



Core Values

The basic values and beliefs that underpin all practice, inform ethos and remain the foundation of the vision of The Downs School.

Educational Philosophy

- At The Downs we believe prep school aged children should be given an all-round education. We are mindful of the importance of academic achievement however, we value highly the various benefits of exposing the pupils to a diversity of other cultures such as Sports and the Creative Arts.

The academic curriculum is the focus of our teaching at The Downs, however, at the same time we aim to provide an exciting and invigorating extra curricular program that offers a range of interesting, stimulating and enjoyable opportunities. These experiences might include Sports, Outdoor pursuits, Drama, Music, Art - in its various guises, Dance, etc... These opportunities serve to broaden a pupil's experiences and character. They also help to develop the pupils' self esteem, a trait that ultimately enhances the chances of the each pupil fulfilling their academic potential. As a result of this philosophy, we hope to produce well rounded, confident individuals who are ready to face the challenges of senior school.

Academic Philosophy

- We believe that The Downs exists to provide an education for children of all backgrounds who are of suitable ability. We also appreciate the necessity to provide appropriate academic support for both the gifted and talented, and for those who find the demands of the classroom challenging.

At The Downs we enjoy having children from different backgrounds different abilities and adapting our teaching to their needs. We provide directed Learning Support for the Gifted and Talented and the Less Able children when they are identified. With the exception of the pupils entering the Reception Year, by means of informal assessment, we ensure we can appropriately support any child before offering a place at the school. Those pupils who entered the school at Reception age and are later identified as needing support are assessed internally, and if necessary externally, before the appropriate means of correction is implemented.

Should the school be unable to offer suitable support, then the parents are advised and alternative schooling is proposed.

Whilst we aim to provide an all-round education at The Downs, the focus of our attention is on the classroom and the pupils' academic achievement. In collaboration with the parents, we select a senior school suitable to the needs of individual pupils and thereafter we expect that the pupils will pass the relative entry exam.

The Individual

- At The Downs we believe in catering for the needs of each individual – academically, socially and emotionally. We harbour the belief that each child can succeed and subsequently we strive to identify and nurture each individual's talents. We are also of the opinion that expectations are most effectively managed, and attained, by means of positive reinforcement.

The Downs is a warm school which enables each child to flourish in his or her own way. Our pupils have a freshness and a vitality and they grow in confidence and self esteem because their contributions in different fields are valued and encouraged. The academic and social development of each child is often, carefully considered. Attainment, Pastoral Care and Staff Meeting are regularly held to discuss the performances of children. The Tutor System also enables us to understand their individual and groups needs.

The process of 'inclusion' is valued highly and as a result all the children are offered similar opportunities, despite their varying abilities. For example, numerous teams of differing standards provide for children of all abilities and The Downs Award Scheme provides for the children who do not like sport. Simultaneously adjustments are made to programs, and new opportunities are offered, if it is felt that individuals will benefit from changes to the 'core curriculum'.

Expectations are managed by various systems of positive reinforcement usually facilitated by the House System. Our dealings with children in every area are designed to be encouraging and supportive. There exists a system of sanctions, nevertheless, rewards and celebrations are used more regularly to influence the behaviour and performance of the children.

Childhood

- At The Downs it is believed that childhood should be preserved and nurtured for as long as reasonably possible, there being plenty of time for sophistication during adolescence.

The children at The Downs enjoy their childhood at the school and they learn to live and play happily with other children and adults. As The Downs enjoys a stunning, rural setting, we strive to make the most of this notable asset to facilitate some of the charms of childhood. Fresh air and plenty of exercise are encouraged through a program of games, clubs and

activities. Additionally, the children are encouraged to enjoy the grounds and gardens during their free time. In contrast, as the Good School's Guides comments, 'The Downs is a mobile free zone'.

Pastoral Care

- At The Downs we believe that considered pastoral care is central to each child's happiness and success.

At The Downs School we work hard to look after the needs of the children in order that they may enjoy their education, indeed we strive to provide exceptional pastoral care. Through the House, the Tutor and the Form Teacher systems we hope to nurture the children's social and emotional development, helping them overcome problems as and when they occur. Additionally, the Headmaster and the Chaplain make themselves available to offer support and advice as often as is possible.

