ABINGDON

A Rough Guide to the Middle School
2017

The pages of a booklet can only hint at what the flavour of a School is like; it is the people and relationships that matter more than glossy pictures and fancy text. I hope, however, that this booklet offers you a flavour of Middle School life at Abingdon. The text is written by existing Middle School boys for new Middle School boys. It is, essentially, your rough guide. Hopefully it will answer some of your questions and allay all those normal fears and anxieties about starting at your new school.

At Abingdon staff work very hard to create a friendly and collegiate environment where you can thrive and excel in a myriad of ways. Personally, I take great pride in the School and I believe that this is due, in no small part, to the quality of the relationships between the staff and boys. I am confident that you will find the School a very welcoming place and I am sure that you will soon make some life long friends.

I hope that you will seize the numerous opportunities available to you at Abingdon and grow in many ways: in your learning, your self-confidence, your sport, your music and in your zest for life beyond.

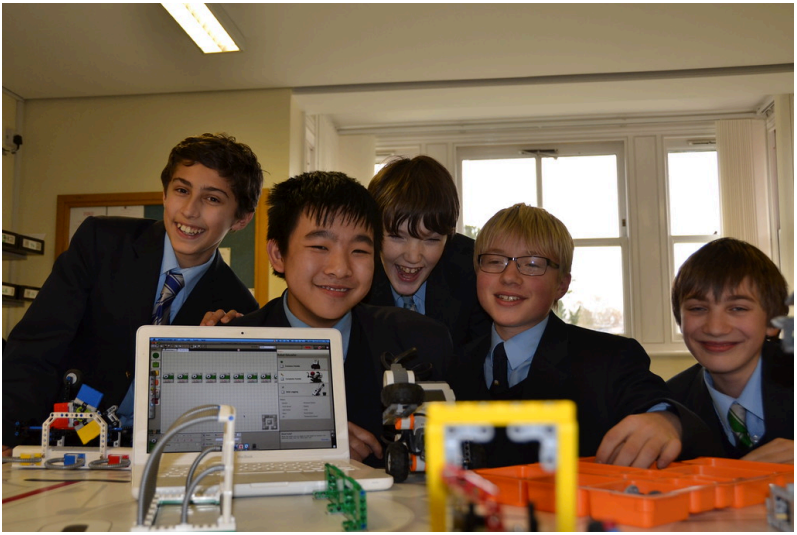
My advice can be boiled down to this: work hard and play hard; strive to be happy, seize opportunities, take risks, don't be afraid to try new things, treat others as you would have them treat you, and, if you need help – just ask! I very much look forward to meeting you.

In the meantime if you have any questions you can email me: paul.gooding@abingdon.org.uk or refer to the school website www.abingdonschool.org.uk.

The Rev'd Paul Gooding
Middle Master & Assistant Chaplain

What new boys have said

"For the first two or so days leading up to the start of term I was incredibly anxious and nervous. As soon as I sat on the bus, I started to relax because everyone was so kind to me and always made sure that I was ok. Also at school the other boys were really kind and helped me find my classrooms, and the teachers were extremely kind and made you feel settled in. Overall the first day was super exciting and not at all scary." Colm Lambert



"Abingdon has been a huge change from my previous school and has given me the opportunity to try new things. I think that my best achievement so far has been being chosen to play in the rugby team, where I have improved enormously. Lessons have also been a change for the better, especially having the longer lessons, making larger amounts of work possible. Although it is a long day it is very much worth it and the amount of homework is manageable. Doing sport everyday means that I can let off enough steam to do homework to a good standard. The broader choice of people to spend time with means that it is easy to find people that are both similar to you and that have the same interests as you. These are just a few of the many reasons why Abingdon has been a great change and I am very happy to be here." Oscar Frost

“The induction day was useful to start to get to know everyone in my house and so on the first day I knew a few people’s names. My first day was made easier as we had a long time in the morning to get to know everyone and then a tour so I knew where all my classrooms were and where to go at certain times. So overall my first day went well and was made very easy to get used to everything. In the first few weeks we had lots of break times and lunch times to make better friendships and we were assigned a lower sixth form mentor to talk to about how everything is going.”
Joe Hornblow

Abingdon is a very friendly and welcoming school that gives you many opportunities to excel. This rough guide to the Middle School is designed to give you a few hints in order to help guide you through your busy and exciting time at Abingdon.

