



## ST JAMES SCHOOLS – FORTY YEARS ON

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION LECTURE, FEBRUARY 2015

2015 seems to be a remarkable year for a significant number of anniversaries.

Next June will mark 800 years since King John put his seal to the Magna Carta, or 'great charter'.

Then there is The Battle of Agincourt, which has entered English folklore as one of our most famous victories, helped in no small part by William Shakespeare's portrayal of King Henry V.

The 18 June 2015 will mark 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo; one of the most famous battles in English history. On a battlefield in Belgium, a coalition of nations led by the Duke of Wellington defeated the French forces led by Napoleon Bonaparte, in what the Duke would later call "a damned close-run thing."

And we have already remembered the seventieth anniversary since the end of the Second World War, the liberation of Auschwitz and the horrors of the holocaust. Alongside these poignant memories we have also paid tribute to the debt we owe to a great leader, Sir Winston Churchill, on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The outpouring of grief and gratitude which swelled the hearts of the British on the day of his funeral was testament to his greatness. He gave voice to the courageous soul of our nation that freedom and justice must be protected at all costs. He was the right man, in the right place, at the right time.

One might ask, what defines a truly great man or woman? I would suggest that it consists firstly in the universal scope of his vision for the welfare of humanity, and secondly, that the actions which proceed from that vision are informed by wisdom, knowledge, strength and love. As one commentator ended

his report on Churchill's life, he reflected wistfully, '...we might not see his like again'. Why such a sad prediction?

It is true that the powerful 'animus' of such a person may come with nature, at birth. However, there is no doubt that its positive growth and development is very dependent upon the quality of 'nurture' and education received. Churchill had an undoubtedly privileged education, although he was not by all accounts much of a scholar. Historically, the wealth of our education system rested in a vision of the greatness of human potential, together with a simple understanding that unless the mind and heart are nourished with a reflection of that greatness, as expressed in our classical and wisdom traditions, such potential is unlikely to be realised.

When, for example, John Colet founded St Paul's School in 1509 and started a tradition of grammar schools which was to last 450 years, he simplified and rewrote the Latin grammar, introduced Greek and insisted on the study of Christian and classical authors whose literature combined wisdom with, and I quote, 'pure, chaste eloquence'. He translated the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments into English for his pupils and based their education on Christian principle and classical learning.

Turning now to the particular subject of our lecture this evening, we must move the clock on four centuries to the early 1970's when many people felt that education was losing its way. The 'progressive' movement had been launched and many of the time-honoured traditional disciplines of education were being cast aside. 'Child-centred' education was in its zenith, accompanied by the idea that a child could discover all that it needed to learn without being formally 'taught' by a teacher. Classrooms were rearranged to shift the focus away from the teacher and onto the pupils: individual pupil desks were replaced by flat tables, arranged in groups, around which six to eight children would sit facing each other and not the teacher. The teacher's locus was no longer at the front of the class.

Furthermore, it was thought best that children were set tasks for self-discovery and that they would benefit from being taught in wider age groups of two chronological years as well as a mixture of ability. In short, it was a teacher's nightmare. When I first started teaching in state primary schools, I had classes of 40 children between the ages of 6-8 and of mixed ability. Teachers would have to spend huge amounts of time planning lessons which offered a range of

activities appropriate for different ages and abilities to undertake at the same time and together. The class teacher was expected to move around the room teaching the groups within a class by rotation. Inevitably, standards of attainment declined and discipline suffered. In secondary schools, grammar schools were being shut down, setting by ability was politically incorrect and the so-called 'permissive society' was threatening traditional moral codes of behaviour in all walks of life. The floodgates were opening to a new era which did not bode well.

It was in this context that in January 1975, forty years ago last month that the first St James School was founded. It all came about through the desire of a number of parents who could see the potentially detrimental effects of the then present state of education and wanted to establish something very much better to offer their own children and the children of future generations. These parents were philosophically inclined: they were students of philosophy in the School of Economic Science and, through their own studies, had come to value the importance of an education which provided spiritual enrichment as well as what could be described as the best of a traditional English education; a rigorous education steeped in the classical traditions and offering the best of artistic and academic culture.

Recognising that they lacked the wherewithal to launch such a project, these parents approached Leon MacLaren, the leader of the School of Economic Science for advice. Although initially extremely reluctant, Leon MacLaren was finally persuaded that to support the establishment of a school for children based upon the highest principles of education, would be a worthwhile venture.

