



THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

CONFIDENCE
CHARACTER
ENERGY
HAPPINESS
ENRICHMENT
DIVERSITY
OPPORTUNITY

Welcome

The Downs Preparatory School is a leading independent, co-educational School. It is a place of happiness and joy; a place of opportunity and diversity; a place of endeavour and aspiration. A close community, we know our children as individuals and can identify the spark that lights their passion for learning.

Our children are challenged and certainly nurtured in all aspects of their busy school life. Our primary aim is to encourage each Charltonian to be a confident, well-rounded individual who will unreservedly embrace qualities such as respect, kindness and integrity.

When you enter our gates and drive down the drive and finally see for yourselves our beautiful school, you will learn how childhood is truly celebrated here and discover what makes The Downs Preparatory School so special.

We look forward to sharing The Downs School with you.



Debbie Isaachsen

Debbie Isaachsen BEd Hons MEd
Headteacher

Two young girls with blonde hair, wearing dark green V-neck sweaters over light blue and white striped collared shirts, are sitting outdoors. They are both smiling and holding open books. The girl on the left is holding a book with a red cover, and the girl on the right is holding a book with a purple cover. The background is a blurred green landscape with trees.

VISIONS, AIMS AND *Ethos*

Our children enjoy a vibrant education that is stimulating and challenging. Academic study is important and we expect all pupils to adopt a healthy work ethic and achieve high standards but we believe in celebrating the creative, the physical and the spiritual as much as the intellectual. Whilst our children may perceive they have options, in reality they are obliged to engage wholeheartedly in the multitude of opportunities presented. Our experience is that those children who derive pleasure and success from a range of activities outside the classroom go on to realise their potential inside the classroom. We enthusiastically and constructively embrace a diverse all-round education.

We wish for all our children to enjoy their childhood, their initial school years, in a safe and beautiful rural environment away from the pressures of modern youth. Their happiness is essential to our provision not least as happy children learn most effectively. Simultaneously we wish for all our children to be civilised; to demonstrate natural, good manner and reverent, gentle grace.

A group of children in school uniforms are sitting on a large, mossy tree branch. The children are wearing yellow polo shirts and dark green or black skirts or shorts. They are looking towards the camera with smiles. The background is a dense canopy of green leaves, creating a natural, outdoor setting.

Our Space

It is a *wonderful
landscape* within
which to educate children

04/05

THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY



The bustling, cultured city
of Bristol is only five miles
away from our
tranquil grounds

THE DOWNS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Setting

The Downs Preparatory School was founded in 1894 in a house overlooking the extensive parklands of Bristol, known as The Downs. In 1927 it was relocated, according to Mr Wilfred Harrison, the Headmaster of the time, to get away from the 'incessant roar of traffic' and the 'nerve-racking turmoil of the city'. It was moved across the Clifton Suspension Bridge to Charlton House on the Tyntesfield Estate. In the autumn of 2002, the school and parklands was bought from the estate of Lord Wraxall for the Downs School Trust.

Today it is difficult to believe that the bustling, cultured city of Bristol is only five miles away from the tranquil grounds of The Downs. At

the end of the long drive, ignorant of the distractions of the inner city and within a mobile free zone, our children are able to safely enjoy their childhood within a stunning park and woodland setting. The views are awe-inspiring and the fresh air fresh! It is a wonderful landscape within which to educate children, the key being to use it to the children's best advantage. In this regard, not least the beautiful Tree House – an outdoor classroom – Pets Corner and the children's allotments are integral aspects of the school's educational provision. The extensive, well-resourced playing areas and woodlands are delightful providing amazing spaces for the children to explore and play.

PRE-PREP TO PREP

Structure

Whilst an expansive site, compared to most, The Downs Preparatory School is a small school of about 280 children. This is by choice as we genuinely wish to know all of our children, and their families, really well. To achieve this we simply have a two-form entry that extends throughout the entire school, the maximum number of pupils in a class ideally being 18. The Pre-Prep Department is largely independent of the Prep School, however, the young children benefit from being able to use all the Prep School's extensive facilities.

PRE-PREP

Children join the Pre-Prep and Reception, aged four. They spend four years in this particularly happy and caring setting, being encouraged to learn in a safe and secure atmosphere. Class Teachers direct the majority of the curriculum in each class, however, subject specialist teachers provide a regular change of face. The unique, rural environment affords imaginative and purposeful play, where children can have

direct access to the large and varied school grounds. The enriching curriculum provides children with a strong social and academic foundation from which they gain confidence and self-esteem, the essential building blocks for their move into the Prep School.

