

### **An interview with the Headteacher following the 2016 Ofsted inspection**

Sir Jim's was inspected by Ofsted in April 2016. The inspection team said this was "A very happy school" with "delightful, respectful and helpful students who are proud of their school and feel really safe."

### **How long have you been Headteacher at Sir James Smith's Community School?**

I began in January 2007 and so this will be my ninth year. It has taken time but the school has been utterly transformed from when I first arrived. I am sure ex-students and their parents/carers would not recognise the school now because so much has changed for the better. It is now a great place for students and staff.

### **Where did you go to school?**

I attended Redruth County Grammar School way back in the mists of time. I had a working class background but my parents/carers understood that education could provide a passport to higher and better things – and that is something I want all my students to understand. It is as important today as it was then; and today, in a global world full of competition for jobs, possibly even more important.

### **Please can you tell me a little about your teaching background and experience?**

I did not go into teaching straight away. After a degree in Geography from London University I worked for the Ministry of Defence doing some very interesting jobs that I am not allowed to talk about. I went back to university in London to do my PGCE and then worked in challenging schools in Kingston upon Hull and Bognor Regis. I returned to Cornwall and worked at three schools before taking up a position of Deputy Headteacher at Helston College and then Headship at Sir Jim's, a school much in need of a good shake up.

### **What are the ethos and values of Sir James Smith's Community School?**

Everyone is an individual – in a small school you can be - and we are here to ensure that everyone achieves their best. We talk a lot about 'Us' and there is a great ethos about being a community helping each other to succeed. Sir Jim's is not just about academic success, although that is important; it is about fostering abilities in all things from an interest in art and drama through to engineering to sport and beyond. There are many ways to be clever and I want my students to find what it is they are good at.

### **What key areas of improvement did you identify as needed when you first became Headteacher at Sir Jim's?**

My in-tray was rather full. Behaviour for learning had to improve first. Teaching had to get better. But my main priority was to improve the achievement of students. Attainment is not a useful figure to look at as students from lower starting points will attain less – we needed to accelerate

progress and that is what we have done successfully. Key to this is of course making sure you have the best teachers teaching the best lessons every day!

**How has Sir Jim's developed since this time?**

Sir Jim's has moved from being a school that was not well-regarded in the local community to one that more and more parents/carers are putting as first choice. We have moved from a stubborn grading of 'Requires Improvement' to being 'Good' with many excellent features.

The one thing for me though is the ethos – students smile and are happy being in school; they value each other and the opportunities they are being given. The school is extremely harmonious with students from a very wide range of backgrounds working well together and showing great respect for each other.

**Please tell me about the most recent Ofsted report for Sir Jim's**

Obviously we were delighted to have moved forward and that the report recognised the hard work of all in the community to make this a "good school". I was most proud of hearing what the students said to the inspectors about their school. One student said this was "the perfect school for me." It really showed us that our values were actually there in reality on a daily basis. We were obviously also very happy that teaching and learning got graded as good with English obtaining an individual comment about being outstanding.

**What links does Sir Jim's have with the wider community and why are such links important?**

No school is an island and I am proud that we are still a school that belongs to local people. We believe that schools should be centred in a community and open their doors to all children. Our governors are outstanding and work hard to bring the views of the community to bear on all that we do.

We are very aware that living in a rural area our students need to understand the wider world. Students are given a range of opportunities to broaden their understanding through visits and numerous activities within the local community and further afield including residential trips to London and abroad whether language trips to Belgium or skiing in Italy.

We also have strong links with the local primary schools and work really closely with them to ensure the transition to Sir Jim's is as smooth as possible. There are science workshops, outreach work, partner reading schemes, a transition programme and so on. We issue Sir Jim's termly newsletter which details all the fabulous events and our many successes and invite members of the community to sign up to receive them by email.

**What are the key areas of improvement that you would like to work on in future at Sir Jim's and how do you plan to do this?**

We obviously want to ensure all students are achieving their potential. This will mean a continued focus on teaching and learning and support for our

students. I want all students to make the best possible progress putting them in the driving seat when it comes to choices when they enter the next phase, whether that is further education, employment or training.

**What are your long-term plans for Sir Jim's in the future?**

- Linking with other good or outstanding primaries and secondary schools to ensure we work together to improve outcomes for children within the locality.
- Working closely with Callywith College (as a new Post 16 provider) and other sixth form providers to ensure Sir Jim's students get the best possible deal.
- I would like us to strive towards getting Outstanding – the continued focus on improvement will mean all students getting the best possible deal.

**Anything else you would like to add?**

This is such a diverse and exciting place to work. The atmosphere in the school is amazing and I feel very privileged to be Head of such a fantastic group of staff and delightful and talented students. People need to come and visit the school to find out what makes it so special!