



left: Alan carries the Olympic Torch in Bedale in 2012. Photo: Alan Mak
right: Alan with his parents and sister outside York Minster for the St Peter's School Commemoration and Prizegiving in 2002. Photo: Alan Mak
below: Alan in Westminster.
 Photo: NK-photography.co.uk

form. He says: 'My five years at St Peter's had a transformational impact on my life. I will always be grateful for the fantastic education I received which enabled me to achieve more than I could have ever hoped for. 'St Peter's gave me access to inspirational, brilliant teachers who brought out the best in me and opened up a world of new opportunities, from learning in the classroom to trips abroad and sport to performing in drama productions and singing in the Chapel Choir.' He became the first person from his family to go to university, reading law at Cambridge and then completing a post-graduate law and business diploma in Oxford before working as a solicitor in the city.

'I would not have made it to Cambridge without the support and first-class teaching I received at St Peter's'

Alan says simply: 'I would not have made it to Cambridge without the support and first-class teaching I received at St Peter's.' It was while at St Peter's that he also developed an interest in politics that would lead to him becoming an MP.

He ended up serving in a number of ministerial and payroll positions, including Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury and Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

He is the first and only MP from any political party with British-Chinese heritage, the first to be appointed as a government minister and the first to speak from the Despatch Box in the Chamber of the House of Commons.

Alan won the Best New Conservative MP award in 2017/18 and in 2021/22 was voted Conservative MP of the Year at the cross-party awards hosted by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

He has also served as trustee and later president of the child hunger charity Magic Breakfast and in recognition of his work he was selected to carry the Olympic Torch



through the town of Bedale in 2012 as part of a national relay.

Alan, who is MP for Havant in Hampshire, recalls: 'My interest in politics and public service began during my time at St Peter's.'

'I enjoyed A level government and politics, which led to me joining the Conservative Party locally in York during the sixth form.

'My interest grew over the years, and I was fortunate to be elected to Parliament in 2015 and appointed as a government minister in 2021.'

Alan's parents settled in York after escaping communism in China.

They had an entrepreneurial spirit and started their own business. Alan worked in the takeaway from a young age and went on

to help run it. That was where he learned his Conservative values and he was encouraged to pursue his interest in politics as he worked alongside his mother and father.

Alan says: 'My parents worked all hours to give me and my sister the opportunities they never had and I will always be grateful for their sacrifices that enabled me to attend St Peter's.'

Today he may represent a constituency several hundred miles away on the south coast, but he still has close ties to York.

He returns regularly to the city to see family and retains a very special connection with York Minster.

It was there, last August, that he and his wife Cathy got married. ●

Alan's spirit of achievement

MP Alan Mak's life took him from a takeaway in York to the heart of politics. He returns to his old school this month with an inspiring message for pupils

WORDS: Simon Toft

They say school days are the best days of your life. In Alan Mak's case, they changed his life.

From growing up in two rooms above the family takeaway in York to carrying the Olympic Torch and serving as a government minister and vice-chairman of the Conservative Party, his has been a remarkable journey.

But he freely acknowledges that what made it possible was the education he received at the city's St Peter's School.

It's why he's returning to York on July 7 to give the annual Commemoration Address to

the whole school at York Minster, sharing his story and hopefully inspiring young people into public service.

He's also acting as a bursary ambassador as the historic school promotes its Keys For Life campaign to offer more transformational opportunities to pupils from across the community. This aims to raise £5m and ensure the school remains demographically diverse by doubling the number of bursary recipients in time for its 1,400th anniversary in 2027.

As an alumnus of St Peter's (the third-oldest school in the world, founded in AD

627), Alan joins illustrious names such as England cricketer Jonny Bairstow, Team GB rower Helen Austin, *James Bond* composer John Barry, BBC broadcaster Harry Gration, BBC sports presenter Katherine Downes – and Guy Fawkes.

He knows from personal experience just what a difference financial assistance can make, benefitting significantly from a Government Assisted Place, a bursary and a scholarship.

Alan attended St Peter's from 1997 to 2002 after switching from Queen Anne Comprehensive School in York in the third