Abingdon is certainly not your ordinary school and that is very clear when you arrive. It’s an incredible place; with a myriad of opportunities and activities - a place where everyone can find their niche. As a new boy, it’s the size and scale of the place that can blow you away. But it’s also very easy to settle in and make lifelong friends.

Settling In

As a new third year you are assigned a Tutor and Housemaster. The tutor guides you through the 3rd year and then you have a new tutor who is with you for the 4th and 5th form. The Housemaster stays with you throughout your time at Abingdon. You are also placed into different sets for each subject. In this way there are plenty of opportunities to make new friends and settle in. When you first arrive, introduce yourself! This might seem obvious, but remember: everyone is in the same boat and if you see someone by themselves offer them some company. With this in mind, you will be well on your way.

Organising Your Belongings

When you arrive at Abingdon you are given a locker to put all of your books in. A plastic wallet or box file will do, but a ring binder can be particularly useful as you move up the school as it keeps all your loose sheets in one place. I think it is also crucial to clear out your locker once in a while otherwise it gets like your bedroom and you can't find anything! Changing your folders at break, rather than at lunch, is also a good idea; you don't want a bent back!

Good Quality Folders

I have lost count of the number of folders I have broken! Therefore, you should buy one good quality folder for each subject (definitely not the cardboard ones!). It seems expensive but in the long run it's worth it. Keep everything for one subject together and in one folder to accommodate all the loose, but important, pieces of paper as well as your textbooks. Also, hole punch worksheets regularly as this saves you a lot of time later on! For your GCSEs a ring binder or lever arch file can seem more useful.

Games Kit

The games kit that you will need varies on the sport that you will be doing each term but there are shelves in each houseroom and games kit can be easily stored there.

Lost Property

Lost property is open regularly, so if you are unfortunate enough to lose something at school, then within a few days it is normally there. After a term of being in lost property, your kit will be taken to the second hand shop, so beware!

Other Half

Abingdon is unrivalled and the Other Half is the jewel in its crown. The 'Other Half' is a great Abingdon tradition, and this unusual turn of phrase describes all the extra-curricular activities that happen during lunchtimes and after lessons. Abingdon is renowned for its clubs and societies, presenting unlimited opportunities for you. Make the most of them! There are a wide range of activities, both sporting and non-sporting, which you can get involved in, such as debating, which I fell in love with on arrival. Sporting activities are numerous, whatever your sport. There's even croquet and bridge! Here, you can have great fun, and find people with the same hobbies. You can also discover interests you didn't even know you had, things you didn't even know you were good at, and much, much more. Do as many activities as you physically can!

Service & Citizenship Scheme - including the CCF

On Tuesday afternoons you can either choose the CCF (Combined Cadet Force) or a Service Activity. Within the CCF, you sign up initially for a year, and attend the recruit camp at Easter. After graduation you can choose to specialize in either the Army or RAF sections. Some boys progress to fly aircraft solo and/or go on the Advanced Infantry Cadre. Within the Services & Citizenship scheme you can choose from a range of options including: visiting the elderly, offering ICT help in a local library, conservation work, helping the theatre tech crew, learning touch typing and helping with the Moldova Project. There is a lot on offer, including first aid.

Drama and Music

The school has brilliant drama facilities and every year there are several plays to get involved with; some are joint productions with the school of St Helen and St Katharine (a local girls school). We have a thriving music department that has toured in many parts of the world. Approximately two out of three boys in the school take music lessons and there are many orchestras and groups for the boys to get involved in.

Sport

There are many sports to choose from including: rugby, hockey, football, fencing, badminton, cross country, rowing, squash, swimming, water polo, sailing, cricket, tennis, athletics and golf. We are also very proud of our state-of-the-art Sports Centre and our facilities at Tilsley Park which you will undoubtedly benefit from.

