

Academy Council Pen Portraits

Andy Davies

I have worked in education for 14 years. I started my career as a Science Technician, then working in Examinations, I then moved to a pastoral role and have loved my job ever since.

My work in various pastoral teams has evolved constantly; I now hold the post of Safeguarding Intervention Manager, working daily with a dedicated team of staff to support the students and parents of our Academy.

During my 12 years of pastoral and safeguarding work, I can say in honesty I have always enjoyed immensely working with our students and families, and found that every day is a learning curve. Each day has a new challenge and each day you have the capacity to help a fellow member of our Academy community.

Having grown up and lived in Stoke on Trent all my life I have seen how our City has changed so vastly from when I was a student. I have seen how the City has produced some superb individuals who have gone onto achieve in their chosen fields and have had the pleasure to meet my students long after they have left and enjoyed their stories of success. I believe you have to have pride in your City and where ever I travel will always talk with pride of Stoke.

I enjoy spending time with my son throughout the weekends and holidays, as any 6 year old should we play in the woods, go swimming, and get mucked up, creating new ways of keeping him busy.

I chose to apply for the position of support staff Councilor because I wanted to use my 14 years' experience in education to help sculpt the next chapter of the Academy on its journey to being 'outstanding'.

I am extremely proud of the Academy and all it has achieved and take every opportunity to raise the status of our Academy whenever I can. Through the role as Councilor, I felt I could push from the inside to keep those high standards we set ourselves and create the environment where Every Life is Enriched.

Sara Goddard

I have been in the teaching profession for over twenty years and have experience in various roles. I have been a Principal for six years and I am currently the Executive Principal of Kingsland CE Academy in Stoke-on-Trent. I have a degree in English and Primary Education and a Masters Degree in Education Studies. Kingsland CE Academy is part of a large Multi-Academy Trust and I am the lead for Christian Distinctiveness and SIAMS for the Trust. I am also a SIAMS Inspector for the Church of England.

I enjoy baking cakes, swimming and reading. I regularly worship and take an active role in my parish church where I am a member of the Leadership Team and Parochial Church Council. I also help to lead a weekly youth club for the young people of the parish.

Good governance is at the heart of a successful school and I would like to contribute to the continuing success of St. Peter's CofE Academy. I am passionate about improving children's educational attainment and opportunities in Stoke-on-Trent and as St. Peter's is the only CofE Academy I feel strongly that it should be at the forefront of education in this city in raising aspirations for our young people.

Sheena Podmore

I have been a primary school teacher in Staffordshire for over 24 years. My degree was in R.E and English. I am a member of the senior leadership team in my school and I am responsible for the safeguarding and pastoral care of pupils. I teach a class every day in Early Years and I love it! Each day is unpredictable, never dull, laughter filled and so rewarding. It is a privilege to be involved at the start of a child's learning journey and to watch them develop and grow into confident, happy children.

I am a local girl born and bred and I am extremely passionate about our city and our young people. I believe that our city has lots to offer in terms of culture and history and I believe that we have very talented young people in our city.

I am a mother of 3 children, two at St Peter's CofE Academy and one studying at university. I am an avid SCFC fan, reader and supporter of local music.

I chose to become an Academy Councillor out of a genuine interest in school improvement at all levels and a deep rooted belief in the importance of education for all. I want the best for the children at St Peter's CofE Academy and want our pupils to have equality of opportunity with other pupils of their age, regardless of which part of the country they are educated in.

Kara Walley

I have been a Registered Nurse in Stoke-on-Trent for the past 25 years, having worked at the hospital and on the community, now proudly working as the Team Leader for The School Nursing Service in our city (Our Health 5-19). I have served on the Governing body for St Peter's CofE Academy and Waterside Primary in the past, for a twelve year period.

I am thrilled to be working closely with St Peter's CofE Academy, having been their School Nurse in the past for a period of six years, I feel I have a good understanding of Academy life and the Christian Distinctiveness of the school. The service that I lead supports the school to ensure that all pupils have their medical needs met to learn and achieve. Additionally, pupils are supported and signposted to services that promote good physical and emotional wellbeing, and we deliver health promotion topics in the school.

I am a compassionate, approachable, committed Christian, who has proudly sent all three of my adult children to St Peter's, who in turn have all gone on to graduate at university and with their excellent educational start are successful young people.

Having led the School Nursing Team and my previous 12 years service on Governing Bodies, I was invited to join the Academy Council. I have a wealth of knowledge and skill in working closely with schools to deliver services and the governance arrangements that must be in place to ensure that the school delivers an outstanding education for your child.

Canon Andrew Wickens

I am Rector of the Minster Church of St. Peter ad Vincula (St. Peter in Chains), also known as Stoke Minster. St. Peter's CofE Academy takes its name from the church and students have the opportunity to visit the church around St. Peter's Day in June each year.

As well as working full time as a Church of England priest in Stoke and Fenton, I am also City Faith Officer, working closely with different faith communities across Stoke-on-Trent. I was made an honorary canon of Worcester Cathedral for my work in Dudley in the Black Country where I was serving until 2017 when I came to the Potteries.

I have extensive experience both in education and in interfaith relations. I have also spent eight years living and working for the church in Kenya and Zambia.

I am the Chair of the Academy Council.

Michael Astley

I graduated in International History and Educational Studies and gained my PGCE at Keele University.

