



BLACKROCK  
COLLEGE C.S.Sp.

# *Looking to the Future*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027







BLACKROCK COLLEGE C.S.Sp.

## The Spiritan Way

- Openness to the Spirit
- Commitment to Service
- Global Vision
- Sense of Community
- Personal Development
- Concern for the Poor
- High Educational Standards



COR UNUM ET ANIMA UNA



# Introduction

When laying out our Strategic Plan, Building on Tradition 2016-2021, we could not have foreseen the Covid crisis. The Covid years brought much suffering, hardship and heartbreak on a global scale. One could not overstate its impact. Our school community responded magnificently to the challenges. My colleagues embraced a technological framework for Learning and Teaching which would not have been considered possible 12 months previously. The resilience shown, initiative taken, creativity nurtured, and can-do attitude was inspirational.

We can look back on our 2016-2021 plan with satisfaction. Blackrock is a better place for it. We are further down the road in providing a high quality education for the boys but being so does not mean that we have lost sight of our founding intention, our roots, our values. Indeed, they are even more relevant today.

Blackrock has always been about the boys. It is our calling to provide the best possible education in the Spiritan tradition. This document 'Looking to the Future', must have as its most basic premise the provision of the skills that the Blackrock Graduate will require in the 3rd decade, and beyond, of the 21st century.

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”*

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Preparation for Life

We prepare young men for life, not as passive recipients of what society has to offer but to be a voice of reason, to confidently espouse Christian values to have the integrity, the interest, the inspiration and ingenuity to make a difference.

Young men fulfil their potential when they believe that they belong to something worthwhile, realise that they can make a difference, and can be an influence for good in both their own lives and in their community. In 'Looking to the Future', we must build self-esteem and give each boy the confidence to keep going in the face of setback. There will always be setbacks. We encourage the boys to reach within themselves, build reservoirs of hope, trust, forgiveness and understanding so that they may be aware of the presence and love of Christ in their lives.

*“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times  
I fell down and got back up again.”*

~ Nelson Mandela

# Be Respectful

The landscape is increasingly challenging as the climate change crisis, ongoing needs of the emerging nations, issues of homelessness, and social integration put demands upon us all. We live in an unforgiving world. Social media lies at the heart of this. In 'Looking to the Future' we add a 5th imperative 'Be Respectful' to our call to 'Be Caring, Be There, Be Truthful, Be Grateful.'

This is a call for Respect for self as well as others in all settings but particularly on social media where over-indulgence can diminish empathy and lead to cyber-bullying.

Essential to self-respect is resilience, a capacity to keep going in tough times, to make the difficult call when peer pressure suggests otherwise. In 'Looking to the Future', we urge the boys to ask themselves the question – “what do I stand for? “

Consideration for others elevates what we do to a different level. Our 'Fides' is a belief that we can make a difference in the lives of others. Our 'Robur' is our strength of character, to act purposefully in favour of what is right. It is about dispensing with the passive role of the bystander and being a voice for good.

Consideration for others is the essence of our Christian faith. Jesus does not leave us free to compromise on the essential matter of loving service to others. This is the difference between routine and rut. It is the Blackrock way to routinely put others first, to reject selfish mediocrity, listless boredom and cynical detachment.

*“If you stand for nothing you will fall for anything.”*

~ Fr. Malachy Kilbride

# Partnership

In 'Looking to the Future', we recognise that parenting is more complex than ever before and that parents need the support of each other. Partnership in the delivery of shared values between the school and the home is essential to this.

Equally the student voice must be heard and supported. The emerging role of the Student Council and Wellbeing Committee must strengthen our shared identity and promote inclusivity.

The Covid crisis certainly catapulted Learning and Teaching forward with the advancement in the use of technology in the classroom and beyond. In 'Looking to the Future' we must ensure the primacy of the student-teacher relationship as well as develop peer and self-directed learning, inspire curiosity and creativity and promote life-long learning.

Essential to this is the provision for our staff, both teaching and support, of the best possible environment for them to share their expertise, empathy and experience with the boys. And of course, the climate crisis is at the forefront of our concerns. Blackrock must tackle issues of waste management, energy and water conservation, biodiversity and sustainable travel on both an individual and community level.

Finally, the 'Reach' of our school has been broadened with the introduction of our Social Integration/Bursary programme and this will continue to evolve. A development will be the expansion of our commitment to youngsters with special educational needs.

