

Drama Department Rationale

From the very earliest days drama has fulfilled a basic need in man. It has enabled him to come to terms with himself and his environment.

(R.N Pemberton-Billing and JD Clegg. 1965) 1

Drama is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way students feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, creativity, and emotional development. Jim Clark states that:

“Drama is an essential form of behavior in all cultures... it allows for the exploration of issues and problems central to the human condition and offers the individual the opportunity to define and clarify their own culture. It is a creative group activity in which individuals behave in ‘as if’ situations as either themselves or as other people.” 2

From this statement we can gather that drama is a universal human activity that can be used to ‘make sense’ of the world in which we live. By engaging in the kind of exploration that Clark says is possible through dramatic activity, we can also develop the student’s ability to empathize with others and to reflect on themselves. Roger Ebert has stated that he believes, ‘empathy is the most essential quality of civilization’ and Barak Obama has said that, ‘Learning to stand in somebody else’s shoes, to see through their eyes, that’s how peace begins.’

There is a consensus in education that engaging in dramatic activity can also enable the student to develop many other important personal skills and attributes such as communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving and self-discipline.

The purpose of our Drama curriculum is to ensure that students develop a deep and secure knowledge and understanding of drama as they work towards mastery of the art form. Students will increase their knowledge as they become more skilled in their use of drama techniques and conventions whilst they explore important and challenging themes and issues with sensitivity and empathy. As Neelands insists:

“Structuring should combine personal and social learning arising from the content with aesthetic learning about the conventions of theatre.” 3

The intention of the department is to allow students to experience using a range of drama techniques and gain knowledge about a wide range of important and influential plays, practitioners and performance styles whilst developing important personal attributes and skills such as creativity, communication, and reflection. In short, subject knowledge will be developed through engagement in practical exploration and theoretical analysis.