THE PREP SCHOOL

The Prep School expands on this excellent grounding. It offers a broad, diverse curriculum that seeks to develop each child's individual strengths and interests in a multitude of areas whilst simultaneously preparing them for senior school entry. The Common Entrance Syllabus enables the pupils to approach 13+ senior school entry exams with confidence, be they scholarship, Common Entrance or Bristol Schools. Talent is fostered in all areas aside from academia; many take scholarships in drama, art, music, and sport. The preparation for 13+ exams begins in Year 6, but Years 7 and 8 are in many ways the essence of an education at The Downs.

At this point the pupils begin to reach the 'top of a small pile', an experience reserved much later in most schools. The benefit of greater independence, responsibility and according privilege at this vital stage is immeasurable and the resulting confidence, in contrast to arrogance, is tangible.





*Challenged
and excited*
in their
learning journey

10/11

THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY

A photograph of three young children in a garden. In the foreground, a child with curly blonde hair wears a red jacket with a colorful pattern. Behind them, another child in a red jacket and a third in a pink patterned jacket are visible. The background is a lush green garden.

Bertie's

NURSERY SCHOOL

Bertie's is the School's nursery, it is a place where little children are nurtured in a happy and safe community so that they are able to move on to school ready, able and confident to learn.

Located in the School's estate 800 metres from The Downs, Bertie's enjoys a beautiful, secluded setting, where children can quietly enjoy their young lives. Surrounded by stunning countryside, opposite a farm, the Nursery has superb outdoor facilities that includes Telly Tubby Land, a Forest School and the children's gardens. Four spacious,

well-resourced rooms provide for the children in the house where they are looked after by warm, caring staff that take genuine pride in the quality of Bertie's and, in particular, the happiness of the young children.

There are strong links between The Downs and Bertie's. The children regularly visit The Downs taking delight in Pets Corner, the Tree House and occasionally joining the Reception Classes for PE or music lessons. It is a natural feeder for the Pre-Prep and ensures a seamless transition from Nursery to Reception.

A photograph of a young child with blonde hair sitting in a green and blue bouncer. The child is smiling and waving their hands. The background is a blurred green garden.

Book a visit
to come &
Explore

12/23

THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY

LEARNING TO *Learn*

Through our creative curriculum and inspirational teaching, we compel children to be curious about the world. There is a strong work ethic and high expectation at The Downs and each child is encouraged to stretch the boundaries of his or her individual abilities. Our children develop their skills of study and come to understand their preferred learning styles. They gain a strong understanding of collaboration and they are guided and encouraged to extend their knowledge and to learn independently.

The learning process is augmented by excellent teaching facilities and small classes. The balance between the use of modern technology and more traditional methods is carefully and constantly evaluated to ensure learning is as effective and engaging as possible. For the younger children our immediate outdoor environment is a unique, invaluable resource to extend learning out of the classroom and beyond the syllabus. The most is made of the historical, technical and cultural city of Bristol. In the Prep School music groups and sports teams enjoy short tours all over the country, while the older pupils develop their cultural appreciation and linguistic skills during annual trips to France and Spain. Closer to home our Forest School, our Learning Lab, regular guest speakers, and local and international trips broaden interest and develop cultural awareness.





We aim to ignite
curiosity.

TEACHING

We are committed to high-quality teaching. Our teachers are deeply enthusiastic about their subject areas and they provide a rich learning experience for the children. They value traditional teaching methods, which they employ with great skill and enthusiasm, but they also wisely embrace new technologies. Nothing is too much for them; careful consideration is made to provide for the full range of abilities, some children being helped in their work by the excellent Learning Support Department.

Children at The Downs make impressive progress. The academic curriculum is exciting. As well as the traditional it includes such diverse subjects as the theory of music, etiquette and computer coding; these nicely reflecting the independent nature of the School. The curriculum broadens the children’s knowledge and encourages the higher order thinking skills of assessment, evaluation and creative thinking. It prepares pupils extremely well for 13+ senior school exams but it also affords them a firm foundation of life skills and develops their cultural appreciation.