*“For your own success to be real, it must contribute to the success of others.”*

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

## To be better than our former selves

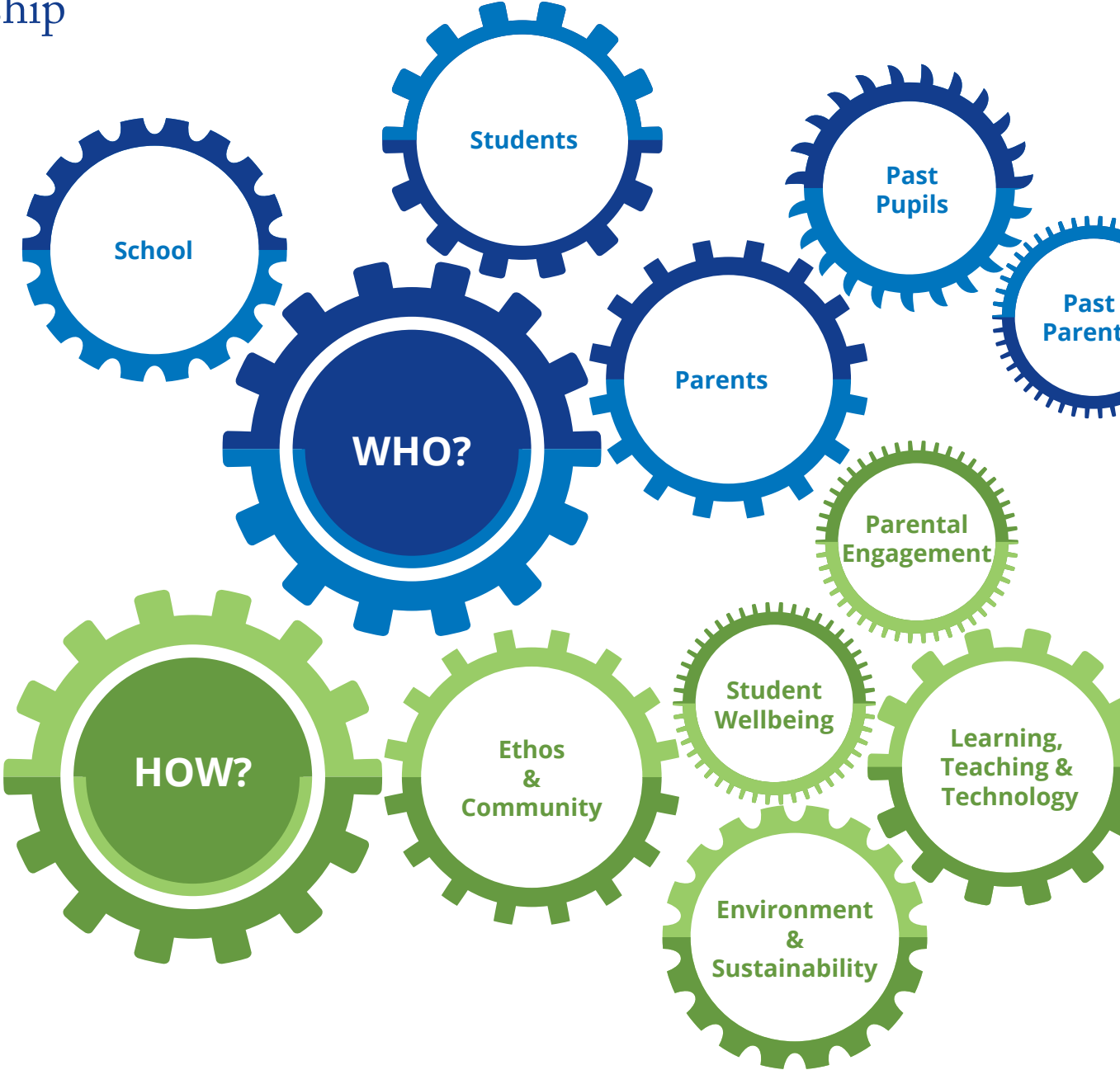
Our goal is excellence that each student and staff member can be the best they can be. In the words of Thomas Merton, **“the biggest human temptation is to settle for too little.”** We want our boys to step out of their comfort zone, embrace inconvenience, act selflessly. Through this, each will make a difference, will find fulfilment.

