



ABINGDON

*Vacancy for a teacher of Drama
required from September 2010*

Abingdon School is an ancient foundation that has varied in form over the centuries, but remains essentially as it began in the Middle Ages, namely a boarding and day school for boys. The main school nowadays houses some 870 boys aged eleven to eighteen, of whom more than 300 are in the sixth form, and 110 are boarders. There is also a preparatory school at Frilford, near Abingdon, for 250 boys aged five to thirteen. The two establishments together form an independent charity, governed according to a scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners. Full particulars can be found in the Independent Schools Year Book.

The School stands in spacious grounds close to the centre of Abingdon, a rapidly growing town, which still retains some relics of its historic past. Dayboys are drawn from a region that includes the University and City of Oxford, a number of large scientific establishments such as those at Harwell and Culham, and a wide area of the Upper Thames Valley and the Berkshire Downs. A wider region supplies numbers of weekly boarders, and there is a thriving community of full boarders.

Boys are selected for entry by examination, and the curriculum is geared towards the academic pupil. The expectation is that the majority of boys who enter the School proceed to university, with a significant number winning places at Oxford and Cambridge every year.

The School has developed considerably over the last half-century, not least by way of a major building programme, including the opening of a magnificent multi-million pound Sports Hall in October 2008. It is now the largest independent school in its region, and school policy is aimed at securing and developing a national reputation. The strength of the Masters' Common Room is seen as the key to Abingdon's continuing success, and the Headmaster seeks recruits of the highest possible standard, men and women with a powerful professional vision who are prepared to exert themselves wholeheartedly for the benefit of their pupils and the furtherance of the School's objectives.

Abingdon has its own salary scale, which is more generous than the Standard National Scale. The successful candidate will be placed on this scale according to his/her qualifications and experience.

The Headmaster is seeking to appoint a well-qualified graduate to teach Drama throughout the curriculum. An ability to teach a subsidiary subject would be of interest but is by no means an essential – such ability should be identified in the covering letter.

Completed application forms should be submitted to the Headmaster, Abingdon School, Park Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1DE. The forms should be accompanied by a handwritten covering letter from the candidate. The closing date is **Monday 25 January 2010**. Interviews for those selected are likely to be arranged for **Tuesday 9 February 2010**.

If you would like to discuss matters informally with the Head of Drama, Jeremy Taylor, please contact him, in the first instance, by e-mail at jeremy.taylor@abingdon.org.uk More general information about the School can be found on our website at www.abingdon.org.uk

January 2010



Drama department

Drama at Abingdon has developed rapidly in recent years, and the appointment of another full-time Drama specialist to join this well-established, experienced and thriving department reflects a strong demand for drama as a curriculum subject, and as one of the School's most popular extra-curricular activities. Abingdon has a strong tradition in the performing arts with a number of prominent figures emerging from the School since the 1980s. These include the actors Toby Jones and Tom Hollander, the comedian David Mitchell and the members of the band *Radiohead*.

Drama is taught throughout the School. All boys in first and second years receive one period of drama tuition each week in which the emphasis is on developing confidence and enjoyment of practical drama activities, and a clear understanding of the subject's collaborative nature. In third year, boys may choose to study the subject in more depth as a preparation for the two-year GCSE course that occupies fourth and fifth years. The third year curriculum currently shadows the AQA GCSE in Performing Arts to develop a wide range of performance skills. This year, there are 48 boys studying drama in three third year sets, and the same number following the AQA GCSE Drama course in fourth and fifth year, with two sets in each year group. A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies is a popular option in the sixth form which offers boys experience of co-education through the involvement of girls from the neighbouring school of St Helen and St Katharine. All sixth form teaching is shared between the drama staff at both schools, and we enjoy a strong tradition of fruitful collaboration with St Helen's at this level. There are currently 24 boys and girls in three upper sixth sets, and a further 19 in three lower sixth sets, all following the Edexcel A-Level specification. The A-Level results are excellent – in 2009, for example, all but one of the 23 candidates achieved an A grade at A2, which almost matched the 100% A grade haul by the 2007 cohort of 21.

Drama is taught in several spaces. The Arts Centre contains a purpose-built drama studio, linked to a dedicated drama classroom, both of which are stocked with lighting & sound equipment, 14 Apple computers (8 desktops and 6 MacBook Pro laptops), 7 video cameras, Final Cut Pro film editing software, a VHS/DVD projector and two screens. There are two further teaching spaces: the Ingham Room, also situated in the Arts Centre, and the Charles Maude Room, which is in the older part of the School. The School's impressive Amey Theatre, built in 1980 can also be used for class teaching. Pupils studying drama in the sixth form receive half their tuition in the excellent facilities for drama at St Helen's, which include a magnificent 120-seater studio theatre and the Yolande Patterson Hall.