It is the intention that this care also extends beyond the pupils to the staff and parents, making for a happy and successful school community.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Values (SMSC)

- At The Downs, we believe that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is essential to both the well being of the community and the all-round development of each pupil. This is a central part of the children's education and clear, constant messages are reinforced at every turn.

Social and Moral:

We have high expectations of the children's behaviour at The Downs. A significant effort is made to nurture those essential values that we believe are important to a child's social and moral development:

1. The Value of Respect for People - the need to respect others, be they peers, adults or people from the wider community be it local, national or international. It is anticipated that this is reflected in the children's ability to socialise appropriately in any company.
2. The Value of Respect for Property - the need to respect property, be it their own, other peoples or the schools.
3. The Value of Respect for the Environment - the need to care for the school's distinct surroundings.
4. The Value of Good Manners - the need to meet and greet pleasantly, the need to eat civilly, the need to appreciate social etiquette.
5. The Value of Celebrating Effort, commitment and success - the need to appreciate the effort and commitment of others and their relative success.
6. The Value of Trust - the need to accept responsibility (in its many different facets) for the sake of the community and to behave in accordance with the expectations of a community.

Spiritual and Cultural:

We value the Christian ethos that underpins many of the school's social and moral expectations, however, we recognise the benefits of extending the children's understanding of other cultures. Additionally, we welcome pupils of other faiths. Through assemblies, Religious Studies Lessons, Tutors groups, Circle Time, House Meetings and our general daily routine:

1. Pupils are made more spiritually aware,
2. Pupils are introduced to and come to appreciate the benefits of other cultures.

Coeducation

- At The Downs we believe that boys and girls of prep school age benefit from co-educational schooling.

The Downs is a fully co-educational school and as such boys and girls are encouraged to join. There is not a specifically defined balance of boys and girls in the total number of pupils. The school seeks to provide appropriate and effective teaching, pastoral care, facilities and activities for both boys and girls.

Leaving Age

- At The Downs we believe that it is hugely advantageous for the pupils' to remain at 'Prep school until the conclusion of Year 8, that is when they are 13. The pupils derive enormous benefit from the privileges and responsibilities associated with Years 7 & 8, a benefit that they would not otherwise experience at a senior school. These experiences improve confidence and build self-esteem, desirable traits that enhance interpersonal skills and academic attainment.

Our 13 year old leavers move on as well balanced, enthusiastic and articulate young people, with a moral sense which they have developed over the course of their years at The Downs. They have learned to think for themselves, to organise themselves and to stand on their own two feet. They are interesting and varied young people, who will relish the challenges ahead.

Independence

- The Downs is an independent school. It does not have ties with any particular senior school. We believe that this independence is to be valued highly as it allows the school to send the pupils to senior schools that most suit the needs of each individual.

The Downs does not feed any particular school. Over the last three years we have sent children to eighteen different senior schools, including some of the best and most demanding schools in the country. We take great care to get to know these schools and the people in them, so that we can help parents match their children to the appropriate school.

Charity

- Those adults and pupils who are fortunate to be a part of the community at The Downs enjoy the benefit of working in a fine and privileged environment. It is therefore important that the community works to help others who are not so fortunate both locally, nationally and internationally.

The Downs School enjoys excellent relationships with our neighbour, The Children's Hospice Southwest. As a result, the focus of the school's charity work is to support the hospice. Furthermore, both institutions are keen to develop close working relationships to the benefit of the children. For example, pupils from The Downs will visit the children in the hospice whilst at the same time the children from the hospice will come and enjoy some of the events held at the school.

In addition to the school charity, the Children's Hospice South West, each of the four school houses also support a particular charity, money being raised through various house activities. Presently these charities are The Wooden Spoon Society, The RSPCA, Click Sergeant and Children with Leukaemia. Money for all these charities is raised in a variety of different ways including an annual sponsored walk at the end of each Easter Term.

The school also tries to benefit the local community. Various events such as Science Lectures are open to local Middle Schools and Music Lessons are offered to local nursery schools. Many of the school's facilities are also available for use, perhaps for local sports clubs to hire or for schools to host Sports Days or ceremonies. Larger events such as conferences and weddings are also hosted at The Downs.

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