



THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

A General letter of Introduction from the Headmaster

The Downs School is a leading independent day Preparatory School for boys and girls aged 6 months to 13 years. It is situated around Charlton House, a magnificent historical building that is surrounded by sixty acres of idyllic parkland just five miles from Bristol. The school is divided into three departments; The Prep School, The Pre-Prep and Bertie's, a new nursery school. The School has recently enjoyed an outstanding inspection.

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 benefits of immersing children into a diverse range of other experiences that serve to enrich their development, is genuinely appreciated and promoted. Sport, Music, Dance, Drama, and Art are essential aspects of the school's exhilarating culture.

Our aim is to nurture happy, caring, accomplished children. 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, independent preparatory school; the pupils leave at thirteen. Most progress to independent senior schools in Bristol; Clifton College, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Badminton and Bristol Grammar School. Others move further afield: Blundell's, Bryanston, Marlborough, Millfield, Sherborne, Eton 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.

The Pre-Prep and Prep schools

Over recent years pupil numbers have consistently increased. Presently 280 children attend the Pre-Prep and Prep, pretty much a full complement, indeed there are 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 – French, English, Science and Maths. Classes average fifteen children and are capped at eighteen. In general the school follows the National Curriculum although we enjoy our independence and in doing so offer a number of other subjects that include Spanish, Latin, Etiquette, the Theory of Music and Robotics.

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 subject to an informal screening process 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, assessment programmes managed in conjunction with Durham University.

Children from Year Four to Year Eight 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 spacious Art Department, a new Learning Support Department, a fully equipped Theatre and Drama Studio, a Dance Studio, excellent music facilities, very well furnished 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 stunning, purpose built learning environment. Modern, well-resourced classrooms overlook a beautiful rural landscape in which the children are encouraged to enjoy their childhood.

Bertie's

Bertie's, named imaginatively after the Headmaster's dog, is an outstanding nursery facility opened at the beginning of the year. It is sited about 800mts from the school in a large Victorian house within considerable grounds. There can be few better facilities! It is beautifully resourced and enjoys exceptional outdoor space.

Bertie's has quickly experienced considerable interest. 50 families already use the nursery, each session being on average 25 children. Maximum capacity is 80. Four very large rooms cater for the children from 6 months to Pre-Prep School. It is the ambition that the Pre-School Year will be taught by a qualified teacher - term time only. Unusually children of all ages can attend term time only or 51 weeks of the year. The Team is headed by Kathy Tannion, a very talented teacher who taught Reception in the Pre-Prep for four years. Kathy is very keen that the children should all enjoy considerable amounts of time in the outdoor spaces.

The nursery has close links with the Reception Classes in the Pre-Prep. Teachers from the school, for example dance and Forest School coaches, teach at Bertie's whilst simultaneously the children from Bertie's visit the Pre-Prep for PE, Music and play – in the wonderful tree house.

Conclusion

Always mindful of the school's wonderful heritage we are nevertheless very excited about the future of The Downs. We have recently opened 'Bertie's, our first nursery and we are enjoying beginning to explore and utilise the wonderful outdoor space with the children. At school we have also recently invested heavily into the facilities of the Performing Arts not least as the demand amongst pupils is enormous. We will in the summer be creating a Learning Resource Centre to promote greater independent learning and we are now seriously investigating the possibility of soon building another astro-truf pitch.

More information can be found on the school website; www.thedownsschool.co.uk. The latest ISI Report is available on the site.

The Downs is a super school. The children are motivated, fun and well behaved. My colleagues work hard but they are passionate about the school and very happy in their roles.

Marcus Gunn

05.04.18