If I have a problem

If you have a problem there are without a doubt many people you can talk to however you are feeling. Your parents are definitely someone to talk to - even siblings, older or younger. At school, there is your Tutor, Housemaster, Middle Master, Deputy Head Pastoral, the Chaplains, the Health Centre and the School Councillors. They are professionals who know what they are doing and you can speak with them whenever you like. But the list doesn't end there. Prefects, and older boys, such as your lower sixth form mentor, can also help you along with boys in the year above. People in your house are also really helpful. If you ever need help, just ask! We are always on hand and not just for the first few weeks.

Sports Teams

Abingdon is a large school that fields many teams for each sport. Therefore, if you like rugby, but are not A-Team material, don't worry because there are many XVs. Training sessions for any sport always welcome new people. Matches are often on Saturdays - so keep them free because if you are selected you will need to represent the School. If you are lucky enough to be selected for a prestigious sports team then it is worth becoming more organised; it is hard work, but rewarding too.

Homework

Prep, or homework is part of Abingdon life - so keep on top of it! As somebody who has their off days, I think it is crucial to get your work done on the day it is set - you shouldn't go far wrong that way. And if you can't do it for any reason, let the teacher know - they will understand. Getting a silent space to do your prep is also helpful - if your room doesn't work, try somewhere else. And if you're tired, break it up. This way, you'll find it easier.

Em@il

Email is part of Abingdon life and this is a really quick and easy way to contact your teachers, tutor, friends etc. Anyone and everyone's email address can quickly be found on the email system and the school calendar is available on line. However, getting your parents to send an email to your tutor or subject teacher can be more help; so if the dog really has eaten your homework an email from a parent is more suitable! Do check your email twice a day however.

I am now able to leave you with some wise words. My tutor has always said: '*Carpe Diem – seize the day*!'. Mine would be: don't hold anything back, throw yourself into school life. Always put your hand up in lessons and contribute as much as you can. Try and give yourself as wide a range of activities and clubs as possible and embrace the Other Half! You don't have to just do sport. Have a go at different activities. Try something new in term two. Sample everything Abingdon has to offer, and don't hold back. Whatever you do, I am certain you will get a lot from Abingdon. It is a wonderful place.

Written by Ben Ffrench

FOR BOARDERS

The ‘normal’ day for an Abingdon boarder does not, like a normal household, begin at a particular time but rather over a period of an hour, with the committed minority making it down for breakfast dead on 7.30am whilst the rest of the house, who struggle to make it out of the comfort of their beds at such an ‘early’ time, perform an excellent dance with time to maximise sleep! To the awe of the younger, less experienced boarder, such a master of time will be showered, dressed and even managed a hearty breakfast in under 10 minutes without even breaking a sweat, and all just in time for registration! The Housemaster or Matron carry out a roll call to make sure that all boarders are ready to go at 8:30am, after which the most exciting part of the five years that you spend in Abingdon begins - the school day!

It takes only two morning lessons for the full force of a boarder’s appetite to return. Luckily, food is at hand once more, with break-time snacks available in the kitchen. One may think such a popular

