



# ABINGDON



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# welcome

I am looking at Abingdon with new and fresh eyes, an experience I am sharing with you, as you explore this school for the first time with your son in mind.

First impressions do count and I am happy to say that what made me sit up and think – ‘Abingdon, now there’s a very special place’ – is now, for me, a palpable reality. What struck me on my early visits to this lively community was how straightforward and engaging the boys are. They carry a quiet confidence, mingled with a certain charm, which is very attractive. Without exception, I have found that the boys are willing to look me in the eye. I think that this says a lot about the boys and the families who make up this special community.

Certainly you would expect a stimulating, rigorous academic programme, where high standards count, as a given. Teachers are passionate about their subjects, deeply committed to the School and keen to draw the very best from the boys. This, combined with an eye-watering array of clubs, sports and activities, really does mean that a boy can explore any possible talent or interest, whether latent or burgeoning.

Nurturing and coaxing a boy through the early stages of his life is a serious and considered business. At Abingdon the boys really are very well looked after. It is hard to get lost here.

These are my initial impressions. I very much hope that you too will discover the same qualities in this characterful school. Do visit us. I hope that you will be able to see your son here. We are very happy to welcome you to Abingdon School.

Felicity Lusk

*Head*



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# introduction

Abingdon combines over 750 years of history and tradition with a modern outlook, providing an exceptional all-round education for boys from the age of 11 to 18. As well as encouraging academic achievement, with impressive results at GCSE, A Level and Oxbridge and university entrance, Abingdon provides extensive extra-curricular opportunities, encouraging pupils to try something new, to develop existing talents and 'give something back'.

Our aim is to ensure each boy thrives at Abingdon and, through challenge and opportunity, achieves the most from his potential. We do not manufacture a child but encourage initiative, individuality and creativity whilst reinforcing the importance of respect and endeavour. Our pupils come from a wide range of social and geographic backgrounds, creating a lively and tolerant mix of cultures. Boys of all faiths are welcome. The Chapel and its services provide a focus for exploration of the spiritual dimension within a Christian context: each year-group comes together in the Chapel once a week to share in an inter-denominational act of worship.

“This high achieving school has an excellent balance in the education it provides through an outstanding and wide-ranging extra-curricular programme and the high academic attainment which enables boys to win places at highly selective universities.”

Independent Schools Inspectorate





The majority of our pupils are dayboys although boarding plays an important part in the character of the School. Close ties with the nearby girls' school of St Helen and St Katharine add a co-educational feel, especially to our Sixth Form, where some subjects are taught jointly and there is much collaboration with drama productions, musical activities and, of course, socially.

We occupy an extensive site in the centre of Abingdon, just six miles south of Oxford. Abingdon Preparatory School is on a separate site ten minutes away. Our facilities range from the beautiful Victorian and Edwardian buildings to the more modern Amey Theatre, Arts Centre and science blocks. We are also very proud of our most recent addition, a multi-million-pound sports centre that opened in 2008.



# academic



Abingdon is an unashamedly academic school, providing a broad education which aims to nurture intellectual development, interest and enthusiasm for learning as well as achieving results. The School follows the GCSE and A level curricula for public examinations, but we aim to teach well beyond what is expected from exam syllabuses and we draw on a wide range of experience and techniques to enrich each subject. Classroom education is supplemented by visits to exhibitions, demonstrations, performances, specialist speakers, theatre trips and lectures. We advocate first-hand experience of culture and language and the practical benefit of field trips; hence boys are encouraged to join classics trips to Greece and Italy, foreign language exchange

programmes to France, Spain, Germany and China and geography and biology field trips in the UK and abroad.

Abingdon achieves outstanding results in public examinations, consistently maintaining a leading position in the UK. The vast majority of boys move on to higher education, most to the UK's top universities, including large numbers each year to Oxford and Cambridge. We believe that our pupils can reach the highest academic standards whilst being fully engaged in an excellent all-round educational programme. The tremendous reputation of our sport, drama, art and music is testament to the success of this philosophy.



Further detailed information about the curriculum can be found at [www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum](http://www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum)

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# the other half

'The Other Half' is a familiar term to all associated with Abingdon, and is one of the few examples of school colloquialisms we have. The name, however, captures our underlying philosophy, that we regard what goes on in the classroom as comprising only one half of what is important in education. The 'other' half plays an essential part in a boy's experience of Abingdon and it is very much learning about life, its challenges and opportunities. A huge range of activities is available for boys to choose from, and a great variety of interests are catered for, from sport, music and art to cookery, drama and debating. The Other Half extends well beyond the boundaries of the School, with activities and expeditions designed to expand horizons through culture, physical challenge, responsibility, leadership and experience.

