

Welcome to the Dragon School

The Dragon is a co-educational day and boarding school which has offered a unique educational experience to generations of pupils. Together with the Dragon Pre-Prep, we welcome boys and girls aged 4 to 13 years.

The extraordinary education provided here to every individual pupil stays with them for life. The pupils in our care have outstanding opportunities for discovery, adventure and learning. At the Dragon, new talents are uncovered and ambitions nurtured; friendships are forged and challenges embraced. Every pupil is valued and every achievement celebrated.

Our beautiful campus and dedicated Pre-Prep, located in the oldest University city in the land, afford an inspirational environment for teaching and learning. Our facilities also ensure that pupils can excel at the performing arts, music and sport. A strong scaffold for academic excellence is provided by our cutting edge curriculum and outstanding teaching, equipping our pupils for smooth transition to their senior schools and beyond.

The Dragon is a special place where children learn just as much outside the classroom as they do inside it. We promote kindness and tolerance, we encourage a sense of responsibility and service to others, and we teach children to respect and nurture their own wellbeing.

This prospectus provides only a glimpse of our school but I do hope it will encourage you to explore our school website and to visit us to see what the Dragon can offer your family.

I very much look forward to meeting you.

C. Hyde ~ Dunn

Dr. Crispin Hyde-Dunn
Headmaster

Imagination and Originality

The Dragon School was founded by a group of Oxford dons as the Oxford Preparatory School in 1877. Soon after, the school moved to its present fifteen-acre home on the banks of the River Cherwell in leafy North Oxford.

For many years the School was run by the Lynam family and it was due to them that the Dragon became one of the best known of all preparatory schools.

Leaders in the educational world, the Lynams promoted the unconventional belief that boys and girls should enjoy school, be positive and independent. They created a school where common sense and individual responsibility were more important than prescribed rules. The original spirit prevails; today's Dragons - as all pupils are known - are noted for their cheerful self-reliance and lively enthusiasm for all they experience and learn.



Ice hockey on the frozen lawn
of School House, 1953

Older Dragons

The Dragon remains with children long after they leave the School. Having formed firm friendships and been encouraged to keep in touch and to return, Old Dragons maintain strong links. Their affection and regard for their prep school is often apparent well into later life.

“We have failed unless we have helped children develop their minds and capacities in their own way, unless we have given them the full scope for all of the imagination and originality that is in them”

Skipper Lynam, 1908
Headmaster of Dragon School 1887 – 1920

Illustrious Dragons

Among the School’s former pupils are a large number of highly successful men and women. Eminent twentieth century Dragons included a Poet Laureate, two Nobel Laureates, four VCs, a Leader of the House of Lords, a Leader of the Labour Party, and celebrated sporting figures, writers and thinkers.

Old Dragons today continue to achieve distinction as academics, actors, artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, philanthropists, politicians, teachers, musicians, writers and in a host of other fields.



Social and Emotional Learning

Understanding how our mind, body and emotions work is a very important skill for the 21st Century. We use the Family Links Nurturing Programme throughout the Dragon to support us in integrating social and emotional learning across the curriculum and in daily life in order to cultivate healthy minds, bodies and hearts. All staff receive training in this approach. Using appropriate language based on the four building blocks of the Nurturing Programme (Self-awareness, Appropriate Expectations, Positive Discipline and Empathy), the whole school community works together to create an environment which can best support the academic, social and emotional development of our young pupils. There are also regular opportunities for parents to join a ten-week Family Links Parent Group so that home and school can develop a shared language and approach.

‘Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.’

(Aristotle 384-322BC)

Courage, kindness and respect are valued highly at the Dragon, supporting children to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, others and the environment. Since it was founded in 1877 (as the Oxford Preparatory school), the Dragon has been influenced by progressive educationalists; the School continues to develop the very best in teaching and learning experiences for its pupils.



‘The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character and will. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence.’

(William James, Philosopher and Psychologist 1842-1910)

For success and resilience in today’s world, we need to support pupils in cultivating attention, self-awareness and emotional regulation. We introduce pupils to Mindfulness (a training in paying attention to experience, as it happens) as part of our holistic approach, using the .b and the pawsb Schools’ Curricula from the Mindfulness in Schools Project.