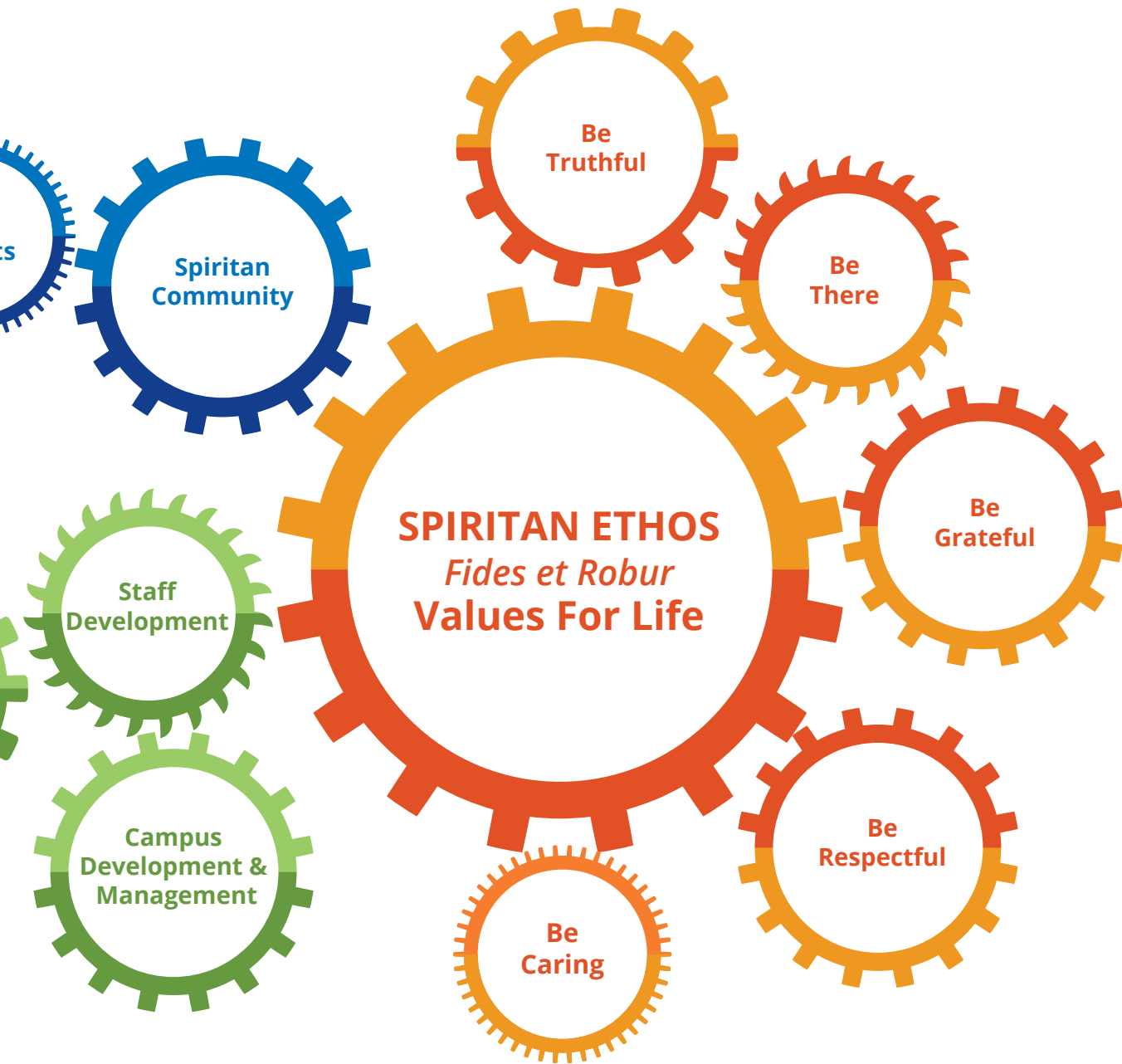
I thank the many contributors to this plan. My colleagues on both an individual and Department level, the parent body via the Council and Year Committees, our students via the Student Council and House Captains, the Green Schools and Wellbeing Committees and of course, our Spiritan Community who are a constant reminder of the raison d’etre of Blackrock, a Spiritan, mission-focused school, committed to the development of our students with Jesus Christ as their exemplar.

*“When day comes, we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid. The new dawn balloons as we free it. For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.”*

~ Amanda Gorman

# Partnership





# Looking to the Future



# Ethos & Community

*‘Cultivate an openness to the Spirit.’*

## 1.1 Support, reinforce and build upon the College’s ethos and values.

- Establish an ‘ethos task force’ with representatives from all stakeholders – Parents, College Union, Past-Parents’ Association, Parents’ Association, Staff, Community and Student Council.
- Grow a deeper understanding of the seven core values of Spiritan education.
- Strengthen links with Spirasi.
- Promote partnership with the emerging nations through the WWGS programme and Immersion trips.
- Introduce a Spiritan Faith Leadership programme at senior cycle level.
- Develop the prayer programme in the College.
- Increase the Archives’ visibility as a resource within the College and commence an extensive digitisation programme, with focus on the most historic and physically vulnerable resources.