During their years at Abingdon, boys will spend some time pursuing a service activity and there is a variety on offer, including help in the community, conservation, charity work, Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Full details of all the activities available can be found in The Other Half booklet and at [www.abingdon.org.uk](http://www.abingdon.org.uk)





“The CCF played a very important part in getting my scholarship to Sandhurst. The leadership and experience it provides are invaluable.”

Matthew Winters, pupil



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# music



Abingdon fosters tremendous musical talent with a large team of staff and peripatetic teachers who are specialists in their field. There is ample opportunity for the boys to enjoy music of all kinds and at all levels with several choirs, two brass, a wind and jazz bands plus Chamber, First and Second Orchestras. Over half of the boys take individual instrumental or vocal lessons and standards are excellent, with many reaching the highest grades at an early age. The musical ability at the School is reflected in the impressive results achieved at GCSE and A level and the wealth of external recognition, from membership of the National Youth Orchestra to regular organ and choral scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge. The department has organised many tours abroad in recent years, including a prestigious orchestral tour, involving over one hundred boys, to Beijing and Hong Kong.

“Music is strong and has been further strengthened, as have art and drama, by the new arts block.”

The Good Schools Guide



# sport



“I couldn’t have done it without the School, which has been so supportive and provides excellent coaching.”

Matthew Rossiter, Gold Medal winner at the Junior World Rowing Championships, Beijing





Abingdon has an enviable sporting reputation, with boys competing at national and international level in a number of sports, particularly rugby and rowing, and with regional and county representation in most activities. All boys are encouraged to take part in sport and the range available ensures there is something to suit everyone's tastes and abilities. Individual as well as team achievement is important, with pupils gaining notable successes at European and World Championship events in rowing, sailing, fencing and shooting.

Boys are coached to reach their full potential by dedicated staff and have ample opportunity for training and competition. The sports

available are as diverse as archery, cross-country, fencing, golf, karate, table tennis and kayaking. Teams tour at home and abroad, including most recently rugby tours to Italy, France and Canada, cricket to Barbados and rowing to the US for the Head of the Charles Regatta.

The opening of an exceptional new sports centre in 2008, which includes an eight-lane swimming pool, squash courts, climbing wall, fitness suites and a martial arts and fencing studio, complements 60 acres of pitches and enables Abingdon to boast some of the very best sporting facilities in the country.



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# drama



Abingdon has a long dramatic tradition with several well-known industry names having begun their careers at the School, including Tom Hollander, Toby Jones and David Mitchell. The drama department combines a talented teaching staff with excellent resources of a professional standard, including the School's own Amey Theatre. The boys are given a wide range of opportunities as it is recognised that in taking part in a production, whether as actors, writers, directors, musicians or technicians, they are potentially gaining invaluable life skills.

Drama and Theatre Studies are taught throughout the School. At Sixth-Form level, there are joint lessons, and in the Middle and Upper School there are joint productions with the girls and staff of the School of St Helen and St Katharine. There are usually three or four major productions in a year, as well as tours to the Edinburgh Fringe and regular theatre visits to Oxford, London and Stratford.

# creative arts

Art and Design are firmly embedded in the School's curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The art department provides excellent specialist accommodation for a full range of art from printmaking to sculpture, painting to computer graphics. The staff, practising artists in their own right, provide enthusiastic and expert tuition, encouraging a balance between the importance of mastering techniques with the need for self-expression. The department's own computer suite and library are extensively used and the facilities are open at lunchtimes and after school for a range of clubs and activities.

Recently refurbished, the design technology department gives pupils the opportunity to develop their practical understanding of materials and processes. The facilities enable work in plastic, metals and wood, and the wide range of machinery available allows a commercial approach to design. The curriculum places a large emphasis on design-and-make and encourages pupils to develop original, high-quality outcomes.

“The art department was very important to me throughout my Abingdon career, with staff always ready to chat through any ideas. The Sixth Form especially was a brilliant place to study – I just wish I had the same space and staff in my Cambridge Studio!”

Richard Worth, Old Abingdonian,  
reading Architecture at Cambridge University

“The School has been really encouraging; teachers are enthusiastic about design technology and the facilities are excellent. It has given me a great start.”

