

Hannah Khan

Headteacher at Katharine Lady Berkeley's School, in Wotton-under-Edge, on the community-based values of the oldest state school in England

‘A school-house in Wotton for the habitation and likewise... for the maintenance of a master and two poor scholars of the art of grammar; which master and his successors shall govern and inform all scholars coming to the same house or school coming for instruction in this art without taking anything for his trouble from them or any of them...’

This bequest, made by Lady Katherine Berkeley in 1384, marked the founding of the oldest state school in England. 635 years later, I am happy to say that her gift has grown and blossomed into our wonderful learning community of 1,500 students. We continue to produce “great scholars” and, as a comprehensive school, we continue not “take anything” from any of them.

When I became the 44th head teacher of KLB, we spent time together thinking about what it was that defined us. The answer came quite naturally from our students, parents and our staff. We are all very proud to be part of this unique school. In a world focused on measurements and tables, we are happy that our examination results, year on year,



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are among the very best state school results in the country. But that isn't why KLB is an extraordinary school.

What I have always found to be unique here, is the power of community and that we are glued together by shared values.

At the top of our list of values we placed respect and a visitor to our school will quickly see the confident and calm way students move around and the happy and authentic interactions between adults and students.

We recruit teachers who have a genuine interest in the wellbeing of young people and who demonstrate this care, setting high academic standards in the context of developing rounded and resilient students.

The second of our values is as important as our first – humility.

A KLB education includes opportunities for all of our students to work with our community, to serve and to give willingly. Our extra-curricular programme seeks to build this mindset and to balance learning and service in equal measure.

We want everyone at KLB to show the courage to do the right thing when no one is watching them. That is what makes this school unique.

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