



# SCHOOL INFORMATION



INDEPENDENT DAY SCHOOL  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND FOUNDATION  
GSA SCHOOL – GIRLS AGED 3-18  
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# ONE OF THE FIRST SCHOOLS TO TAKE GIRLS' EDUCATION SERIOUSLY.

Durham High School is a leading Independent Day School for girls aged 3 - 18. We were one of the first schools in the North East of England to take girls' education seriously and we are proud to continue that tradition today; we seek to develop the potential of every girl in all areas of life.

The school was founded in 1884 by the Church Schools' Company and in 1910 the school's governing body took over and formed an independent school. In the 1960s, Durham High School moved to its first purpose-built premises on the edge of the city adjacent to the new Durham University colleges. This began a period of building and expansion which continues to the present day.

Recent developments include a wonderful Nursery, a Science, ICT and Library block and most recently a new building incorporating classrooms for Mathematics and Geography with a purpose-built Performing Arts Suite and Music practice rooms.

## REPUTATION AND RESULTS

Durham High School enjoys a very good reputation locally both for its academic results and for its excellent pastoral support.

Classes are small and the pastoral care of pupils is given a very high priority. Our pupils consistently achieve fantastic results for both GCSE and A Level.

In 2022, 62.3% of GCSE entries achieved grade 9-7. At A Level 69.4% of the entries achieved A\* or A. Pupils invariably obtain a place at the University of their choice, including Oxford and Cambridge, and other Russell Group universities.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

We are keen to widen access as much as possible, with means-tested bursaries, including some free places, to enable as many girls as possible to attend the school from a wide area.

There are also academic scholarships available at 11+ and 16+ together with scholarships in Music, Performing Arts and Sport.







## EXTRA CURRICULAR

There is an extensive extra-curricular programme, with huge enthusiasm for a wide-ranging number of sports including hockey, netball and tennis, as well as aerobics and cricket.

The musical life of the school is also extensive and of a very high standard. A large proportion of girls take lessons in an instrument and/or voice. There are four choirs, orchestras, a number of bands and an outstanding Drama Department, which stages a number of plays every year. This includes the School's annual production which is performed at Durham's Gala Theatre.

The opportunity to serve both the immediate and wider community is an important part of school life. Other extra-curricular activities include: a Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme with large numbers of girls taking part, including achieving Gold Awards; Young Enterprise; Debating; Art and Photography; and numerous trips and visits abroad.

## COVID AND BEYOND

Durham High School continued to thrive throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite two periods of school closure, our staff and pupils embarked on an extraordinary journey, adapting to new technology and a new way of learning very quickly, which has meant our pupils have received a full curriculum offering and no need for any catch up.

In addition, with thanks to the virtues of the virtual, from House events to School Council meetings, art exhibitions to sporting challenges, Leavers Service to Sixth Form Bake Off, from assemblies to virtual concerts: Even though for large parts of the last two and a half years our community has been physically apart, we truly believe we have never been closer.

## CHRISTIAN ETHOS

All staff are expected to be sympathetic to and supportive of the Christian ethos of the school and to model Christian values.

Our school is inclusive and we welcome girls of all faiths and none. Religious faiths are valued and respected and we have a significant number of pupils who practise faiths other than Christian.

# OUR VALUES

Since 1884, we have evolved with the times to provide a top-class, modern and relevant education whilst remaining true to the principles of our founders.

Throughout the school, from Nursery to Sixth Form, our core values and purpose remain the same:

- \* **PUPIL-FOCUSSED**

Everything we do is centred around nurturing and developing girls. Our pupils are at the forefront of everything that we do.

- \* **CONTINUOUS**

Our education from Pre-Prep to Sixth Form allows for continuity of care and development. Our vision is with the whole school in mind.

- \* **ASPIRATIONAL**

High expectations ensure pupils leave us as well-rounded, independent and confident young adults, with top-flight academic qualifications.

- \* **BALANCED**

We take seriously our role in encouraging pupils to broaden their interests, develop leadership skills, resilience and confidence.

- \* **CARING**

We have a caring, family ethos where all the pupils are known well to each other and by their teachers and are valued as individuals.

- \* **CHRISTIAN**

We create opportunities for pupils to explore faith, nurturing spiritual and moral values.





# ISI INSPECTION REPORT

Durham High School was judged as 'Excellent' across all areas by the latest inspection carried out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in October 2022.

The school succeeded in fulfilling every standard examined during the *Regulatory Compliance Inspection*, where each standard is simply 'met' or 'not met': there is no evaluative judgement in the report beyond this.

This inspection includes the standards of the quality of education; the suitability of staff and those in contact with our pupils; the welfare of our young people and their moral, social and cultural development. We also met every requirement relating to the premises and the provision of information.

