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23 May, 2014

**ECF 'School Award' nominations**

English Chess Federation

Dear Sir,

The English Chess Federation has an annual award called the School Award that it presents to schools which show outstanding success or enthusiasm in Chess. We believe that St Edward's Church of England Academy, Leek is worthy of receiving such an award and in accordance with award guidelines have submitted this recommendation via the MCCU. The attached document explains why St Edward's is worthy of the award. If you do have any questions or queries, please don't hesitate in getting in touch.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Andrew Davies, (General Secretary)  
Staffordshire Chess Association.

## St Edward's Academy, Leek

### Chess as part of the curriculum, since 1981

Leek is a town located on the edge of the Staffordshire Moorlands. In 1981, St Edward's Middle School was founded there, to help look after the educational needs of nine to thirteen year olds. The school's first head teacher knew of the benefits chess could bring to young minds so included chess on the curriculum as just one of the school's distinctive features. But right from the start thought was given to helping encourage young players not just from the school itself, but also in the wider community. In 1982 Malcolm Pein was invited to run a coaching weekend at the school, not simply for pupils from St Edward's but for all children from Staffordshire. That coaching weekend was held over the 18 and 19 September 1982. Mr Pein, who attained his IM title just four years later in 1986, said after the coaching weekend finished that he thought it had been so successful that he would like to repeat it.

With chess being so important at St Edward's, there has been an after school chess club since the school first started. A variety of teachers and volunteers have taken responsibility for that club over the years and at times it has proven so popular that children from other schools have also attended. Here in 2014, around seventy of St Edward's pupils attend regularly, including over twenty girls. With the school having just under 750 pupils, that means almost ten percent of pupils attend regularly. The club is currently looked after by three members of teaching staff (Colin Abell, David Rose and Elizabeth Salmon), with additional coaching and support being provided by two equally keen members of the neighbouring "Cheddleton and Leek Chess Club."

Returning to the school's early years; In 1983, Woman's Hour on BBC radio gave half a programme to chess at St Edward's. They visited the school where both pupils and staff were interviewed. Also that year, The Times Educational Supplement featured a spread on chess at St Edward's school.

By the second half of the 1980s the school was competing regularly in EPSCA tournaments and in 1990 reached the semi-finals. During the same year, the girls' team won the under-12 Lloyds Bank Trophy for school teams. In 2001 a team of players from the school, all aged under 13 but competing in an under 18 tournament, won the English Counties Girls' Chess Federation Cup. In addition a separate team competed in, and won, the under-11 tournament. The following year, tournament rules were amended so that only county teams could take part. A member of that winning team was **Molly Moruzzi**. In 2000 she was selected to play for England and BBC Midlands Today visited the school to interview her. For several years she played regularly at international level.

For many years St Edward's has also competed in the ECF's National Schools under-19 team tournament, with varying success. In 2013 two teams took part, with the 'A' team finishing joint third in England despite all the players being from year seven (*aged under twelve*). In 2012 competition rules were changed and extra sections introduced. As a result, St Edward's entered three teams in both the under-11 open and under-11 girls' sections of the competition. The girls' 'A' team finished sixth and the open 'A' team seventh.

In 2003, St Edward's hosted a Megafinal for Staffordshire players competing in the UK Chess Challenge. This year, 2014, the school hosted its twelfth and along with all other competitors about forty St Edward's pupils took part.

St Edward's had its inception in 1981, but chess at schools in the Leek area goes back to 1969 or even earlier. One of St Edward's predecessors in the town was the Mount Methodist Primary School, where chess had been taught to pupils from 1969 and included as part of the curriculum from 1971. At Mount Methodist, teaching chess was very largely the brainchild of their head teacher, the late **George Loraine**, who encouraged chess because he could see the benefits it brought to his pupils. Going back even further, George Loraine himself had been encouraged by HMI (*Her Majesty's Inspector of schools*) **Charles Strafford** who had also been keen to encourage chess in schools. Charles Strafford features well on the internet, for both his exploits in the Second World War and as HMI.

Mount Methodist Primary itself enjoyed a very good run in various national junior team tournaments. Among their successes were reaching the last four of an EPSCA junior knockout in 1972 and the last eight on two other occasions. Latterly, the school concentrated more on the achievements of individual pupils, such as **Clare Whitehead** who became British Under-14 girls champion in 1976 and under-18 champion in both 1977 and 1980 (she did not compete in either 1978 or 1979). At the age of seventeen, she achieved a grade of 196. At that time, the highest grade ever achieved by a female player. Clare became British Ladies Correspondence Champion in 1980.

In 2013 the school became "St Edward's Academy"; Keen to help its nine to thirteen year old pupils develop. Chess at the school is currently included as part of the Mathematics curriculum, which demonstrates how the qualities it helps develop in eager young minds is appreciated and valued. To help them develop, more skilful players will be invited to join the nearby "Cheddleton and Leek Chess Club," where many of them will go on to play regularly for one of the club's league teams. Many St Edward's pupils have also represented their county; Playing for Staffordshire teams in both EPSCA, NYCA and ECF Inter-County tournaments at varying levels.

Chess has been part of the school curriculum at St Edwards since 1981 and it has been estimated that since that time around 6,000 young people in the Staffordshire Moorlands area have been taught and developed an interest in chess because of St Edward's school and its enthusiastic support of the game.

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