



GLOBAL VISION

Drawing on decades of leadership in Jesuit schools around the world, Stonyhurst's new Head, William Doherty, is guiding pupils to thrive through reflection, service and a sense of purpose

When William Doherty arrived at Stonyhurst earlier this year, he found himself captivated not only by the beauty and history of the school but, more importantly, by the people who bring it to life: "It is just a stunning environment to work in but the first impressions were of the people," he says. "It's easy to get absorbed in the history and the grandeur of the place but for me it is the people and in particular the pupils. They are happy, joyful, courteous and polite."

As the new Head of Stonyhurst, William joins one of the most historic educational institutions in the world. Founded in 1593, Stonyhurst is the oldest continuously operating Jesuit school globally and occupies a spectacular 1,000-acre estate in the heart of the Ribble Valley. Yet despite its rich heritage, William believes its enduring success lies in its ability to remain relevant.

Born and educated in Brisbane, Australia, William spent his final two years at school as a boarder before beginning his teaching career at St Ignatius' College Riverview, a leading Jesuit day and boarding school in Sydney. More than three decades later, following senior leadership roles across Australia and Singapore, he has brought his extensive experience of Jesuit education to Lancashire.

For William, the philosophy underpinning a Jesuit education has never been more important: "I think a Jesuit education is more relevant than ever in the 21st century," he explains. "A Jesuit education is not one dimensional – too often schools are focused on academic achievement, but a Jesuit education focuses on the whole person.



"It is about putting fundamental traits such as morality, spirituality, wellbeing, decision-making, reflection and service at the core of the entire person. In Jesuit schools you see the person, not the product."

> "A JESUIT EDUCATION ENCOURAGES DISCERNMENT AND GRATITUDE: RECOGNISING WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY, AND LEARNING TO APPRECIATE IT"

That commitment to educating the whole person is central to Stonyhurst's mission. Alongside academic excellence, the school places equal emphasis on character formation, leadership, service and wellbeing, guided by the Jesuit principle of cura personalis – care for the whole person.

William believes that one of the most valuable qualities schools can nurture today is the ability to reflect.

"I think we have lost the power of reflection," he says. "We are preparing young people to take action and make decisions, but what matters most is the ethics that guide their choices. We encourage pupils to pause, reflect and consider the impact of their decisions before they act."

It is an approach that prepares young people not only for examinations and university but also for the complexities of modern life.

"We live in a global, complex world and we are aware of the challenges of our time," William says. "We want to give our pupils the confidence to go into different frontiers. They need to engage with others both virtually and physically. We give pupils many and varied opportunities, so they experience a lot about the world around them. We think it is important to produce citizens that impact the world."









That blend of tradition and innovation remains a defining characteristic of Stonyhurst. While the school proudly celebrates more than four centuries of history, William is equally focused on ensuring pupils are equipped for the future.

"Stonyhurst has more than 430 years of tradition and innovation, and it is important that a school with such a rich history continues to look forward as well as draw on the wisdom of the past," he says. "The Jesuit philosophy is: don't get so attached to the past that you can't detach and look ahead."

For pupils, this includes embracing emerging technologies thoughtfully and responsibly.

"AI has come along so let's embrace the best of it in an ethical and discerning way. It's a fine balance."

Recent recognition from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) reinforces the strength of Stonyhurst's approach. The school met all Independent School Standards and was awarded the rare distinction of a Significant Strength for its Co-curricular provision.

"Again, this is about educating the whole person," William explains. "Pupils grow and develop because of the Co-curricular Programme – it makes an impact on their formation."

The inspection also highlighted the school's welcoming community, strong pastoral care, commitment to wellbeing and the respect pupils show towards different cultures and perspectives.

> "OUR AIM IS TO CULTIVATE OUTSTANDING TEAM PLAYERS WHO HAVE A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE"

William sees the combination of day and boarding pupils as another of Stonyhurst's great strengths: "We have a fantastic blend of boarding and day pupils," he says. "From a boarding point of view, we recognise that it often represents a great sacrifice on behalf of parents as it is all about letting go – preparing your children to fly from the nest with confidence."

Looking ahead, William's ambitions are clear: "Our aim is to cultivate outstanding team players who have a global perspective. Academic formation is important along with the development of good intellectual habits by way of clear thinking and knowing when to act.

"A Jesuit education encourages discernment and gratitude: recognising what brings you joy, and learning to appreciate it," adds William.

With his wife, Terina, William is equally enthusiastic about their new home in the Lancashire countryside: "I love it here in the Ribble Valley – it is so beautiful!"

It is a fitting sentiment for a Head whose vision combines appreciation for tradition with a determination to prepare young people for a changing world. At Stonyhurst, he believes, education is about much more than academic success. It is about helping every pupil discover their purpose, develop their character and make a positive difference wherever life takes them. ■

STONYHURST

Discover more at an Open Day

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