CONFIDENCE THROUGH *Diversity*

Children find recognition in a host of ways. Pursuing an interest offers satisfaction in itself but by pushing for the highest standards children find fulfilment and confidence. Although our attention is focused on realising the intellectual potential of each child, we believe this is best achieved by embracing the benefits brought by enriching experiences.

Our young children are cheerfully cajoled into making the most of the diverse opportunities we provide. We guard against them becoming specialist sportsmen, musicians or lead characters. Rather we encourage rugby players to sing with distinction in our Chamber Choir, saxophonists to act with conviction in the numerous school productions and leading characters to create brilliant works of art. Our children become rounded individuals who value the difference of others.

Within this exhilarating landscape our children are able to determine the spark that lights their passion for learning. They then grow in self-belief, they learn to conduct themselves

with confidence and they are increasingly able to demonstrate resilience, persistence and mettle in the face of challenge.



Our children develop a sense of *integrity* so they can identify right from wrong and stand up for the values they have *grown to embrace*







ENERGY AND ENRICHMENT

Sport

Sport is an integral part of each child's development at The Downs. We understand the enormous benefit of sporting involvement; the willingness to commit wholeheartedly to a contest, the challenge of handling victory and defeat, the disciplines of training and the opportunities to represent others. Sport is not just about physical aptitude, it develops the whole person.

Sport is genuinely 'for all' at The Downs. We seek to inspire the elite and the apprentice. We want all our pupils to enjoy physical exertion and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Ours is a philosophy of inclusion; there is a team for everyone, all of our children regularly represent The Downs. We are aware that there are children, who aren't interested in organized team-sports and for them there is the Downs Award Scheme, an exciting programme of climbing, caving and orienteering not unlike the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

We enjoy a national reputation for excellence on the games field although we are as proud of our inclusivity as we are of the standard of achievement. Our teams play in the 'premier league' and the impressive results of all the teams speak for themselves. We have regularly won the national rugby sevens title but importantly our teams in various other sports – hockey, netball, horse riding – regularly compete at a similar level. The major sports for boys are rugby, hockey and cricket; for girls, hockey, netball and cricket. The minor sports include swimming, lacrosse, horse riding, tennis, cross country running and athletics. Pupils are able to enjoy these activities in superb facilities that include two Astro-Turf pitches, extensive rugby and cricket fields, two all-weather netball courts, an outdoor, heated swimming pool, and an excellent, modern Sports Hall that houses four full-length indoor cricket nets.





THE Arts



The performing and creative arts are central to the school's rich culture; every pupil is involved in our imaginative and dynamic arts programme. The standards are very high and the interest considerable. Pleasingly this has necessitated the development of excellent facilities; an impressive Theatre, the recent extension of the Art Department, new Drama and Dance Studios. Every child is in at least one production each year, every child is in one of our seven choirs, over half the children attend speech, drama and dance classes, be they ballet, jazz or tap.

We provide many opportunities, both formal and informal, for our children to perform; we regularly showcase their learning and talents in drama, music, art and dance. The annual Battle of the Bands and House Dance Competition and the regular lunchtime and informal concerts are hugely popular in-house events. The privilege of performing at such venues as Windsor Castle, Wells Cathedral and the Royal Festival Hall is memorable.



PERFORMING *Arts*

Music pervades the corridors of the School. The vast majority of children learn an instrument and most are involved in a wide range of ensembles. All are members of a choir and all learn the theory of music for a year in the Prep School.

Public performances are plentiful, although the Inter-House Music Competition and House Song Competition remain amongst the most popular. Some of our pupils become outstanding musicians, most are more than competent. Essentially many enjoy the art and continue to develop their study and enjoyment of music for many years to come.

We aim to give
our children
lifelong delight
in the arts.



Character

FROM YOUNG CHILD TO YOUNG ADULT

Character at The Downs is shaped over time by the gentle reinforcement of strong, traditional values. By consistent repetition of our expectations we nurture happy, accomplished, civilised young adults.

Childhood is cherished. Children are encouraged to be imaginative in their learning and playing and to make the most of our wonderful park and woodland. They wear wellies, climb trees and build dens. They make elaborate daisy-chains, delight in playing conkers and relish bush-craft cooking. The sophisticated world of mobile devices and adolescence remains at the front entrance for later life.

Within this wholesome environment we seek to nurture unaffected good manners, and we applaud the qualities of friendship, gentleness and tolerance. We have high regard for individuality, we endorse aspiration and we celebrate success. Quality of character is considered as important as achievement.





