



Exeter School



School Information Pack

2021 / 2022



Introduction

Exeter School is a leading independent coeducational day school and the Sunday Times 'South-West Independent Secondary School of the Year 2018'. Educating more than 930 pupils aged 7 to 18, it is academically ambitious and successful, but down-to-earth and unpretentious, offering pupils a breadth of co-curricular opportunities in a warm and supportive community. The Sunday Times Parent Power Survey concluded, "In a competitive local market, with some excellent state schools nearby, Exeter School has to offer a high quality and distinctive alternative – and does so in spades". In its 2018 review the Good Schools Guide called the school a "cohesive and purposeful community" and "An admirable school. A humane school. A very agreeable school."

Located in one of the UK's most vibrant, historically interesting and fast-growing cities, close to the coastline and spectacular countryside, Exeter School offers a particularly attractive environment in which to live, work and learn. The school prides itself not only on its intellectual achievement and happy, purposeful atmosphere but also the value for money it offers parents.



History

Exeter School traces its origins back to 1633 and the founding of Exeter Free Grammar School for the sons of the city's freemen. In 1877 it moved to its current 25-acre site on Victoria Park Road which was designed by the influential Victorian architect William Butterfield in his trademark brick and banded stone, irreverently described as 'streaky bacon'. After the Second World War the school's status changed to Direct Grant and remained so until 1976, when it became independent. A preparatory school has operated on the site since the early 1900s and in 2000 became Exeter Junior School. Boarding ceased in 2003. The first girls were admitted into the sixth form in 1981 and the school became fully co-educational in 1997.



Inspection report

Exeter School was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2014 and achieved an excellent rating in each of the eight areas. A link to the report can be found here: <https://www.isi.net/school/exeter-school-6443>. The inspectors concluded, "Teaching is excellent and promotes high quality learning. The broad curriculum enables pupils to have a wide range of experiences and the extra-curricular provision is extensive". In January 2018, the school fully met all the required standards of the new format 'compliance only' inspection.

Location and Campus

Exeter regularly features on lists of the best places to live in the UK. It is close to sandy beaches and majestic moorland, yet under two and half hours away from London by train. The city centre is dominated by the gothic splendour of the 800-year-old Cathedral, which has the longest uninterrupted, medieval vaulted ceiling in the world. Exeter has a rich and varied cultural life and the vibrancy of a city which is home to a world-renowned university and is one of only 39 cities globally to be awarded UNESCO City of Literature status. It is also well connected by road and rail, has an international airport and has benefited from much recent investment including the arrival of the Met Office in 2003.

Exeter School is located a mile east of the city centre in the leafy residential suburb of St Leonards. It occupies a 25-acre site with spectacular views to the Haldon Hills.

Recent developments have included a new indoor four-lane 25m swimming pool and changing rooms with associated sports facilities, and extensions to the junior school, music block, art studio and Daw Building.



Teaching and Learning

In the senior school, the development of learning skills, independent thought, creativity and a love of learning are the wider aims of the curriculum. The focus is on the whole pupil and the academic and pastoral teams work closely together to develop potential and keep parents informed. Ultimately, academic success is the aim and aspiration of pupils, staff and parents, but the school believes that this is best achieved through a broad curriculum and a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their wider interests. Exam results are consistently excellent. In 2020, 43 out of 97 A Level candidates achieved three or more A* or A grades. The A*A pass rate was 62% and A*AB pass rate was 88%. At GCSE/IGCSE, 79% of papers taken were graded 9-7 and 45 out of 103 pupils achieved ten 9-7 grades. These results are in line with outcomes over the previous three years.

In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils join the school from diverse educational backgrounds and are given the chance to sample a full range of subject options including computer science, drama and electronics.

In Years 10 and 11 pupils study for nine or ten GCSE/IGCSEs with a core of maths, English, a modern foreign language, science (dual or triple) and religious education (non-examination).



In the sixth form, pupils start by studying four A Level subjects. In addition, lower sixth formers take part in the Futures Programme, which is designed to prepare pupils for life beyond school at university and in the workplace. Alternatively, they can work towards an AS Level in the extended project qualification. In the Upper Sixth, pupils continue with either three or four subjects.

Twenty-one pupils have received Oxbridge offers in the last three years and every year an impressive number of pupils gain medical offers. Around two-thirds of pupils go to Russell Group universities and most go on to study at their first-choice university. In January 2021, nine pupils received Oxbridge offers.



Junior School

The junior school is a school within a school, led by its own head, Mrs Saskia Van Schalkwyk. Pupils benefit from shared facilities including the swimming pool, Astro turf pitches and music school. They are also introduced to subject specialist teachers from the senior school as they progress, making for a seamless transition between the two parts of the school.

From the outset, children are introduced to a broad and challenging curriculum in a friendly environment with a strong emphasis on making learning enjoyable. There are a wide range of team sports, choirs, orchestras, and a broad offering of co-curricular activities.