The size of the Dragon is an advantage; the School is carefully structured to allow children to grow within it and be nurtured as individuals. Boys and girls are placed in small tutor groups suitable to their needs and a large and highly dedicated staff offers outstanding levels of expertise and individual care.

There are two School Councils (one at our Pre-Prep, and one at our Prep). Pupils vote for their year-group representatives and undertake to represent the views, suggestions and concerns of their year group. Along with other Pupil Voice groups, (such as the Food Committee and the Boarding Council), the children’s views are respected and their opinions sought regularly.

As part of our Social and Emotional learning, we also provide a varied Personal, Social and Health Education Programme, delivered throughout the week in Form Time, Tutor Time, assemblies, Circle Time and in discrete lessons. We offer regular workshops for parents to help home and school to work together.

Tutors, Formtakers, and Houseparents are always happy to meet parents and are easily contactable by telephone and email.

Living at the Dragon

Boarders are at the heart of the Dragon. Boarding strengthens the bonds between children and staff, enlivens the daily routine and enriches the School community. Pupils also gain much from being with children from a wide range of backgrounds; boarding and day pupils mix easily and enjoy visits to each other's boarding houses and family homes.

A home at school

In the junior years, boarders live in comfortable family houses which are a particular feature of the School. Resident matrons and boarding staff assist Houseparents who remain in regular contact with the children throughout the school day. The junior houses, each with 15 to 20 children, become proper term-time homes. During the day, boarders go back to house to play, change for games, or have snacks. Main meals are taken in the Dining Hall; each Boarding House has its own area and Houseparents, their children and the boarders often all sit and eat together.



Gaining independence

Girls and boys both move to dedicated Year 6 houses at age ten before becoming part of larger boarding communities at the age of eleven. This progression prepares boarders very well for life at senior school.



Family and friends

Close links between children and parents are maintained by phone, email, Skype and letter. Houseparents are in frequent contact with families, which is especially important for young and first-time boarders.

As well as generous half-term holidays, there are fixed Exeats twice a term when children return to their families or guardians. In addition there are many opportunities to take children out at weekends. Some weekends are designated as 'in school' when there are special activities and trips for boarders. On all other school weekends there is a full activity programme to keep those boarders that are in school entertained and busy.



Health

The Dragon Health Centre staff are available 24 hours a day. Qualified nurses are on hand to support Houseparents and to care for those children who are unwell or injured. A doctor from the local practice visits four times a week and the dentist holds a clinic once a week.

Food

We encourage children to make healthy choices and to have an open mind about food. Menus are designed to tempt children to try new things and to introduce them to a wide range of cuisine. Food is fresh, varied and as local as possible. Children's views are important and the catering manager meets regularly with the pupils' Food Committee.

School Structure

The youngest children at Bardwell Road (Year 4) have their own, separate building within the Dragon grounds. With their own classrooms and playground close to the Dining Hall, the younger children quickly feel secure in their new surroundings. They then progress to the Middle School where individual subject classrooms are grouped around a central hall.

Upper School pupils move throughout the school making extensive use of the learning facilities. The School has six large Science laboratories, ICT suites, a comprehensive library, and spacious Art and Design studios.

Groupings

In the first year of joining Bardwell Road, pupils are arranged into six mixed ability groups, except for Mathematics. Thereafter, children are grouped according to attainment, amongst other factors. This approach allows all children to perform at a pace which suits them best, and enables a very individual approach to be offered to every child.



In Years 5 and 6, pupils are taught Art, Design, Drama, ICT, PE, Music and RS in their mixed ability forms. This allows all pupils an opportunity to mix with as wide a range of children as possible during the day.

Classes are small and the average class size is less than 20. The size, the extent of facilities, and the staffing levels at the Dragon all make this level of individual attention possible.

Timetable

At present, the teaching week runs from Monday to Saturday lunchtime. Each day begins with Registration at 8:20am, followed by assembly or meetings with Tutors. The lessons, Games and Activities take place until 4:15pm, with lunch staggered between 12:00 and 1:30pm. There are games or activities on Wednesday afternoons when; except for Year 4 - there are no lessons. On Saturdays, younger day children not playing in matches usually go home at 12:30pm.



