

The Downs Preparatory School

Head of English

A General letter of Introduction

The Downs is a leading independent day Preparatory School for boys and girls aged 4 to 13. It is situated in Charlton House, a magnificent historical building that is surrounded by sixty acres of idyllic parkland just five miles from Bristol.

The children at The Downs enjoy an excellent, vibrant all round education that is stimulating challenging and exciting. Their academic progress is the focus of our attention but the immense benefit of immersing children into a diverse range of other experiences that serve to enrich their development is genuinely valued and actively promoted. Sport, Music, Dance, Drama, and Art are essential aspects of the school's exhilarating culture.

Our aim is to nurture happy, accomplished children that care for the world around them. We cherish childhood, we applaud gentleness and humility, we appreciate unaffected good manners and we respect traditional values. We enjoy celebrating success in any area of school life but achievement is never valued more highly than quality of character.

The Downs is a traditional preparatory school; the pupils leave at thirteen. Most progress to other independent senior schools in Bristol; Clifton College, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Badminton and Bristol Grammar School. Others move further afield: Blundell's, Bryanston, Eton, Marlborough, Millfield, Sherborne, Radley and Winchester. The children almost always gain entry into the senior school of their parents' choice. Over the last ten years approximately 50% of the 8th Year Leavers have been awarded scholarships.

Over recent years pupil numbers have consistently increased. Presently 281 children attend The Downs and it is anticipated that the school will soon be full at 285, indeed there are already waiting lists for several year groups. There are two classes in each year group. These are mixed ability classes although some setting takes place from Year Four - English and Maths. Classes average sixteen children and are capped at twenty. In general the school follows the National Curriculum although we enjoy our independence and in doing so offer

The Downs Preparatory School

Head of English

a number of other subjects that include Spanish, French, optional Latin, etiquette, woodwork, and the Theory of Music and . In Years 6, 7 and 8 the pupils follow the 13+ Common Entrance Syllabus.

Children entering the school in Reception Year do so on a 'first come first served basis' and as a consequence they are of a broad range of abilities. Pupils entering older year groups are required to take an informal assessment test before they are offered a place at the school. The progress of all the children is closely and carefully tracked by use of INCas and MidYSIS, standardised assessment programmes managed in conjunction with Durham University (CEM). The Year 8 leavers take a wide variety of senior school entry exams, some children take Pre Assessment Tests in Years 5, 6 and 7 as required by senior schools.

Children from Year 4 to Year 8 attend the Prep School, the younger children being accommodated in the Pre Prep (R – Yr 3). The Prep School children enjoy very good facilities located in and around Charlton House. These include an excellent ICT Department, a very spacious Art Department, a well-equipped theatre, a Dance Studio, well furnished and resourced classrooms, an outdoor swimming pool, two astro turf pitches, a large Sports Hall, extensive games fields and a very pleasant library.

Although on the same site, the Pre-Prep is largely independent of the Prep School. The young children have the opportunity to use the extensive facilities of the Prep School whilst also enjoying their own excellent, purpose built learning environment. Modern, well-resourced classrooms overlook a beautiful rural landscape in which the children are encouraged to enjoy their childhood.

The Downs is a day school but it enjoys the ethos of a boarding school. The days are very full and the welfare and happiness of the children is paramount. As previously stated we offer a diverse, stimulating all round education and accordingly all members of staff are engaged in numerous fulfilling activities such as games coaching, music (we have a staff choir) and drama. There are no Saturday lessons but a full schedule of school fixtures exists most Saturday

The Downs Preparatory School
Head of English

mornings. All members of staff can expect some involvement in these fixtures. Exeats are scheduled one in every three weekends when the whole school has the weekend 'off'.

Always mindful of the school's wonderful heritage we are nevertheless very excited about the future of The Downs. We have also developed the facilities of the Performing and Creative Arts, new Dance and Drama Studios having just been opened. We have also entered the nursery market; Bertie's is already proving very popular. In the near future it is likely that we will introduce a new astro turf.

More information can be found on the school website;
www.thedownsschool.co.uk.

Conclusion

The Downs is a super school. The children are motivated, fun and well behaved. My colleagues are passionate about the school; they work hard and they are happy in their work. We look forward to welcoming an excellent new Head of English who will contribute towards the further success of the school.

Marcus Gunn
29.01.19