Pastoral Care

Creating a caring and supportive environment in which pupils can thrive both academically and personally is at the heart of the ethos of Exeter School. The strong sense of community is underpinned by the house based pastoral care system led by the form tutors, house staff, subject teachers and the full-time chaplain and the school nurse.

In the junior school, every new pupil is allocated a 'buddy' from Year 6; this is the first step in becoming part of the Exeter School family where pupils look out for each other regardless of age or year group.

In the senior school, there are ten vertical houses each for approximately 70 children. These meet weekly and their tutor teams form the essential link between home and school, communicating regularly with families. The forms in each year group are aligned to the houses and a robust system exists to ensure that safeguarding underpins the school's pastoral provision. The work of house staff is complemented by that of the expert sixth form team and the school has recently developed a set of wellbeing initiatives, some of which are pupil-led.



Co-curricular

The co-curricular programme at Exeter School is a major strength. Sport, music, art and drama play a considerable part in the lives of many pupils. There is a dazzling array of clubs, societies and activities to participate in at every level and the school offers a great deal of after-hours and weekend activity. It is expected that all staff will play their part in this programme.

Sport

Teamwork and sportsmanship are at the heart of the ethos of Exeter School and every pupil is encouraged to take part in physical activity both competitively and for their own enjoyment and wellbeing.

In Years 3-10, pupils play the main sport of the term, covering rugby, hockey, cricket, netball, rounders and tennis. As pupils progress through the school, they have a wider choice of options. In Years 11-13 there are fourteen different activities on offer including shooting, kayaking, squash and table tennis.

The new indoor pool has dramatically improved opportunities for swimming, both for pleasure and for squads at all levels. The school has an excellent fitness suite with spin bikes and Concept 2 ergometers, and a dance studio and indoor shooting range, and pupils have access to a personal trainer.

Exeter School has a reputation for success in county competitions. Around 400 pupils represent the school every term in fixtures. Many go on to county, regional and national representation in a wide range of sports.



Drama

The junior school put on three major performances every year and the senior school stages three drama productions, spread across the whole range of year groups. There is a main senior school production in the autumn term with further productions for Year 10 pupils and for Years 7, 8, and 9 later in the year as well as those performance from the academic GCSE and A Level provision.

Art

The gallery in the art department hosts a number of exhibitions throughout the academic year, displaying artwork by pupils, staff, alumni and students from WESC. The whole school community is encouraged to participate in The Big Draw (the national campaign for drawing). An “open studio” policy in the art department means pupils can drop in and work on coursework projects under staff supervision during break times, lunchtimes and after school.

Outdoor Pursuits

The location of Exeter School could hardly be better for participating in outdoor pursuits and pupils make the most of the nearby countryside and coastline. As well as residential trips and regular hikes, there is a long tradition of taking part in the Ten Tors Challenge and a successful Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The thriving Combined Cadet Force contingent is one of the largest in the south west, with Army, Royal Navy and RAF sections.



Music

There is a rich annual programme of contemporary and classical concerts, at school and throughout the region, enabling pupils of all ages to experience the thrill of live performance of both established works and their own compositions. We enjoy regular performances at Exeter Cathedral and a number of local churches. The annual Choral Society concert is a highlight of the school year in spring.

Class teaching, instrumental teaching, ensembles and groups are tailor-made to pupils' interests. Nearly 500 music lessons a week are taken by junior and senior school pupils, taught by 27 visiting teachers.



The three academic staff and 12 of the instrumental teachers coach and rehearse five orchestras, several chamber ensembles, eight choirs, two brass ensembles, five jazz bands, and a drum troupe.

There is a full programme of annual musical events including carol services, spring concerts, musicals, and a series of informal workshop concerts. Junior School ensembles combine with senior school pupils in major school events such as the Founders' Day in Exeter Cathedral, and the Christmas and summer concerts.



Leadership and Trips

As well as the opportunities offered through the DofE and CCF, leadership roles for senior pupils are offered through the prefect system, whilst the wellbeing ambassadors scheme enables peer support at all levels. The PE department offers a sports leaders award for senior pupils which is very popular.

Further afield, pupils have enjoyed unforgettable adventures all over the world. For example, the school ran a mixed sports tour to Argentina, A Level geographers visited Iceland and politics pupils enjoyed a week-long trip to New York and Washington DC in recent years.

Clubs and Societies

Pupils at Exeter School can join a wide range of clubs and societies including art, chess, debating, Model United Nations and computing. There are also a thriving set of academic societies known as the Crossing Club, Catalyst Club and Comets Club. These societies host events which challenge pupils to explore their intellectual interests at a deeper level through activities and guest speakers.

Community

The school is rooted in the local community and pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility. In both the junior and senior schools, pupils are involved in fundraising. In 2019 more than £35,000 was raised for local charities. In the senior school, pupils take part in a community service programme, often as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Older pupils are also involved in visiting the elderly and helping local charities and schools.