Curriculum

While we take careful note of the National Curriculum, the school's own syllabus covers a great deal more. Our curriculum is tailored to the needs of the pupils and their future aspirations. Much work is planned according to the Scholarship and Entrance requirements of the leading independent senior schools.

Assessment and reports

Pupils and parents receive regular updates about their child's performance through the reporting system. The strong tutorial system ensures that teachers, Houseparents and the Headmaster are aware of every child's progress. In this way, praise, encouragement and support can be frequently and appropriately given. There are two parents' meetings with staff during the year and regular, open communication is encouraged between home and the School.

In the Classroom

The aim of all our teaching is to make our pupils independent learners with lively, enquiring minds. Children acquire knowledge and understanding to equip them for future challenges and skills they can transfer to new subjects and situations.

English

In English, Dragon children take pleasure in reading across a varied spectrum and are encouraged to take pride in writing stylish, accurate English for a range of audiences. The syllabus for each year group covers spelling, grammar and punctuation, alongside comprehension skills and creative writing. While reading for pleasure is supported wholeheartedly throughout the School and within English as a subject, children are also taught to analyse a range of poetry and prose passages more formally and to construct precise, communicative answers. Dragons take an active approach to English and are given opportunities to perform plays and poems, as well as to improvise and role-play. Overall, we aim to instil in children a love of reading and appreciation of English literature coupled with the ability to express themselves imaginatively, eloquently and accurately.

Mathematics

Emphasis in the Mathematics curriculum is on understanding. Initially, children are taught a variety of mental techniques and are encouraged to puzzle through questions in their heads before turning to formal written methods. From the outset, children are asked to use and apply their knowledge and techniques to solve problems. They are encouraged to think for themselves, pose and answer their own questions, persevere with problems and communicate their thinking verbally, in words and, from Year 6 in algebra. The curriculum is designed to create competent, confident, independent mathematical thinkers who enjoy their Maths as well as prepare children for senior school exams.

Languages

All pupils begin to learn French soon after joining the School, with an emphasis on listening and speaking. A Year 6 French exchange allows children to experience learning in a French school and staying with a French host family.

An understanding of the Classics is important at the Dragon and the School has the largest department of its kind amongst prep schools. Translation-based Latin lessons begin in Year 5 and all pupils are introduced to the life, literature and language of the Romans.

In their last two years, children in the higher streams have the opportunity to study Ancient Greek. Alternatively, German or Spanish are offered. Extra-curricular Mandarin Chinese and Japanese are also available at the Dragon.

Science

The School's thriving Science department has six excellent laboratories, equipped to the highest standard.

Initially taught as a combined subject, Biology, Chemistry and Physics are covered individually from Year 6.

Collaboration and independent thinking are at the core of the approach to teaching and learning in Science at the Dragon with problem solving, extensive practical work, lectures, trips, after school activities and clubs all playing a part in the childrens' learning.



Humanities

Geography at the Dragon looks at how the world works and considers human impact upon it. Interactive lessons make extensive use of digital technology which also supports individual research. Fieldwork and lectures extend the programme and the School organises regular trips.

Expeditions and field trips are also part of the History syllabus through which we aim to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for the study of the past through its relevance to the present. The intent of broadening a pupil's awareness of other peoples' cultures and countries is also supported by opportunities to travel abroad on one of the many expeditions organised by or on behalf of the School. These include exchange programmes with the Keio Yochisha School in Tokyo, Japan, and St Bernard's and Nightingale Bamford Schools in New York.

Information and Communication Technology

The Dragon aims to be at the forefront of the creative use of ICT in the curriculum. The School is well equipped with computers, laptops and tablets. There are 6 ICT suites available for teaching and a variety of devices available across the School for independent pupil research, learning and study. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard which helps us to target a wide range of learning styles.

Across the age groups, children will be given opportunities in ICT classes and after school clubs to learn about programming and coding, web and game design, music and image manipulation. ICT lessons at the Dragon focus on Digital Literacy and Programming skills. The objective is to develop a basic understanding of programming and to consolidate foundation skills: touch-typing, word processing, presentations, and data handling.