The school was to be established as an independent educational charity, with its own board of governors who would have sole overall charge of governance and management through delegated committees, as appropriate. The school would begin by admitting pupils from the youngest age groups of junior school age and grow from the bottom up. The doors of the school should be open to all children and fees should be kept as low as possible in order to avoid having to turn people away for financial reasons alone. In fact, the ideal was that parents should only have to pay for their children's uniform. Indeed, due to the philanthropic will behind the adventure, the first few years of the school's life depended almost entirely upon the good will, sacrifice and generosity of services rendered voluntarily by teachers, support staff and many devoted parents most of whom were, at the time, students of philosophy in the School of

Economic Science. As the school grew over the years and expanded to the secondary phase of education, pupils, teachers, parents and governors came from increasingly diverse locations within society.

What was the vision which inspired the foundation of the schools and how was that vision formulated? The vision was large and in order to explain it properly it is necessary to give some background information about the sources through which it came and the people who were instrumental in its expression. Leon MacLaren drew together a few people who would work with him in formulating the founding principles and remit of the schools. They were people who had mature philosophical understanding as well as a significant academic background and included some practising teachers, two of whom became the first head teachers of St James; Mr Nicholas Debenham and Miss Sheila Caldwell.

Leon MacLaren had established the School of Economic Science in 1937, initially to discover the nature of justice and truth through the study of classical economics and later to enquire more deeply into the nature of man and his ultimate fulfilment through the study of philosophy. He was born in Glasgow in 1910, became a barrister by profession and was the son of a Labour MP, Andrew MacLaren. Throughout his life he was dedicated to contributing to human well-being through the pursuit of wisdom and its power to transform the quality of life.

Although his early experiences of traditional religion had left him with a distinct reservation about formal religion he regarded the spiritual search to be of prime importance in human life and believed that it was the potential of every human being to realise ultimate fulfilment. He had a deep conviction in the unity of all things: that the essence or spirit of every creature was a reflection of the same, single divine expression. In this sense, he believed that fulfilment was a question of coming to see that our all too familiar sense of separation, one from another, was illusory.

He was always open to new discoveries in his search for ultimate realisation and demonstrated remarkable courage throughout his life. In 1953 he discovered and followed the teachings of P.D. Ouspensky, himself a student of the eastern European philosopher Gurdjieff. After some years of practice and application he found that this approach had reached a limit in what it could offer. In the early 1960's he was introduced to mantra meditation through the Maharishi Mahesh

Yogi which opened an entirely new chapter of discovery. Soon after this, he was invited to meet the Shankaracharya of northern India who taught the wisdom of the ancient tradition of Vedanta. The tradition of Shankara which was established in the eighth century explained the essence of non-duality, or unity. The teachers of this tradition are highly revered in India as a source of erudition and wisdom.

And so it followed, that a highly independent Glaswegian spirit met his teacher and began a thirty year-long relationship with him through biennial visits to India lasting up to a week on each occasion. Here he would continue, year on year, to put questions on a wide range of subjects including language, law, astronomy, medicine, art and, of course, in the early 1970's on education. The vision which inspired the foundation of the St James School had two inter-related dimensions: it incorporated a desire to provide for the ultimate fulfilment of the individual whilst also meeting the needs of humanity by educating young men and women of real calibre, whose influence might be of significant benefit to the general good. It was considered that a human being's potential was essentially unlimited and that if the right conditions were provided for development, a person would flourish physically, intellectually emotionally and spiritually. Shakespeare's words spoken through Hamlet might be used to give a sense of this 'largesse':

*“What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals...”*

*Hamlet Act 2, scene 2, 303–312*

There was one additional source of inspiration which informed the founding vision of St James. The great potential of a human life was also depicted by the Platonic ideal of a 'just man or woman' that embodied the virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance and courage in perfect harmony. It was proposed that if education provided a rich and balanced content, mirroring the highest ideals of human conduct, great men and women would emerge whose characters were

ruled by reason and wisdom. They would be the guardians of the state. Through their just and wise disposition justice in the state would be protected. As we proceed to examine some of the key founding principles which emerged, we will see much similarity between the Platonic ideal and the principles which emerged in conversation with the Shankaracharya.

For the sake of clarity, I will set out some of these principles of education which emerged from Leon MacLaren's conversations with the Shankaracharya, as briefly as possible before expanding upon their meaning and implementation.