The key findings in the *Educational Quality Inspection* were:

## **The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.**

- Pupils make excellent progress and achieve highly in both academic and other areas.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent across all areas of learning.
- Pupils of all ages are excellent communicators who listen well and express themselves articulately both orally and in writing.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent study skills. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding and underpin the high levels of achievement throughout the school.



## **The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.**

- Pupils display an extremely strong moral awareness and have a clear understanding of right and wrong.
- Pupils show outstanding levels of respect; they value diversity and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance towards others.
- Pupils' social development is excellent; they collaborate extremely well in lessons and extracurricular activities.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school, the local community and the world beyond.



# PRE-PREP DEPARTMENT

In the Pre-Prep Department at Durham High School, we believe in a holistic approach to supporting children to reach their potential. We implement a curriculum which is fun and academically rigorous, but at the same time is supportive of individual progress, personal strengths and areas to develop.

Our expert team and the wonderful enabling environment utilise the best of pedagogy and research into early childhood learning to ensure our pupils have an exemplary foundation to their educational career. Nursery and Reception children have a dedicated Early Years teacher and teaching assistant working with them and Year 1 and Year 2 class each have a designated, experienced teacher to lead their learning. The wider team encompasses subject specialists in Music, PE, Yoga and Forest School.

Teaching takes place in stimulating classrooms and a large outdoor provision area, including a Forest School environment. The children complete all their core subject teaching with their class teacher in their designated year group then come together each afternoon to learn flexibly, depending on the learning taking place and the age and stage of each individual child.

This approach enables the children to gain the academic rigour from expert teachers in their age-specific class, working in small groups to complete the core subjects of Mathematics and English, and then offers the flexibility to work across phase for further learning to enable the elements of the non-core subjects to be taught by experts through a thematic, connected approach to learning.

The range of teachers working within the Pre-Prep department means that pupils can be divided and taught by development rather than arbitrarily by age. This will also enable children who have particular strengths to be challenged, and to target support for those who are developing their skills. As we know, not every child develops skills in the same order or at the same rate and this approach will ensure that all children make their best progress in both the core and noncore subjects.

Throughout the Pre-Prep department, indoor and outdoor areas of provision and challenge are established for all children to be able to work independently, increasing opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

We have mapped the Early Years Foundation Stage and KS1 National Curriculum, turning it into a progressive and unique Pre-Prep curriculum for some of the timetabled lessons.

Open-ended challenges will be used for those with more advanced skills, where more emphasis is placed on leadership, application, and presentation skills. This means that learning can be tailored to the ability of each individual child using higher level thinking skills.





# PREP DEPARTMENT

The Prep Department at Durham High School is a welcoming place, characterised by a wonderful family atmosphere. Every girl receives individual attention and is supported to help reach her full potential. Lessons are engaging, challenging and enjoyable, and are delivered with expertise and enthusiasm by teachers.

Our children feel safe here and know they are valued by staff who care for them. They are excited about learning and take pride in their work and are always keen to share it at any opportunity, including when family members are invited to visit.

As an independent 3-18 school, we can go above and beyond expectations with specialists delivering lessons in music, languages, and PE to ensure ambitious standards of achievement across the curriculum as well as through the extensive co-curricular clubs. There are various educational visits which offer wonderful opportunities to further develop curiosity, creativity and independence.

We actively engage girls' imagination at all stages, while allowing them to explore their creativity. Involvement and enjoyment of art, dance and music is very much encouraged. Many children pursue their passion for singing through involvement in our excellent choir. Violin, recorder and trumpet are taught as part of the curriculum and individual instrumental tuition is widely available.



Sport is an important part of the life of Prep pupils. PE is taught by specialist teachers to a very high standard and sport plays a huge part in extra-curricular life, with clubs at lunchtimes and after school including karate, netball, rugby, cricket and tennis. Numerous fixtures and interhouse competitions take place throughout the year, allowing girls to develop her sporting skills against other schools in the area.



Pupil happiness in school is our number one priority, which is why our Prep Department is a happy and safe place where girls are able to flourish and have the confidence to be themselves.



The school has a marvellous culture of mutual support and respect in which our staff care deeply about all the girls who, in turn, care for each other. Older girls readily take on the role of 'mentors' to younger girls, creating a genuine feeling of family across the whole of the school. One of our key aims is for girls to grow spiritually and morally, as well as encouraging a positive approach to wellbeing.

Prep is just the beginning of the Durham High School journey. Pupils continue their education into Senior Department, as part of a special community. We work in partnership to provide an excellent all-round education, in an environment where girls are happy and successful.

# SENIOR DEPARTMENT

In Senior Department, a broad, balanced curriculum equips girls with the skills and academic excellence necessary for adult life in the 21st century. We believe that success is best achieved through enjoyment.