Major school productions take place in the Amey Theatre and the studio theatres at Abingdon and St Helen's, as well as 'found spaces' in both schools. We also host some performances by visiting companies. All productions are supported by Abingdon's full-time professional theatre manager / technician. The Amey Theatre has a full lighting rig and sound system and is essentially a proscenium arch/thrust theatre whose apron stage can be removed to create an orchestra pit. 'Studio on stage' productions can also be mounted here. The auditorium is raked, and can accommodate an audience of 450. The drama studio and the Charles Maude Room are suited to more intimate productions, with audience capacities of between 60 and 120. They both have lighting grids, stocks of lanterns and sound equipment. A portable seating rake can be used in both locations.

Providing opportunities for pupils to participate in drama outside the classroom is one of the fundamental aims of the department. To this end, we present a varied programme of plays and events to cater for boys at every level of the School, as well as girls from St Helen's. Full-scale joint productions are mounted at the rate of one or two each term, and are chosen to offer a wide a range of opportunities and styles. They are directed both by members of staff and pupils. This year's productions include *West Side Story* (Years 10-13) in the Amey Theatre, *Our Country's Good* (Years 11-13) in the St Helen's studio theatre, *Zoo Story* (Year 12) in the St Helen's Sports Hall, *Dr Faustus* (Years 9-10) and *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew* (Years 7-8), both in the Amey Theatre. There are several student-directed productions each year. Since 2000, Abingdon has also taken 7 productions to the

Edinburgh Festival Fringe, encompassing large scale musicals (*Sweeney Todd*), straight plays (*Ines de Castro*, *Abigail's Party*), devised work (*Covered in Love*) and comedy sketch shows (*FxP² in Trouble!* and *Sketch, Drugs and Rock 'n Roll*).

A regular programme of workshops and theatre visits is arranged. This year, there are workshops with the company *Theatre de Complicite*, the actors Dugald Bruce-Lockhart and Simon Scardifield, the voice coach Deirdre Trundle and the choreographer Matthew Hawsworth. Trips to theatres in Oxford, London and Stratford have so far taken in *Dial M for Murder*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *Twelfth Night* and *Endgame*. We occasionally augment these with more ambitious trips such as an A Level trip to Paris to see Peter Brook's production of *Hamlet* at the Bouffes du Nord.

The drama department also runs the extra-curricular Abingdon Film Unit (AFU) – see www.abingdonfilmunit.com for further details. Established in 2003, the AFU annually provides about 30 boys and girls with the opportunity to make their own films under the guidance of a team of visiting professionals from the film industry led by renowned documentarist Michael Grigsby (*Living on the Edge*; *Lockerbie: A Night Remembered*) and animator Joanna Harrison (*The Snowman*; *When the Wind Blows*). The AFU's members have now made nearly 75 films, many of which have won awards and been screened at festivals throughout the UK and abroad. In March this year, a new 30-minute film by three sixth form members of the Unit will receive its premiere at the National Film Theatre in London, followed by a reception at the House of Commons.

Aspects of the role and person-specific criteria

The successful applicant will need to be able to work as a member of a team, to be organised and to be able to cope in a busy working environment. A genuine interest in the subject is essential, alongside a commitment to teaching. Experience of a wide range of practical drama styles and techniques would be beneficial, as would some experience in the use of ICT. S/he will be expected to teach at all levels within the department and direct extra-curricular productions requiring rehearsals after the end of the School day and occasionally at weekends. S/he must also be willing to accompany trips to theatres in the evenings. A willingness to contribute to the continuing development of new ideas and practices, and to take responsibility for some aspects of departmental administration will also be distinct advantages. Experience as, or a willingness to become, a drama examiner with AQA or Edexcel would be useful, and the post would particularly suit a Drama specialist who can offer expertise in acting and/or directing and/or design.

At Abingdon, the majority of teachers also become tutors to a group of boys in one of our Houses with responsibility for pastoral care and delivery of the School's PSHE programme. The School currently has a 42 period, six day timetable and in addition to a teacher's period loading there are periods set aside for tutoring and a departmental meeting, if possible, and from time to time colleagues are allocated private study supervisions as well as cover lessons for absent teachers as needed. Contributions are expected to the School's Other Half programme and this can be discussed at interview. All staff members also have two or three duty days per term on which they work with a partner to oversee elements of the daily supervision of the boys outside of the classroom. Colleagues who are attached to one of our three boarding houses have additional duties in the evenings and at weekends.