**FIRST: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT:** *there was a traditional 'formula' expressed as follows:*

*"Up to five, treat the child with love and play, from five to sixteen put him under discipline and afterwards treat him as a friend."*

**SECOND: 'COMPANY WILL RULE HIS OR HER LIFE'**

*There is much contained in this principle but essentially it relates to both the quality and content of ideas, concepts and impressions received as well as the quality of people he or she meets and the example their behaviour sets.*

**THIRD: 'GOOD MATERIAL'**

*This is akin to the second principle just mentioned. ... 'The child is very tender and ready to receive anything, good or bad, whatever is provided. ... If one can provide good emotional, spiritual, devotional knowledge, the child would pick it up and use it in his life. ... **The child should know that good things are important things; this is the art of teaching.**'*

**FOURTH: EXCESSIVE PRESSURE SHOULD BE AVOIDED AND DISCIPLINE SHOULD NOT BE BY FORCE OR COMPULSION.**

*Positive development depends upon the application of love and discipline in the right measure.*

**FIFTH: 'THE CHILD LEARNS MOST BY EXAMPLE'**

*Teachers should be those who are well experienced in their subject and who exemplify the precepts they espouse. 'They should be emotionally and devotionally mature ... the same both inside and outside. Any disparity between*

*his knowledge and his actions will be easily caught by the perceptive mind of the child and avoidable harm would have been done.'*

**SIXTH: 'MEDITATION COULD BE OFFERED FROM THE AGE OF TEN'.**

*'This will make way for an effective, contented and happy being, which would be an example for others to follow.'*

**SEVENTH: 'THE POWER OF ATTENTION must be cultivated through all areas of school work.'**

Having considered the guidance given by the Shankaracharya, Leon MacLaren formulated some simple principles which would serve to lay the foundation for the development and growth of the St James Schools. They are as follows:

*THE PRINCIPLES TO BE APPLIED ARE:*

*I To give the children information of:*

- a) the simple principles of spiritual knowledge,*
- b) knowledge of the universe,*
- c) man*
- d) and the individual's relation thereto.*

*In the belief that the child really knows, and, if the information is given simply and accurately enough, it will connect with that inner knowledge and make it available to the child.*

*II To remind the child of the threefold human duty ~*

- a) to remember the creator*

- b) *to live according to the fine regulations of the universe*
- c) *to find the way back to Truth or liberation.*

*III To give disciplined practice in spiritual, mental and physical fields, including training in appropriate skills.*

He made it very clear from the outset that the ideals, principles and methods of education with which the school started would have to be tested by experience and amended accordingly. This was important for two reasons: first, he was only too aware that although the pioneers of these schools had a good level of experience in education, this was a very new venture and there would be much yet to learn. Secondly, as time evolves, circumstances change, and there must be readiness to meet such changes accordingly. As can be seen from his formulation of these principles, for the reasons just mentioned, he wanted to avoid being over prescriptive. What was important was the central vision, the universality of the principles, not the particularity of specific educational methods or policy.

Returning to the key principles of guidance offered by the Shankaracharya, I would now like to give some consideration as to how they have so far been implemented.

First, the stages of development. This principle is mirrored in our western education system but carries some additional insight. An emotionally secure, loving, and pressure free environment focussed in playful activity is of great importance to the tenderness of the young human being. It raises the question of whether it is appropriate to give support to the increasing pressure for academic progress, measured by assessments, in these early years. It also stimulates the politically sensitive debate as to whether the young child is better placed within the loving security of the home environment rather than in a full-time nursery.

The significance of the use of the word 'discipline' between the ages of 5 and 16 is important. It implies that there should be a respect for authority and a gradual introduction to the simple disciplines of learning. Respect for authority at all levels of society is, in my opinion, in jeopardy. If we do not inculcate this

respect in schools and families, we cannot expect the next generation of citizens to conduct itself in a manner which is conducive to social order or harmony.

Later in the conversation on stages of development there is mention of the significance of the age of ten. Prior to ten, it was said, the child is naturally ego-centric. At ten, there is an expansion of awareness: the world and how it works becomes much more relevant to his or her interest. The child naturally seeks to know the causes of things which opens the door to the growth of the power of reason. There is also a greater energy available for work. For these reasons, St James made the senior phase of education begin at ten years of age.

Between ten and sixteen years of age the child should grow in responsibility. During this phase good disciplines of conduct and learning are established which promote the development of strength of mind and body.