Chris Davis, winner of a national Arkwright Scholarship for Design Technology





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# the house system



Abingdon has long been an advocate of the benefits of the house system. Each boy is a member of a house under the care of a housemaster who is independent of a boy's teaching sets. Within each house the boys belong to a tutor group led by a member of staff who is the principal liaison between a boy, teachers, School and home. Boys spend about an hour and a half with their tutor each week and close ties develop between a tutor, his/her tutees and their families. Every boy has his own individual timetable of work and activities which is supervised by his tutor throughout the year.

The relationship is very effective in monitoring a boy's wellbeing, offering support, help and advice as well as overseeing his performance. The tutor is the principal means by which the School delivers its PSHE programme.



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# boarding



Boarding is an important part of Abingdon School and has become increasingly flexible over recent years, adapting to the needs of families and individuals. Many of the boarders come from the surrounding area, opting to utilise more fully all of the facilities and opportunities the School has to offer during weekday evenings and at weekends. Our international boarders come from all over the world, including Europe, the US, Russia and the Far East. Our boarders are a very important part of the School, enabling us to broaden our horizons and adding an enormous amount of diversity to school life.

“A school is an important formative influence on anyone’s life as an educational institution and as a social hub, but for me the greatest testament to Abingdon is that I, and many others, proudly embrace the School as home.”

Christopher Lillycrop, boarding pupil

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# abingdon preparatory school



Abingdon Preparatory School has been part of Abingdon School since 1998. Established as one of the leading prep schools in the area, the majority of pupils move on to Abingdon, with an increasing number gaining academic, art, drama, sport or music awards.

Standing in nearly 50 acres of beautiful grounds, three miles from Abingdon, the Prep School provides a friendly and stimulating environment for boys from the age of four to thirteen. The caring and encouraging atmosphere promotes independence, self-confidence and respect. Pupils flourish in an environment where academic studies are carefully balanced with the creative and performing arts, sport and a wide variety of extra-curricular and social activities.

All children are encouraged to enjoy the opportunities available at the Prep School by taking part in the diverse range of clubs and societies. These include chess, choir, gardening, art and an extensive choice of sports. Regular trips and visits supplement the academic curriculum with, most recently, day trips to the Tate, Sulgrave Manor, HMS Victory and Bowood House plus football tours to Amsterdam, French residential trips, outdoor adventure weekends and skiing holidays.

The Prep School has an excellent sporting reputation, enhanced by impressive new facilities, including a sports hall, which accommodates cricket nets and multi-sport activities. This superb development complements 30 acres of playing fields and an indoor swimming pool. The core sports are soccer, rugby and cricket with coaching available for additional activities including golf, judo, shooting, fencing, tennis and athletics.

“We are ‘beyond pleased’ with the School. It is genuinely interested in our children. I am delighted with the parent involvement and the dedication of the teachers; they really care.”

A parent

Music, art and drama feature strongly in school life with exhibitions and performances throughout the School. Extensive peripatetic tuition is available for all abilities and there is ample opportunity to join choirs, bands and orchestras which hold concerts throughout the year. Boys benefit from the many artists, authors and sportsmen who visit the School and who, together with a talented teaching staff, bring experience and enthusiasm to inspire young minds.

For more information, please visit [www.abingdon.org.uk](http://www.abingdon.org.uk) and come and see us; we would be delighted to meet you.



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# admissions

Abingdon is divided into the Lower School (aged 11-13), Middle School (aged 13-16) and Upper School or Sixth Form (aged 16-18). Entry to the Lower School is mainly from maintained primary schools and independent schools that teach to the age of eleven. The Middle School intake is predominantly from preparatory schools. In the Upper School there is a further addition of boys from the maintained and independent sectors.

References from a boy's current school, interviews and entrance examinations are required at all entry points. For the Sixth Form, admission is dependent on performance at GCSE or, where these are not taken, on examination.

For full details on admissions, please see the additional information booklet.

There is a range of scholarships available at ages 11, 13 and 16 for academic ability, sport, art & design, drama and music. The School also offers a number of bursaries up to 100% of fees.

For full details on awards, please see the additional information booklet.







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**Abingdon School**

Park Road, Abingdon  
Oxfordshire, OX14 1DE

Tel: 01235 849041

Fax: 01235 849085

[admissions@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:admissions@abingdon.org.uk)

[www.abingdon.org.uk](http://www.abingdon.org.uk)