Design Technology

Design Technology encourages natural curiosity through investigative tasks which have many potential design solutions. These may involve computer aided design and manufacture, these skills are embedded in the problem-solving curriculum. Areas of study include existing designers, the design process, materials, solar power, mechanical structures, modelling, wood work and electronics.

Art

A well-balanced Art education encompasses creative processes and art history. Drawing from both observation and imagination, painting, sculpture, ceramics and printmaking are taught and good use is made of digital design and photography.



The spacious purpose-built art centre facilitates stimulating and sophisticated learning. Visits to local galleries, together with exhibitions by artists in the School gallery further enrich this programme.

Religious Studies

The aim of the Department is to teach about the Christian tradition and to broaden the children's awareness and understanding of the main world religions. The Department aims to create an atmosphere of understanding and knowledge of those people who follow and believe in faiths other than Christianity. The objective is to equip the children to cope compassionately and intelligently with issues surrounding world faiths and to develop skills of clear thinking and thoughtful reflection about religious issues.

Learning Support

The Learning Support Department provides extra help for children who find work more challenging due to dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Support is provided when and where necessary, in close conjunction with subject and Form teachers and within the context of the broader curriculum. On top of Learning Support, the Dragon has an excellent EAL (English as an Additional Language) Support Team, providing help to children who are integrating into a new cultural environment. In Language and Speech Therapy we offer specialist provision both at Bardwell Road and at Lynams for children who have speech, language and/or communication needs.

The Performing Arts

Music

Our talented, inspiring and passionate music teaching staff have created one of the leading non-specialist prep schools for music in the country.

Integrating creative arts with academic learning develops higher-order thinking skills: analysis, synthesis and communication.

At the Dragon, more than four out of five pupils actively participate in music making. Our instrumental programme allows children to try different instruments until they find one that suits them. Children then develop listening skills and learn to blend with other musicians by taking part in one of forty one ensembles, which include eleven pre-select groups for aspirational players and several choirs.

The Dragon has over fifty specialist teachers, many of whom play professionally in world-class orchestras and ensembles. Children enjoy learning, practising and performing music in public, at school and on annual overseas tours.

Drama

Drama is taught from Years 4 to 6 with an emphasis on performance skills and self-expression. Each year group puts on a major production and a broad selection of plays and musicals are performed.

The School's Lynam Hall allows pupils to become involved in lighting, sound and stage management. There are also numerous opportunities for informal and improvised drama performances.



Thoroughly Modern Mille, 2017

Sport

It is our aim that every child will enjoy playing games and sports. The Dragon's own playing fields, three Astroturf, gym and splendid indoor pool provide a wealth of sporting opportunities.

Sport for all

The boys' main sports are rugby, hockey, soccer and cricket; the girls' sports are hockey, netball and rounders. Boys and girls do athletics and play tennis; swimming takes place all year round in our large indoor heated pool. The Dragon fields teams to compete in all these sports as well as sculling, table-tennis, cross-country running, riding, golf, squash, fencing, judo, badminton and skiing.

Skill and competition

Friendly competition is encouraged and we involve as many children as possible in fixtures with other schools. Dragon teams will typically take part in over 800 matches a year with some children reaching national standards and others achieving sports scholarships to senior schools.

Internal competition is just as important and equally fiercely contested. Most significantly, the emphasis of the Sports Department is always on skill development and as a larger school, every ability can be coached and all can take part.



Girls'1st Hockey

The Dragon Pre-Prep

Head of Pre-Prep:
Annie McNeile

The Dragon Pre-Prep is situated on a quiet lane just north of Summertown. It welcomes boys and girls from age 4, with enjoyment of school and pleasure in learning being encouraged from the start. Children are taught at their own varied pace and steadily acquire the skills needed for lifelong learning. At age 8, children go on to the main Dragon site at Bardwell Road.



Facilities

Lynams classes are small and the average class size is 16 children. The School is fully equipped with a hall, gymnasium, dining room, library, art room, games court, an ICT suite and bright teaching rooms with interactive whiteboards. There are four enclosed play areas with a range of equipment for activity and recreation.

Children also enjoy visits to the Prep School site for drama in the Lynam Hall and for swimming in the indoor pool.