The age of sixteen marks the beginning of adulthood. The idea is that by this stage the person has come to understand for himself what is valuable and why. He or she has developed the power of discernment and is expected to assume responsibility for the decisions made and action taken. He is still in need of some support and guidance but should be respected as a responsible adult. This necessitates that a thoroughly sound grounding in spiritual and moral education would have already been established. The period between 16 and 18 is crucial in consolidating the competencies required of a fully-fledged adult. This is why it is important to remain in the school until this stage so that the young person is provided with consistency in approach and the values contained therein.

Secondly, the importance of company in human development cannot be over-emphasised. Here, I will link my comments to the third principle of good material. It is obvious to most of us that it is the nature of the human being to be shaped by the quality of influences which his heart and mind have received. The younger the child, the more crucial this is: the receptive nature of childhood is very tender and impressions go deep. Therefore, if parents and educationists wish to provide for the best qualities in human nature to be drawn out as the child develops, influences which are most conducive to the growth of those desirable attributes will have to be provided; conversely, it is plainly evident that the opposite is true .

This applies as much to the people with whom the child associates as to the plethora of impressions he or she receives. For these reasons, St James head teachers have always encouraged their staff to select the very best material

when choosing the content of their subject-study. The question to apply is: will this give accurate information as well as elevate the appreciation of the greatness of human potential? This is not an easy principle to implement, particularly in the senior phase of schooling when syllabi are both prescriptive and, to some extent, influenced by political agendas. However, this is a challenge and vigilance is very necessary in this area.

Since the early years we have sought to offer pupils the riches of spiritual knowledge and understanding so as to provide some wisdom with which they may wish to guide their lives. This is a huge area of work and one which continues to develop, year on year, across the schools. The way in which this has been approached has changed over time but the essential vision has not. We do not proselytise a particular wisdom tradition, although the support for the Christian tradition is wholehearted. It is important to stress that our community is of all faiths and none, and this gives us the welcome challenge of diverse perspectives on the big questions of life. It is our view that the quality of life is enhanced by the availability of wisdom and that such wisdom has been voiced by our spiritual traditions, east and west. Our philosophy courses differ in detail across each of the schools but we share the practice of drawing directly from the stories and words of the great spiritual teachers, encouraging the pupils to exercise their higher intelligence in understanding the significance of their teaching and the value of its application in their daily lives.

In this context, there is a very great opportunity provided: in a world which is increasingly riven with religious division, two things are needed. First, to do everything possible to maintain a respect for the spiritual wisdom which originally inspired those traditions and secondly, to emphasise the thread of unity which runs through the heart of them all. In this way, we can nourish the truth that we are of one human family, and one in spirit. This spirit of unity is the heart of the school and serves to inform everything we undertake.

The statement, ‘children should know that good things are important things’ has a simple profundity to it. Within the remit of the philosophy courses, moral education is embraced. Likewise, sex and relationships education is informed by wise principle whilst also giving a full programme of important information and guidance on sex and related matters. The education of young men and women in this regard is a very challenging and all-important subject. We must meet the needs of today and yet also find the appropriate way to inspire them to recognise what it really means to be a man and woman of calibre: what are his

or her natural strengths, how may these be developed and how can their respective natures complement and support their mutual development and fulfilment as well as that of society at large? These are large issues which we seek, in some measure, to address in the philosophy courses. We may have made some mistakes over the last forty years in this attempt, but with the readiness to review and reassess, we are presently succeeding in meeting the challenges of today.

The fourth principle emphasises that knowledge should never be imparted with pressure, or discipline imposed by force. Discipline is there to facilitate learning, respect for knowledge and to shape good conduct. Applied rightly, it secures the good will of the child and allows his or her education to flourish. The harmonious development of a human being requires the intelligent balance of love and discipline.

The fifth principle refers to the importance of example. The power of example is irrefutable in human development. None of us is perfect and all of us would be the first to criticise our own shortcomings, but we endeavour fully to ensure that the precepts which we profess to cherish and admire are carried through into the practice of our lives. It is an unavoidable fact that teachers are expected to set an example and that example needs to reflect, in good measure, the principles that the school holds dear. Children are extremely perceptive: where there is a discrepancy between what is espoused and what is practised, the child's natural faith shrivels and open trust transforms into bitter contempt, not just for the person but, regretfully, for everything which he or she sought to advocate.

