

## Wickersley St Albans Theological Rationale

### Summary of the theological rationale of St Albans.

- every child is made in the image of God and is living out that image, so must achieve their full potential
- children will value courage, encapsulating the confidence and determination to make their way in life
- courage requires vulnerability – as seen in the legend of St Alban – to face trials and, in the spirit of Christ, forge a way through them
- as expressions of God's creation we are empowered to be the people God creates us to be.

### Commentary

St Albans is committed to the aim that every child achieves their potential at the school, and in life. It reflects the notion that we are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and that humanity is therefore a work in progress and we are both being who we are and becoming who we're meant to be (Colossians 3:10; 1 John 3:2)

The school sets huge value on the quality of courage.

This is a quality the Psalmist sees as a gift from God: 'You will listen, O LORD, to the prayers of the lowly; you will give them courage' (Psalm 10:17)

In the Old Testament it is the quality God stirs when calling the people to risky next steps: "Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the LORD your God, am with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:6)

It is also a quality Jesus calls for in various encounters in the Gospel of Matthew, as a response both to an encounter with him, and with situations of anxiety and fear (Matthew 9:2; 9:22; 14:27 – see also Mark 6:50). Might there be something in the ministry of the school that can also call 'courage' into anxious and vulnerable young people?

St Alban is venerated as the first recorded Christian martyr in England. His death came as a result of him shielding a priest to whom he had given refuge. It is in the nature of this story that it concerns one who gave his life for his values and beliefs.

Though a legend the story embodies something of the vulnerability that is required if we are to act in courage. Alban quite literally cloaks himself with the garment of the one he seeks to protect and, in doing so, takes his place.

(St Alban's story: <https://www.stalbanscathedral.org/history/story-of-st-alban?>)

The school affirms the principle of resilience as a way of approaching life.

The Church of England 'Vision for Education' paints a picture of Jesus Christ as follows, to which I have added emphasis for a line that would tally with the St Alban's vision:

'Jesus and the love he embodies are at the heart of our faith and hope that wrongdoing and sin, suffering, evil and death are not the last word about reality. *The drama of his life, teaching, death and resurrection, set within the larger story of God's involvement with the whole of creation and history, is fundamental not only to affirming the goodness of life but also to facing and finding ways through whatever goes wrong with ourselves and our communities.*' (Church of England, Vision for Education, p.10)

Empowering is also central to the school's vision.

Throughout the Bible story the tale is told of God's people freed from the power of Pharaoh and Egypt and of power being seen as a quality God possesses and shares with humanity. Jesus exercises power to heal, and then crucially shares that with his disciples (Luke 9:1; Acts 1:8) and there is a whole strand of Biblical tradition that speaks of humanity being created to continue the work of creation.

The Biblical notion of us having received gifts and abilities from God (Romans 12:4-8) may resonate with the idea that God's power to create is exercised through us, the created.