## 1.2 Support the Parents’ Council: A call to partnership.

- Welcoming new parents to the College.
- Encouraging parental attendance at College activities including year masses, evening lectures, musicals, concerts and social events.
- Distribute and review the Parents’ Charter.

## 1.3 The College Access Programme

- Sustain College Access/Bursary Programme to Leaving Certificate and onto undergraduate levels.
- Expand the Access Programme in line with the Spiritan Education Trust, ‘strategic direction’ and mission to include the support for educational provision for those with additional educational needs.



*“Lord, I will prepare missionaries for you  
and then you can put them to work.”*

~ Claude Poullart des Places

# Environment & Sustainability

## *'Awareness, Appreciation, Action'*

### 2.1 Educate and Engage

- Create whole school awareness through a cross-curricular approach.
- Grow Green Schools' membership with a target of 75% of the student body by 2027 with membership defined as at least one positive act.
- Promote annual Green projects through Environment Awareness Weeks, newsletters, assemblies and House System.

### 2.2 Energy, Waste and Water Management

- Undertake, in association with College professional advisors, a cost/benefit analysis of a solar panel system.
- Increase recycling: replace interior and exterior bins with clearly labelled colour-coded alternatives.
- Eliminate single-use plastic on the campus.
- Establish litter patrols – responsibility for cleaning up of classrooms.
- Reduce paper consumption in the school office by effectively using document management and information systems.
- Identify actions for water conservation.

### 2.3 Biodiversity

- Develop a pollinator friendly campus through wildflower meadows.
- Enhance education around biodiversity by creating and using outdoor classrooms.

### 2.4 Sustainable Travel

- Promote cycle/walk/public transport to school.
- Install electric vehicle charging points on the campus.



*"Earth provides enough to satisfy everyman's need but not every man's greed."*

~Mahatma Gandhi

# Student Wellbeing

*'If we want the boys to be responsible – we must ensure that they are response-able.'*

## 3.1 Build Resilience and Empathy within the student body

- Establish a Resilience programme alongside the SPHE programme.
- Increase the profile of the College Feature Days/ Weeks on Mental Health, Addiction Awareness, Wellbeing and Anti-bullying.
- Embed the 'Be Respectful' imperative with a particular focus on social media and interpersonal relationships.
- Promote inclusivity – all are welcome.

## 3.2 Promote active engagement in school clubs and societies

- Raise the profile of the Student Council and promote student-led activities.
- Improve awareness of the extra-curricular clubs and activities available through the development of the Clubs and Societies (sign up) Day.
- Strengthen the House system with a focus on vertical links and inter-year House points.

## 3.3 Examine Student Support

- Develop the role of the Student Wellbeing Committee and promote openness about wellbeing issues.
- Move from having a Student Homework Diary to a Student Journal to encourage routine reflection on practice and embed the 5 college imperatives.
- Review Counselling Services in the College.



*"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."*

~ Catherine of Siena

# Learning, Teaching and Technology

*'Promote life-long learning and curiosity.'*

## 4.1 The classroom experience

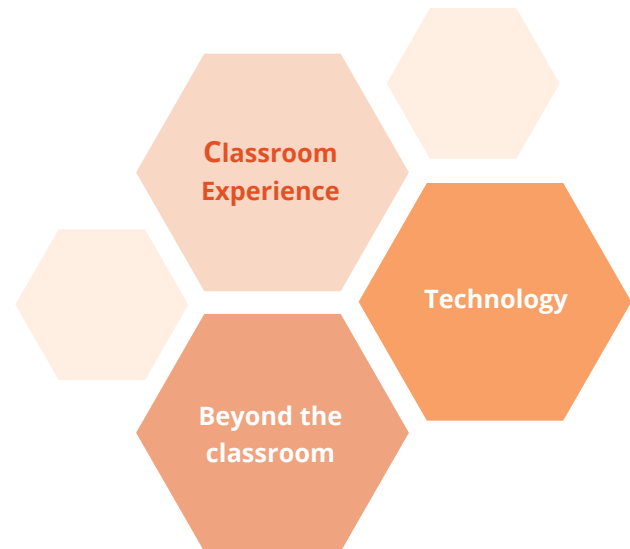
- Grow curiosity where the key skills in all subjects are used as the catalyst for personal discovery.
- Establish the global context of our Spiritan mission in a cohesive approach across the curriculum.
- Review methods of assessment with a focus on Formative Feedback.
- Encourage student reflection on practice: promote the use of the Student Journal in all classes.