I became a History teacher at Sandon High School in Stoke on Trent and soon became a Head of Year and led a team of Learning Mentors across six secondary schools. I then became Head of Humanities at Hagley Park in Rugeley. By the age of 33, I had been promoted to one of the youngest Headteachers in the country, overseeing an increase in the GCSE performance of students from 22% 5 A*-C (9-4) in 2010 to 60% in 2015. I also chaired a District Inclusion Panel for the Cannock and Rugeley area and was an adviser for PiXL.

I then became Principal at St Peter's CofE Academy in Stoke on Trent, a school in Special Measures. Within 18 months, the Academy had come out of Special Measures and achieved an Outstanding grade for Personal Development and Welfare and Good for Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning and Behaviour in May 2019. SIAMS awarded the Academy Good with Excellent features in October 2019.

In the city, I chair the Headteachers Prevent Board and sit on the Skills Advisory Panel, Fair Access Panel, Schools Forum and Opportunities Area Board, where I have co-ordinated a common transition process from Year 6 to Year 7. I am also a Trustee of the Potteries Educational Trust.

I am driven to get the very best from my staff and therefore my students. I am passionate about giving them the opportunities to develop the confidence and determination that will help them thrive in school and beyond.

In my spare time I enjoy playing cricket, as well as following Crewe Alexandra Football Club.

Mark Kent

I joined the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College as Principal in January 2016 where I continue to teach Mathematics, and I am also the Chief Executive of the Potteries Educational Trust. Having moved from my previous post as Deputy Principal at King Edward VI College, Stourbridge this is my sixth post in a sixth form college in my over 30-year teaching career.

I have experience in training groups of teachers (including primary) in maths and statistics, delivering training modules for maths primary school under-graduate trainee teachers. During the course of my career I have also been involved in taster and master class sessions in primary and secondary schools.

I began my teaching in Oxford as a mathematics teacher, working my way up to Head of Mathematics, to Head of Faculty before re-joining King Edward's where I had been Assistant Head of Mathematics for four years.

I herald from Liverpool, where I studied maths, F maths, physics and economics A Levels at King David High School (a part Jewish state school) and then went on to complete a mathematics degree at Leeds University, followed by a PGCE and then a masters degree in statistics with education at Sheffield Hallam. I have served on Mathematics in Education and Industry's Curriculum Committee since 2006 and for some 15 years acted as an examiner, and was a trustee of an international maths education publication.

Away from education I have served previously as a church warden at my local Anglican Church, and in my spare time I lead worship in my church (playing a 12-string guitar and mandolin). I am also a photography enthusiast, a keen walker, cyclist and enjoy reading and spending as much time as I can with my family, as well as following Liverpool Football Club.

Ven Matthew Parker

My current role is that of Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent in the Diocese of Lichfield. With the Bishop of Stafford, I work with 220 churches across North Staffordshire including, of course, the City of Stoke-on-Trent, with a particular responsibility for the care of church buildings, finances and the wellbeing of the clergy and church officers. In the wider Diocese I am involved in developing our Diocesan Direction of Travel, I am deputy-chair of the Board of Finance and I am nominated by the Bishop to sit on the Diocesan Board of Education. I have previously been a parish priest, most recently in Leek, where I also chaired the governing body of the Church of England Middle School in the town.

Born to parents who are teachers, with a brother who teaches and married to a former teacher, schools and education have always been part of my life and work. I had a short spell as a School Chaplain when I actually had to do some teaching myself. It's exciting to keep on learning and to be part of the community that is committed to learning.

Outside of work, I run a book club because reading is such a gift and I play the guitar though now only for my own listening pleasure.

St Peter's CofE Academy is the only Church of England secondary school in the Stoke area and so it has an important part to play both in the City and wider Diocese. I want to play my part in shaping an Academy that is committed to Christian education but which also meets the needs of all the young people it serves, regardless of their faith or background.

Tracy Critchley

After practicing as a Registered Learning Disabilities nurse for a number of years in hospital and private settings I became a partner in the Christian Worship organisation 'Presence Worship' with my husband Paul 23 years ago, resourcing and meeting with Christians both in the UK and overseas.

I've lived in Stoke all my life and believe that it's a wonderful place to live and serve. A place that our young people and families can thrive in.

As well as my work with the local organisation, Beacon House of Prayer, I regularly volunteer at my local foodbank.

In my downtime I enjoy reading, crafts and spending time with my Granddaughter. Having seen my 4 children educated at St Peter's and it being a massive part of our lives, I'm keen to keep giving back and to offer my practical support as well as praying and building together a great Christian faith community

Adam Yates

As a former professional footballer for Crewe Alexandra, Morecambe and Port Vale, I am an advocate for professional players gaining qualifications and broadening their employment prospects for their careers after football. Following my retirement due to injury, I am now using the skills and experience gained from a degree at Staffordshire University to work as a Community Business Manager with Synectics Solutions and I am Head of Community Liaison Officer for Port Vale Foundation Trust.

I work with many schools in Stoke-on-Trent, including St. Peter's, overseeing holiday clubs and ensuring that families still have access to hot food on days when schools are normally closed.

Rev Andrew Day

I was born in Cape Town, South Africa and studied at the Universities of Stellenbosch, Cape Town and Durham.

For much of my working life, I have been in education in both the independent and state sectors in the UK and South Africa, as a teacher and, latterly, as a Headteacher. But, in a moment of sheer indulgence, spent time in the travel industry specialising in safaris in southern Africa.

The world is truly charged with the grandeur of God – to paraphrase Gerard Manley Hopkins.