Finally, we come to the principle of meditation and the need to cultivate the power of attention. There are many dimensions to this and it is a large subject which I can only touch on briefly in the time available. Meditation is a golden jewel in life. It opens the door to direct experience of the spiritual riches of our being; as such, it is the means to transcend the limits of thought, precept and belief and enter a greater dimension of existence. Regardless of the method adopted, authentic meditation practice will provide the same opportunity. We offer mantra meditation and approximately a third to half of pupils will opt for this method. However, we also seek to provide some guidance for those who choose not to meditate in this way so as to ensure that the whole school community engages in two periods of meditation within each school day. Meditation has many additional benefits even for those who may not feel

themselves to be particularly spiritually inclined: it hones the power of attention and strengthens a person's general awareness both of themselves and of others. This engenders a greater sensitivity and empathy which is crucial to good human relationships, both personal and professional. This is another area of continued discovery, review and innovation. The key is to inspire a desire to meditate in young people. It is presently rather fashionable to meditate and our young people find encouragement to know that a number of celebrity icons meditate. So, times are easier today than they were in the past, but the challenge to maintain authentic practice which proves itself to be of real value to youngsters will remain.

In many respects the need to become acquainted with quietude and the ability to sustain attention is of enormous relevance to humanity in general. The digital age is escalating at a tremendous speed and whilst it brings us untold benefits there is a cost to the human condition. Inability to sustain attention in human relationships as well as in intellectual and creative pursuits is an increasingly serious problem which is rendering our engagements shallow and superficial. The addiction to speed of stimuli and the consequential need for increasingly high density sensory impact to accompany our digital experience causes a desensitisation in our human condition, the consequences of which are frightening. In simple terms, we risk losing the ability to relate, one to another, with real care and empathy.

From the St James Junior School through to the top of the Senior Schools we endeavour to hone our pupils' powers of attention at every opportunity. This has been a cornerstone of our approach since the school's foundation where the teaching of handwriting, singing, art, language dance and gymnastics were introduced through encouraging the art of careful attention. I was recently privileged to observe an A level English lesson on Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the Senior Boys' school. The level of conversation was remarkable; the power of intellectual penetration and quality of concentration which the students exhibited was testament to an education which had both equipped their intellects with a rich classical background from which they drew in a most scholarly fashion, and one which had taught them the ability to remain focussed on truly challenging material.

Equally, I recently witnessed a junior class of girls engaged in a music theory lesson. They were tasked with being shown a series of different written musical rhythms on flashcards which they had to digest and repeat by clapping the

rhythms in succession at lightning speed. Their speed of digestion, memory and perception were spectacular: all this hinged on their power of sustained attention.

It should perhaps be mentioned at this juncture that it was in Leon MacLaren's conversations with the Shankaracharya that questions on the field of language, in its largest context were discussed. Emerging out of this was an introduction to the riches of the Sanskrit language, its superb grammatical system and the rich canon of literature contained in the great epics and ancient scriptural poetic texts. This inspired the study of Sanskrit by a small group of brave souls in London who after a number of years of devoted study were able to prepare academic courses for the entire range of pupils from five to eighteen in St James Schools and beyond. Those younger pupils in the junior schools who have been trained in the challenging art of Sanskrit pronunciation gain a great advantage in learning to articulate their speech with an unusual degree of precision.

In addition, as the course proceeds through to the senior schools, pupils' intellects are trained in the rigours of the grammatical system which not only lays a strong foundation for the other classical and modern languages, but also enhances the faculty of reason and logic. An additional and most important benefit comes through the study of the stories from a young age and later through the great epics and scriptural texts through which they meet great heroes, heroines and some of the most expansive moral and spiritual precepts they are likely ever to encounter. This lends a very particular depth and breadth to their understanding and strengthens the capacity to penetrate subtle and profound concepts with a very refined intelligence. The study leaves golden seeds of understanding in their hearts and minds which enhance every aspect of their lives. The courses which have been developed over these forty years are absolutely magnificent. It was not easy in the early days: expectations were too high and the children's enthusiasm was not exactly electric. The small group of teachers who have worked on the content of the syllabi and their delivery have continued to review and revise according to experience and I applaud their open-minded readiness to keep learning. The subject is thriving: it is popular in the senior schools and students who apply to the top universities with good GCSE or A level qualifications in Sanskrit are regularly noticed with particular interest and respect.

To now return to the development of St James in the early days: after much preparation and careful planning, St James Independent School for Boys and St

James Independent School for Girls were launched in January 1975. From the outset it was intended that the schools would be single sex schools although at the very beginning, due to small numbers in the first term or so the initial classes contained boys and girls between the ages of five to eight. By the summer term of the first year there were four classes, two for girls and two for boys of approximately sixty pupils. There were four teachers, two of whom were the head teachers and a few kind volunteers, usually parents and grandparents, acting as school secretaries and kitchen staff. Devoted parents baked wholemeal bread, bought the most organically grown fruit and vegetables they could find, sourced good cheeses, honey, nuts and various other nutritious foods in order to provide the pupils with wholesome vegetarian lunches which were unique in the 1970's. Three decades later, Jamie Oliver visited St James, saw the lunches and proclaimed that this was his dream come true!