## 4.2 Beyond the classroom

- Promote a wide range of clubs and societies across the Arts, Languages, Science and sport.
- Promote external competitions across the Arts, Sciences and Languages.
- Develop the study skills of the boys with a focus on peer-learning and collaborative practices.

## 4.3 Technology

- To sustain and develop our blended approach to Learning and Teaching in tandem with a balanced use of technology and devices.
- Equip the boys with the I.T. literacy and skills necessary to be an active and committed member of society.
- Promote responsible, competent and appropriate use of technology through a Digital Rewards System in the Junior Cycle and student Digital Champions.



*“Strive not to be a success but to be of value.”*

~ Albert Einstein

# Staff Development

*‘Attract, Develop and Retain staff members.’*

## 5.1 Welcome new staff

- Provide staff induction and mentoring for all new staff.
- Encourage an openness to the spirit.
- Introduce a communication strategy to develop/enhance collaboration between College Departments – Academics, Administration, Catering, Grounds, Household, Maintenance, Medical and Security.

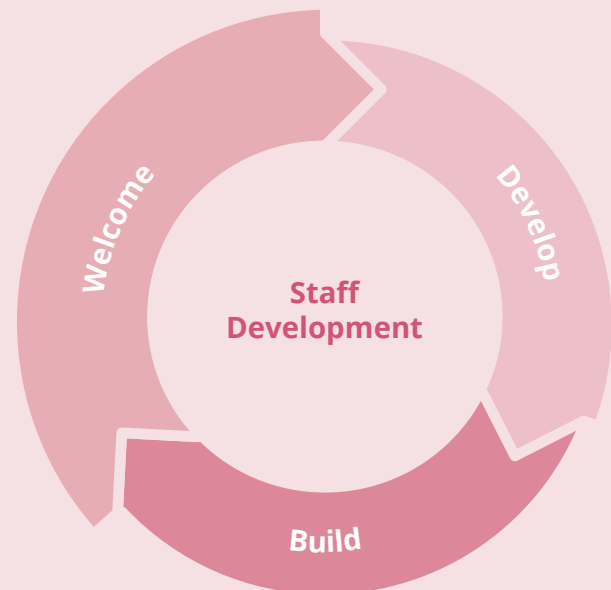
## 5.2 Develop Staff Community

- Support physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.
- Broaden Chaplaincy services.
- Organise social events.
- Integrate and value support staff.

## 5.3 Build Professional Practice

- Have Learning and Teaching, including e-learning, as a component of every Academic Staff and Subject Department meeting.
- Develop inter-departmental collaborative practices through the Shared Learning Group.

- Prepare Teaching staff for the new Senior Cycle Programme.
- Introduce monthly meetings to develop the administration functions and promote better collaboration between Finance, I.T., Administration, Halls of Residence, College Registrar and Medical Departments.
- Encourage and facilitate professional and personal development.



*“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”*

~ Aristotle

# Campus Development and Management

## 6.1 Capital Development Projects

- Pavilion for campus wide tog-out, medical, social, strength and conditioning and storage facilities.
- Provision of an Arts Centre in the Jubilee Hall with rehearsal space in the basement.
- Extension to CADLC to incorporate a Development Education Centre.
- Development of tennis courts with a dome over the three courts.
- Ongoing upgrade of I.T infrastructure in line with Pillar 2 of the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027.

## 6.2 Financial Management

- The Development Office will lead fundraising campaigns across the global Blackrock family for (i) capital projects (ii) the Access Programme and (iii) support educational provision for those with special educational needs.
- Financial planning to manage costs and fee increases as well as broaden income streams.



*“A leader is a dealer in hope.”*

~Napoleon Bonaparte

# Conclusion

When we look back in 2027, Blackrock will have embraced many challenges but will have done so with decency and discernment. What will Blackrock look like in 2027? That is not for us to answer. A Strategic Plan is about the direction and not the destination. May the journey continue.

I will finish with this definition of happiness/fulfilment:

“It is to thank God every morning for the miracle of life. It is the maturity to be able to say that I made a mistake, it is to have the courage to say I need you, the awareness to say thank you.”

*‘Be Caring, Be There, Be Truthful, Be Grateful, Be Respectful.’*