Academic development

In their first year at school children follow the Early Years Curriculum which, through play and child-led activities, encourage the laying down of firm physical, academic and emotional foundations for future learning. In Years 1, 2 and 3 children learn through the Creative Curriculum which takes a topic based approach and encourages links across the different subject areas. At all ages the children have a rich diet of sport, music and drama and from Year 1, all children are taught French.

Personal development

From their first day, the children are taught the Dragon Values which encourage the children to respect each other and property, to be kind and empathetic. Through our Family Links Strategies, they are taught the language needed to express how they feel, how to begin manage their feelings and to know that if they talk to someone, that person will listen and help. Weekly circle times encourage discussion amongst the children.

Organisation

Children are taught in small classes of 16 (in Reception and Year 1) and up to 18 in Years 2 and 3. All classes up to and including Year 2 have a dedicated teaching assistant, with Year 3 classes sharing assistants throughout the week.

Further information

The School day runs from 8:45am to 3:30pm from Monday to Friday. A varied programme of after school activities is offered to children in Years 2 and 3.

A limited number of after school care places are available up to 5:25pm for which an extra charge is made.



Extra-curricular Activities

The Dragon's extensive extra-curricular programme is designed to enable the children to make the most of their time at the School. All the staff are involved in the programme and some specialist instructors are also brought in, mainly for the after-school Clubs. The Activities programme is planned as a 'circus' of activities that gives everyone a taster of a variety of experiences. As they move through the School some children may begin to specialise in musical or sporting pursuits, but the balance for all pupils is closely monitored. The Clubs programme offers more scope for personal preferences, but both programmes can be broadly divided into three areas:

Physical challenges – such as sailing, golf, modern dance, fencing or judo.

Cultural and creative – including current affairs, Latin in the community or bee keeping.

Service and skills – through gardening, cooking or community projects.

Philanthropy and social entrepreneurship

Dragon pupils are introduced to philanthropy and are encouraged to think intelligently about charity fundraising and giving. They are very active in raising both money and awareness, and they recognise their responsibilities to the community and the environment. They work in partnership with local schools and charities for the benefit of other children. Our aim is to help pupils understand local social issues as well as global challenges, and to see how they can become problem solvers, change makers and leaders who make a real difference.

Expeditions and trips

The Dragon has a long tradition of travel. Recent out of term time trips have been organised in Japan, New York and Holland. Other regular trips include a popular ski trip, team sports tours, art trips to Cornwall and post-exam excursions to destinations including Devon and Wales.

Admissions

There is assessment process for prospective pupils appropriate to their age, with the exception of those children entering our Reception year.

Registration may take place any time after birth; early registration is always advisable, especially for day places.

Parents and children are warmly encouraged to visit the School, to see it in action and to meet staff and pupils. Prospective boarders will also be invited to tour boarding houses and meet Houseparents.

The Registrar deals with all applications for the Dragon School - at the Prep and Pre-Prep sites. Further details of the admissions process and of current fees can be found in the accompanying literature and on our website.

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The Registrar
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www.dragonschool.org

Destination Schools

Dragon boys and girls go on to a wide selection of excellent independent senior schools. Common Entrance is taken by 75% of the pupils and 25% sit scholarship exams. The Dragon's outstanding record of pupil achievement includes over 210 scholarships and awards to senior schools in the last five years. The Headmaster and his Deputies work closely with parents and senior school Heads on individual school choices. The Dragon has a dedicated Future Schools office with two members of staff.

Dragons go on to a wide range of senior schools. Frequent destinations include:

Abingdon School
Bedales School
Bloxham School
Bradfield College
Bryanston School
Canford School
Charterhouse School
Cheltenham College
The Cheltenham Ladies' College
Cokethorpe School
Dean Close School
Downe House School
Eton College
Harrow School
Headington School
Kingham Hill School
Magdalen College School

Marlborough College
Millfield School
Oundle School
Oxford High School
Radley College
Rugby School
Sevenoaks School
St Edward's School
St Helen's & St Katharine's School
St Mary's, Ascot School
Stowe School
Tonbridge School
Tudor Hall School
Uppingham School
Wellington College
Winchester College
Wycombe Abbey School