These were exciting times: the launch of this much loved project was accompanied by huge enthusiasm, optimism and idealism; it inspired years of sacrifice and devotion from many good people who gave their time and energy unreservedly to make it all work. The ideals which inspired such support were deeply cherished because they resonated with the values and understanding which had come to be so admired in the parents' own experience.

However, there was, as might be expected, something of a price to be paid for this idealism: whilst the first phase of growth laid strong foundations in which the essential principles had taken root and flourished, the zealous approach had, in some respects, masked certain shortcomings. These commonly related to expectations being either too high or unrealistic and adjustments needed to be made, either to the curriculum or to the way in which pupils' development and behaviour was managed. Fortunately, there has always been a willingness to learn and grow in understanding.

Forty years on, we have 951 pupils and 190 serving teachers across the three schools. Ironically, whereas many aspects of our approach were considered to be either, 'unique', 'archaic', 'new-age' – or just plain 'weird' – many of them are now common practice in education. As I mentioned previously, since the foundation of the schools we have placed the importance of a person's access to contemplative silence to be of prime importance. The pause, before and after activities, as well as the opportunity to meditate regularly in school, are now practised in some measure by many schools under the title of 'mindfulness'.

The fact that, unlike prevailing fashions in education, we did not abandon the long-respected understanding that study of the classics is an essential ingredient of a good education; or that children should first learn to calculate mentally without the use of calculators; or that if the development of good character is to emerge in young people their emotional and spiritual well-being must be addressed alongside a demanding academic programme. These are just a few examples of the innovative nature of the schools' first forty years; we have much of which to be proud.

In consultation with the first two head teachers, Leon MacLaren named the school St James. There is some theological debate as to which St James was which, but this was meant to be James the Righteous, the brother of John, who were the sons of Zebedee. The symbol of the pilgrim's shell is linked to pilgrimages undertaken to Compostella where the relics of St James are said to lie. The pilgrim was and is a person of great faith, who is prepared to leave everything behind and travel with nothing, in order to reach his holy destination. He does not know what he will encounter on the way but his courage is steadfast and his purpose, true.

We are now in the third generation of head teachers at St James and I am pleased to say that the schools are in wonderful hands. Mrs Thomlinson, Mr Brazier and Mrs Labram hold the original vision clear in their hearts and are, like the first pioneers, utterly dedicated to the care of their pupils and the spirit of St James. They are, in all respects, perfectly equipped to meet the challenges of the next phase in the life of St James Schools.

The Founder's connection with the wisdom tradition of ancient India opened the door of understanding to reveal the profound and simple truth that the multifarious forms of the manifest world are an expression of a unitary consciousness, referred to by many names but ultimately incapable of being adequately described by any of them. When the subject-object relationship which is projected by the phantom impression of a separate identity ceases, the simplicity and fullness of the all and everything, just as it is, is known to be enough. Here searching stops, for there is nothing lacking.

This understanding of the unity of all things cannot be known by the intellect. Ultimately it is, one might say, 'seen through the heart'. However, it is sufficient that this profound truth has inspired the life of the St James Schools since its foundation. The way in which that understanding has been given

expression over these past four decades has, in many ways, grown and matured, but it has remained steadily at the heart of the schools, informing every effort and initiative. It cannot be said that we have been successful in ensuring that the full meaning of this truth has prevailed at all times – not at all, there have been many ways in which we have been found wanting – but it is clear that the understanding has deepened considerably over time and much has blossomed as a result.

From a global perspective, humanity very much depends on benevolence for its welfare. Our human nature is a conduit for godly and destructive forces which are in a state of continual flux, both within the individual and in society as a whole. When destructive forces gain the ascendancy, humanity suffers. Properly understood, it is for education to provide the conditions in which the forces for good might flourish and prosper. In this way, men and women who are wise, honest, magnanimous, courageous and steadfast will emerge whose company will be a benefit to all.

This was the vision at the birth of St James Schools and, forty years on, we can be confident that such good men and women will continue to emerge ready to play their vital part on the stage of the world, well into the next decade and beyond.

Laura Hyde Cert Ed, MEd  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

©St James Schools