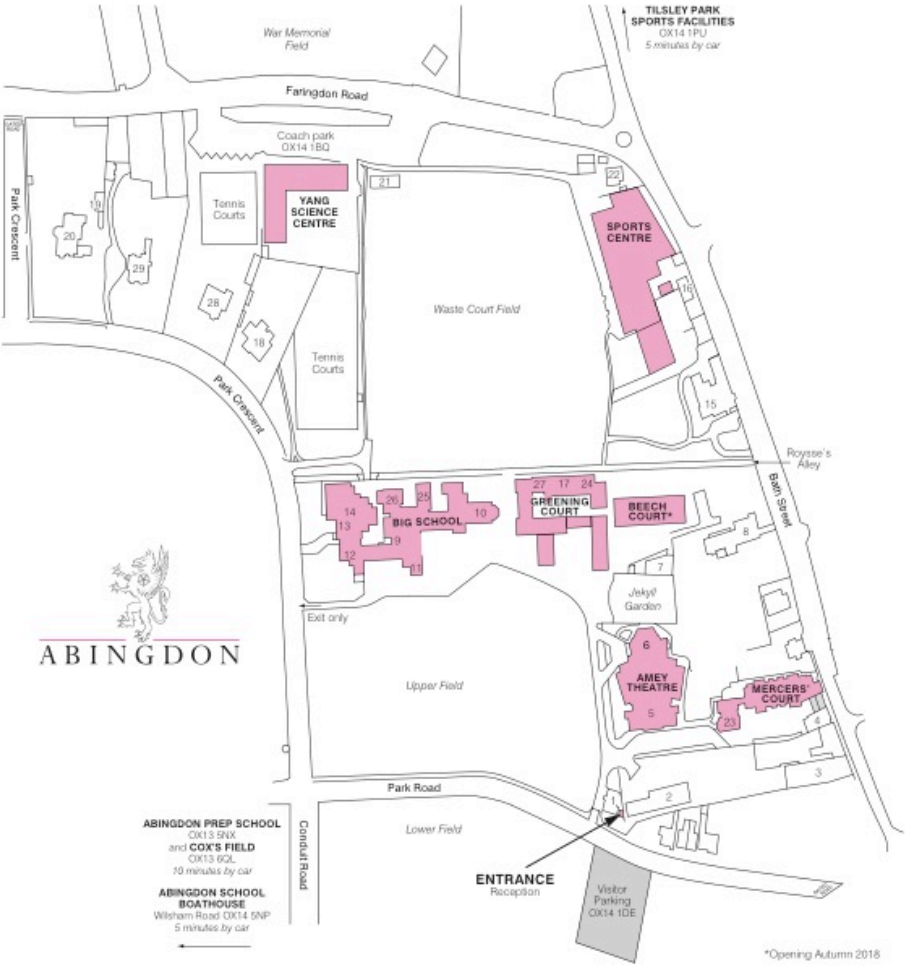
feeding frenzy for the grazing students would result in congestion, however all happens in respectable time thanks to the three toasters at hand. The hot crumpets, waffles and toast that follow are guzzled down as quickly as they came about, with the kitchen emptying in time for the next lesson, leaving no evidence that a hoard of hungry teenagers had just exited (that is until someone checks the waffle cupboard).

After the school day ends, the boarders encounter another food-based ritual in the form of 5 o'clock teas, where the most prized sandwiches hurriedly disappear in the hands of the chanting victor, leaving the poor tutor on duty with the less desirable egg and cress or tuna mayonnaise to choose from! At house teas you can see all the variety of school life from muddy CCF cadets through to exhausted rowers who have just done an ergo test! At this point the boarders have a couple of hours to relax in their rooms, go to the gym, play indoor football or wander into town before making their way to dinner where boarders in other houses catch up on the latest news.

Dinner, at 615pm, is followed quickly by registration where students are updated on house-related news and evening arrangements as well as, of course, who is on washing up duty, after which the two

rostered boys are met with rapturous applause for their soon-to-be sterling work! Boarders then have 90 minutes to do prep before an evening activity or free time. Houses have different activities, such as boardgames as well as hot food and beverages. Bedtimes vary according to the year group: 945pm for the 3rd year, 10pm for the fourth year, 1030pm for the 5th year and 11pm for the sixth formers.

Tutors are also on hand to make sure the well-oiled machine that is the boarding house is running smoothly. Slowly the house settles down, eventually leaving only the Sixth Form awake as they get some extra work done before going to bed, which they try to do as quietly as they can. Unfortunately they aren't renowned for their subtlety. After the occasional late shower, they too head to bed and the house goes to sleep.



1. Park Lodge / School Reception & OA Club Office
2. Administration
3. Design Technology
4. Admissions / Headmaster's Office
5. Arts Centre
6. Amey Theatre Foyer
7. Café
8. Ladies Court
9. Lower School
10. Chapel / Charles Maude Room (CMR)
11. Library
12. School House
13. Avernus
14. Dining Hall / Kitchens
15. Austin House
16. Activities Centre
17. Second-hand Uniform Shop
18. Crescent House
19. Learning Support / EFL
20. Health Centre / Whitefield
21. Faringdon Lodge
22. Estates Workshops
23. Franklin's / Morgan's
24. Border's
25. Southwell-Sander's
26. O'Doherty's
27. James's
28. Crescent House (Cobban)
29. Crescent House (Glyndown)

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