

Aquinas College. Details for prospective applicants for employment

Statement of Purpose, Values and Vision

Aquinas College strives to be a Catholic college for the whole community.

Christ is at the very heart of our philosophy. This is expressed in our commitment to the Gospel values of freedom, justice and love. *“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.”* John 10:10.

We affirm and value each member of our community, recognising the dignity and unique nature of each individual. In this way the presence of Christ is celebrated. We share each other’s strengths, support each other in our weaknesses, and strive for the highest standards of achievement in all we do. We also encourage a questioning stance towards the values of our increasingly secular society.

In short, we aim to provide reasons for living and hoping.

The College

Aquinas College is one of the largest Catholic sixth form colleges in the country. The college has about 1,850 full time 16-19 year old students with about 118 full time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff and 55 FTE support staff. The college has grown to this size from modest beginnings. In 1980 it was opened in the premises of a former high school to provide sixth form education to Stockport’s expected 200 Catholic 16-18 year-old students.

The college now draws students from its four Catholic partner schools (three in Stockport and one in Buxton, 18 miles away) and from many other schools in Stockport and neighbouring areas. It has become one of the most over-subscribed colleges in the country, receiving applications from up to twice as many students as there are places available. The admissions policy gives priority to Catholic students, others from Catholic schools, and to siblings. Beyond that it works on a strictly ‘first come first served’ basis. Having received unsought national publicity in recent years for overnight queues, the ‘first come, first served’ policy has been managed through a telephone queueing system since 2006.

We have refused to become academically selective, welcoming all students for whom we have space and suitable courses. This is fully in keeping with the college’s ethos and the importance we place on personal relationships. We believe that it is these aspects of the college which keep its reputation high, rather than our success in league tables and against national criteria. Nevertheless, and in spite of our comprehensive intake policy, the college has always been amongst the highest rated colleges in the country ever since the league tables were first introduced.

The college was inspected by Ofsted in October 2008 and was judged outstanding in its overall effectiveness, its leadership and management, and the quality of its provision. The inspectors also commented on the excellent individual support for students together with the college’s outstanding response to educational and social inclusion. The resultant report was published on 21 November 2008 and is available at

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/\(id\)/102264/\(as\)/130514_329313.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/(id)/102264/(as)/130514_329313.pdf)

The college is classed as excellent by the Learning and Skills Council and was one of the 29 highly successful colleges upon which was based Ofsted's publication "Why Colleges Succeed". Both the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Ofsted named the college as one of the best providers in the country in their Chief Inspectors' annual reports in 2004 and 2005 respectively. It also featured in the Ofsted report "A comparison of the effectiveness of level 3 provision in 25 post-16 providers" published in September 2008. This concluded that "the most effective group of providers among the sample visited was sixth form colleges".

About 90% of each year's intake follow AS and A level courses (including Applied A levels) with the remainder undertaking level 2 courses together with some GCSEs. There is also provision for some level 1 literacy and numeracy, as well as entry level courses in our Extended Education department for students with moderate learning difficulties. We offer about 50 subjects at AS/A2 level with all the students undertaking a core skills course including tutorial, ethics and appropriate study skills with some preparing for the national key skills qualification.

In addition to the 16-19 year-old students, the college has around 1,000 part time adult students who attend mainly in the evenings as well as some in the daytime – including some at our outreach adult centre in Brinnington. They follow a wide range of courses including some HE courses offered through our links with Manchester Metropolitan University.

The original 1950s buildings have been added to in recent years, but despite this the college remains one of the most space efficient – that is crowded – in the sector. We are therefore in the process of constructing a £42 million rebuild of the college. This will replace all the current accommodation with the exception of the excellent sports hall which will be retained. This landmark new building will be completed in May 2010 and will mean state-of-the-art facilities, suited to the needs of the 21st century, will be available for all curriculum areas.

In common with other sixth form colleges, the college is centrally funded by the Learning and Skills Council. However, as a designated college, the premises remain the property of the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury. All staff are employed directly by the college. The terms and conditions of employment are, in common with all sixth form colleges, those nationally negotiated by the Sixth Form Colleges' Forum (SFCF). In broad terms salaries and contractual arrangements parallel those in secondary schools.

Concerning the present appointments, applications from practising Catholics would be particularly welcome, although all applications will be considered on their merits. As a college committed to equal opportunities, we positively welcome applications from all sections of the community. Intending applicants who will be Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) should note that it is possible for them to complete their period of induction at Aquinas College.