

David Sheppard was an exceptional sportsman, bishop and leader. He is an outstanding example of a leader driven by conviction, and the values he lived by were those at the heart of this school which bears his name.

In the 1950s he was well-known as a cricketer. While at Cambridge he set new batting records for the University, which remain to this day. He played for England 22 times, and twice captained his country. He twice toured Australia and New Zealand with MCC, and captained Sussex in one of their most successful seasons.

His compass for life was set during his first term at university, when he experienced what he called his 'conversion to Christ'. Attending a meeting of the Christian Union, he responded to the preacher's invitation to let Jesus 'enter his life and take charge of it'. From that point on he wanted God to direct his life, leading him to seek ordination in the Church of England.

Sheppard devoted his life as a priest to serving people in the inner city – first in Islington, then a very deprived area of London, then Canning Town in east London. In 1969 he was appointed Bishop of Woolwich in south London, before coming to Liverpool as Bishop in 1975.

How did the values which guide this school – **FRIENDSHIP, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, ENDURANCE, RESPECT** and **FAIRNESS** – inspire Bishop Sheppard himself?

Endurance was something he learnt as a cricketer, practising many hours a day to perfect his skill, and setting his mind to playing a long innings if the situation demanded it. Later, as a church leader, he learnt not to expect instant results but to accept that achieving worthwhile change could be a long process.

Friendship was important to him, both in cricket and the Church. When captaining a side, he would get to know his players, off the field as well as on. Many who played under him have said how much they appreciated that. As a church leader he would build relationships with people and organisations with whom he worked. Liverpool Polytechnic (now Liverpool John Moores University) awarded him an honorary degree in engineering because, the Vice Chancellor explained, he was a 'bridge builder'.

Bridge-building for Sheppard also meant bringing people together, something he did very effectively in Merseyside. One of his strongest legacies is the work he did with his Roman Catholic colleague, Archbishop Derek Worlock, to dismantle the deep, historic division between Catholics and Protestants in the region. The bishops also worked to break down the barriers that existed between the black community and the police.

Sheppard always wanted to heal broken relationships, and was ready to practise **forgiveness** when people had wronged him. When friends turned against him because he called for a sporting boycott of apartheid South Africa, he went to great lengths to restore friendships, and did not bear grudges.

Respect characterized his approach to others. He treated everybody as equals, regardless of their background. He encouraged people in the inner-city, who had seemingly few opportunities, to become leaders and pursue careers they would

otherwise not have had. Many have attested to the transformation this brought to their lives.

In both London and Liverpool, he built relationships with black communities based on trust and mutual respect. He challenged prejudice in all its forms, and partnered with members of the black community in their struggle for equal rights and opportunities.

Sheppard's **compassion** for those he described as 'left behind' – those without jobs or decent housing, or who were the victims of prejudice – drove him to act on the local, national and international stage. He was the first Test cricketer to refuse to play against teams from apartheid South Africa, and his opposition to apartheid was an important factor in ending that system. As Bishop of Liverpool, he worked hard to encourage businesses to bring jobs to Merseyside, a region then suffering chronic levels of unemployment. He thought the absence of a job, or poverty wages, took away a person's dignity and rendered family life more fragile.

His sense of **fairness** drove him to look for the underlying causes of injustice and to seek to remedy them. He was not afraid to advocate policies that he thought would create a more just society, and believed in the principle of the strong helping the weak. One of his favourite Bible verses was Romans chapter 5 verse 12, where St Paul talks about people being 'members one of another'. Within the Church, he thought it unfair that only men could become priests or bishops, and was an early advocate for women's ordination.

The title of his best-known book, *Bias to the Poor* (1983), encapsulates his belief that God has a special concern for the disadvantaged, and he was passionate about working that out in practice. He was the driving force behind the famous 1985 report, *Faith in the City*, which led to both Church and government giving greater priority to tackling the poverty and powerlessness faced by many in our inner-cities.

Bishop David Sheppard would have strongly affirmed our motto '**Following Jesus, together we succeed**'. He thought following Jesus was vital for individuals, but also for communities. When people **together** followed Jesus' example by practising friendship, compassion, forgiveness, endurance, respect and fairness, each person would be valued and each would have an opportunity to fulfil their potential.