Durham High School's reputation for academic success is wholly justified: as experts in the teaching of girls, we know how girls learn and provide an environment in which they can flourish. Our Senior staff are dynamic and enthusiastic, and are indefatigable in their efforts to secure the best possible outcome for our girls. Our lessons are engaging and stimulating, fostering curiosity and the determination to succeed. We encourage girls to be aspirational. Our pastoral care is also exemplary; each girl feels secure as part of a happy and compassionate community and knows she is valued as an individual.

To broaden and develop the interests of each girl, we offer an extensive extra-curricular programme with activities to suit all. There are opportunities in sport, drama and art, among others, and we regularly see pupil success locally, regionally and nationally in these areas. Our numerous clubs also include astronomy, dance, journalism, photography and practical science. Residential and day trips, as well as international trips, are offered to each age group, to help to broaden horizons to new experiences.

A key characteristic of Durham High School is a feeling of community and being part of a family in which every girl is known and valued by her teachers. We strive to ensure that not only are girls looked-after, but that they also look after each other, learning to respect difference.

Pupil voice is also incredibly important, with School Council, Eco Council, our Interact Charity group and various leadership opportunities throughout Senior Department ensuring that girls have the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community.

Regular whole school events encourage all girls to be fully involved in the life of the school, as well as broadening their friendships to include girls in other year groups. We create opportunities both in the classroom and beyond for girls to learn tolerance and respect for others.

While academic expectations are high and we are certainly proud of our results, careful and caring support from staff ensures that girls manage their work load while maintaining a healthy balance with their other activities.

Supporting and nurturing spiritual and moral values, and encouraging positive mental health and wellbeing is high on our agenda. Our Personal, Social Health, Careers, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCCE) programme enables girls to explore and debate the issues and challenges they will encounter in the modern world.





# SIXTH FORM

We are proud of the vibrant, friendly community the Sixth Form at Durham High School provides, with its reputation for consistently outstanding achievement at A Level. The caring, supportive environment ensures that all girls fulfil their academic potential, as well as developing the self-assurance, the moral framework and the leadership skills they will need in a challenging world.

The Sixth Form is sometimes taxing, but never dull, and will indubitably, be very rewarding and enjoyable. We are confident that studying in our Sixth Form provides two of the most enjoyable years of our pupils' school life, as well as the best possible preparation for university and beyond.

The Sixth Form is a close-knit community where girls can relax and enjoy the exclusive use of their common room, private study room and a diner. Each girl is assigned a Tutor who provides pastoral support and academic mentoring. To complement their academic studies, our enrichment programme covers areas such as Democracy in Action, Astronomy and Life Skills. A programme of lectures is delivered by specialists in a range of fields.

There is extensive provision for extra-curricular activities and many of our Sixth Form participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Many trips are on offer, both social and curriculum-based, with everything on offer from Christmas Shopping trips in a European city such as Paris, to a project-based expedition to a developing country such as Malawi or Vietnam.



Sixth Formers are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and most undertake leadership roles or work with younger girls in the school, though After School Care or by supporting some of our many extra-curricular activities.



The learning environment is designed to enable girls to achieve their academic potential. Teaching groups are small and facilities are excellent. Our highly qualified teachers, who are all specialists in their subjects, are always available to offer individual advice and support.

Our Sixth Form team work closely with girls to provide advice and support at every stage of the university application process. Practice interviews are arranged with relevant professionals and extra lessons are provided for those who need to sit additional admissions tests such as UKCAT, BMAT, STEP and LNAT.



At the end of their studies, the majority of our pupils head to their first choice university, with many taking up places at prestigious Russell Group universities, or at Oxbridge.

# WORKING AT DURHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Durham High School has a group of highly qualified and enthusiastic teaching and support staff for who nurturing and developing girls is at the forefront of everything they do. The school comprises of approximately 52 members of the teaching staff, and 35 members of the support staff including our Administration Team, Facilities Team, transport drivers and cleaners.

Our teaching groups are smaller than the maintained sector, typically beginning with Pre-Prep and Prep classes of between 10 pupils and 20 pupils, increasing to around a maximum of 25 pupils per class in Years 7-11. Depending on the subject, classes can average between 8-10 at Sixth Form.

Teachers and support staff are paid on our own DHS pay scale and our school holidays are longer than those in the state sector, and many other independent schools, with two weeks in October, just shy of three weeks at Christmas and Easter, a week in February and May, and up to eight weeks in the Summer. Some support staff are on 52 week contracts and are entitled to 25 days holiday, an additional three day 'shutdown' between Christmas and New Year, and the eight statutory Bank Holidays.

A free school lunch each day is offered to all staff during term-time and staff rooms have complimentary tea and coffee. Teaching staff are enrolled in the Teachers' Pension Scheme and support staff have the opportunity to be in an employer contributions pension scheme. Durham High School operates a fee reduction package for children of staff members, subject to meeting the school's admissions criteria. All staff have access to training opportunities for personal and professional development.





WE ARE  
'EXCELLENT'  
IN ALL AREAS

ISI INSPECTION REPORT  
OCTOBER 2022



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