



ABINGDON



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# welcome



Welcome to an insight into this exceptional school. Although Abingdon is based on long traditions of scholarship and learning, it is also a school that embraces innovation and fresh thinking. Our pupils are remarkable young people with exciting futures. We encourage them to think for themselves and to develop a spirit of independence that will allow them to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Our collective lives are shaped by a culture of challenge and enterprise, where pupils are encouraged to embrace their aspirations and to make the very most of their talents and abilities.

Academic standards are very high but a commitment to pupils' wider personal development is a touchstone of our approach to education. Indeed, Abingdon is renowned for 'the Other Half', the vast array of extra-curricular activities which make up an important part of every day at our school.

Abingdon's success is rooted in its enthusiastic and expert staff who are wholly committed to passing on a love of their subject. Relationships between staff and pupils are close and supportive and indeed the culture of the school as a whole is one of consideration and kindness. Although educating young people is a great responsibility that we take very seriously, we never forget that a school should also be a place of laughter and fun and we encourage pupils to maintain a healthy sense of perspective. We are specialists in boys' education and endeavour to produce open-minded, confident and well-rounded young men.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our school in this prospectus and that it will inspire you to visit us. I will look forward to welcoming you to Abingdon.

Mike Windsor  
*Headmaster*

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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.

“The pupils’ achievements and learning are excellent, as a consequence of the excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision and teaching.”

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 beautiful Victorian and Edwardian buildings to the stunning new Science Centre opened in 2015, a very well equipped Sports Centre and the Amey Theatre and Arts Centre.



# 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 A level and GCSE curricula for public examinations, with the more rigorous iGCSE taught in most subjects. 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 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, international foreign language exchange programmes 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 its 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. Over 100 wide-ranging activities are available for boys to choose from, and a great variety of interests are catered for from ceramics and digital media to kayaking, debating and Classics Club. 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 Week magazine's Autumn/Winter 2015 Independent Schools Guide nominated Abingdon as **'Great for extra-curricular'** in its **'Best of the Best'** feature.



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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 prestigious orchestral tours, involving over one hundred boys, to Beijing and Hong Kong and the USA.

“We know the school, teachers and overall education, relationships and care at Abingdon is fantastic, the boys are proud and love their school.”

A parent



# sport



“Discipline is choosing between what you want now and what you want most. This is something that sport and sporting life at Abingdon has taught me.”

Thomas Digby, Great Britain rower and World Record holder





Abingdon has an enviable sporting reputation, with boys competing at national and international level in a number of sports, particularly rugby, rowing and hockey, 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 with dedicated staff and ample opportunity for training and competition. Teams tour at home and

abroad, including most recently rugby tours to Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, Italy, France and Canada, cricket to Barbados and rowing to the US for the Head of the Charles Regatta.

Abingdon opened 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. In 2014 the School took over the management of Tilsley Park Sports and Leisure Centre in Abingdon, providing all-weather surfaces for hockey, football and rugby as well as an athletics track. These additional facilities complement 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.

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# 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. In most sixth form years the School has at least one pupil with a prestigious Arkwright Scholarship. These are given to outstanding individuals who show potential in, and who are looking to follow, a career in design or engineering.







# 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. Specialist tutors deliver the PSCHE programme to small groups of boys.



# boarding



Boarding, which is available from the Third Year, 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.

“The quality of boarding is excellent and parents are highly appreciative of the outcomes for boarders, the provision and care, and the leadership of boarding.”

Independent Schools Inspectorate

“Boarding is an enjoyable experience I will never forget, spent with a diverse group of people you hope to know for the rest of your life.”

A boarder

# 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 aged four to 13. 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 and outdoor adventure weekends.

The Prep School has an excellent sporting reputation, enhanced by impressive 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 football, rugby and cricket with coaching available for additional activities including golf, karate, shooting, fencing, tennis and athletics.

“Pupils’ achievement is exceptional, both inside and outside the classroom. They reach unusually high standards and make rapid progress through the school, displaying outstanding attitudes to learning.”

Independent Schools Inspectorate

“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/prep](http://www.abingdon.org.uk/prep) and come and see us; we would be delighted to meet you.



# 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 website or the Additional Information booklet.

# scholarships and bursaries

There is a range of scholarships and awards at ages 11, 13 and 16. The School also offers a number of means-tested bursaries up to 100% of fees.

For full details please see the website or the Additional Information booklet.

Abingdon School is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

“My son joined Abingdon at the age of 13 and I can honestly say that it has been a total success for him and he has been very happy. I cannot thank the School enough.”

A parent







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