PASTORAL CARE AND

Wellbeing

To nurture a child's full potential it is necessary to know and understand them as individuals. For this reason each child at The Downs is placed in the midst of a network of exceptional pastoral care. We spend an unusual amount of time getting to know our children and their families even before they join the school. Once they are members of the community we seek a close partnership with parents, based on shared values and expectations in the development of each child.

Our children develop under the close attention of the Pastoral Care Team. The younger children in the Pre-Prep are closely nurtured by their class teachers, the older children benefit additionally from having

Tutors. The Matrons are also vital members of this strong pastoral network, more often acting as friend and supporter than medic. During Myspace the School Counsellor offers expert communal support. Within this close, caring community each child is then assured of generous care and support as they negotiate the inevitable social, emotional and academic challenges associated with school life.

To nurture a child's
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THE DOWNS PREPARATORY *Community*

The warmth of community is a distinguishing feature of The Downs. It is a happy place; a wonderful, close supportive community, full of goodwill. We make it our duty to know each child very well and to embrace parents in partnership to educate their children.

We are mindful of our good fortune; service to others has always been important. We work particularly closely with and for our neighbours, the Children's Hospice South West, and support other local charities. Further afield, we enjoy active and constructive relations with international schools and charities.

The values at the heart of the school are Christian principles. This spirituality provides the backbone of the community but we are nevertheless very pleased to embrace children from other denominations and religions; indeed there is much we can learn from them.



RESULTS & DESTINATIONS

Pupils move on from The Downs at 13 to a variety of prestigious senior schools. Much time is taken with parents to carefully identify the school most suitable for their children, our advice being entirely impartial given the independent status of the school. The process is evidently successful given that almost without exception our pupils have successfully passed into the school of their first choice over the last decade. We take pride that many of our Year 8 leavers are awarded scholarships; however, such accolade is not purposefully sought as we do not 'hot house' for results. It has been gratifying that on a number of occasions in recent years our pupils have achieved a 'full house' of scholarships in one year; academic, music, art, drama, sport. There can be little more a school can do to provide evidence of genuine breadth.

Why The Downs Preparatory School?

We are often asked what distinguishes The Downs from other schools. As do a minority of others, we enjoy an outstanding ISI Inspection Report, but this does not necessarily highlight how the school might differ from others.

Most obviously we enjoy a wonderful setting: of 60 acres of stunning parkland and woodland. Not enough to simply admire it's glory, continually we use this wonderful landscape to enhance the children's development and wellbeing.

Put very simply our children are extremely happy; they hugely enjoy school. They are undoubtedly challenged – in all areas – and importantly they experience disappointment. In doing so however, they are confident of exceptional Pastoral Care, an integral network of 'TLC' that the children can rely on when the going gets a little tough. Indeed the relationship between the children and staff is one of genuine, unusual warmth and care.

Many schools boast an all-round education but very few provide the range and depth of opportunities our children are fortunate to enjoy. They are young and we guard against

them becoming specialists; rather we embrace inclusion. Within this environment of diverse opportunities our children become confident, self-assured, rounded individuals who value the difference of others.

And then there is the 'big fish in a small bowl' factor: Years 7 and 8 is an excellent reason why pupils should attend The Downs. It is these two year groups, a tender time in the physiological development of young people, that our pupils are the 'biggest fish' in the pond, top of the pile, albeit small. The self-esteem and confidence they develop from this experience is tangible and unique in the local market. Each pupil experiences considerable responsibility, increasing independence and subtle privilege that inevitably informs the development of their character.

A small school, a close and happy community, the class sizes are small, ideally a maximum of 18. In such groups children cannot hide, in such groups teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of all their students, in such groups individuals thrive.

An independent Prep School, The Downs does not feed any particular senior school. Over the last decade, our children have moved on to numerous schools including the best and most demanding in the country. Considerable time is taken to provide constructive and objective advice to parents. This consultative process is evidently successful as it is extremely unusual for a pupil not to gain entry into a senior school of their first choice. A large number of Year 8 pupils are awarded scholarships.

Finally 'Why The Downs'? Because we nurture exceptional, happy children of natural grace and unaffected manner.

Seven good reasons why children should attend The Downs. There is no priority and there are numerous others – the food alone is legendary! The best way to test my assessment is by visiting – you're very welcome.



Arrange a
visit or join us
for an *Open Day*

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