

# THE DOWNS Sixth FORM



... the most satisfying period intellectually and socially of most students' school career





Attending The Downs Sixth Form will be the most satisfying period intellectually and socially of most students' school career. It bridges the gap between the period of compulsory state education and taking one's place in the adult world.

Our Sixth Form sets a framework in which students, under the guidance of well qualified staff, can continue the success of the school. Staff who have known the students for several years will be instrumental in preparing them for life after school. We can offer a quiet, well structured environment in which to study, with a high degree of individual attention.

Students are supported by a personal tutor and the Head of Year as well as the Director of Sixth Form and benefit from close working relationships with them. Advice and guidance are given on time management and study skills and we are able to give additional time to students when they request it.

We encourage a broad range of extra curricular activities together with a wide variety of conferences and open days. We take part in a range of sporting activities including matches against other Sixth Forms.

The comfortable and well-equipped common room and kitchen provide a relaxing base for Sixth Form students and the study areas have IT facilities.

Participation in the Sixth Form is a challenging experience. Students are expected to apply themselves diligently to their studies to ensure that the investment in their education by the school, their families and themselves gains maximum rewards. Success with these plans will require commitment.

We welcome students who want to succeed; who have a positive attitude to learning; want to contribute to the school and to the community, and who are willing to work constructively with their peers and tutors. We expect students to work hard and achieve their ambitions, which will enable them to leave our Sixth Form with good qualifications and a clear vision of their next step in life. In return, we will work hard on their behalf so that together we can work towards their goals.

If you believe you can benefit from the opportunities the school has to offer and have the determination to succeed, please read on!

# SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM

Each student's Sixth Form programme will consist of five components: academic, tutorial, critical thinking, leisure opportunity and independent learning.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

The programme comprises a combination of courses which lead from Year 12 to Year 13 to Advanced Level, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level, and in Year 12 to BTEC and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

### ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY AND ADVANCED LEVEL COURSES (LEVEL 3 COURSES)


Study for Level 3 courses requires a considerable degree of interest in the subjects taken and high levels of motivation and ability usually demonstrated by prior attainment. These courses will require students to show independence and initiative not least in planning and using their study time effectively.

Students can take five of Advanced Subsidiary Levels in year 12. Usually students then choose up to five but not less than three subjects to continue for a further year to the full 'A' Level award ('A2'). All of these are awarded grades A – E and are converted into UCAS points for university entrance.

Most Year 12 students now study Critical Thinking 'AS' level and this can count as one of their five 'AS' subjects.

Many students use their Level 3 courses to gain entrance to higher education or employment and although three 'A' Levels is given as the minimum requirement, at The Downs we want to ensure that high achieving students choose a number of courses commensurate with their potential.

Increasingly employers recruit students who have demonstrated that they have the desire to gain improved qualifications and the capacity to handle the workload and problems that further education courses generate.



“the time to  
make serious  
choices”

## **GCSE COURSES**

One year GCSE resit courses will be available in English language and mathematics.

## **TUTORIAL PROGRAMME**

On entering the Sixth Form each student will be allocated a personal tutor who will encourage him or her to take full advantage of the academic and personal development opportunities offered. The personal tutor will help with UCAS and careers guidance and will regularly monitor student progress and help with target setting during personal tutorials.

## **CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAMME**

This subject supports and extends the academic programme. It aims to help the students think laterally and logically in the world in which they live. Year 12 students can take an 'AS' Level in Critical Thinking which is examined at the end of the year.

## **INDEPENDENT STUDY**

Independent study time is an integral part of any Sixth Form course and requires the ability to organise work and set targets. Help in the organisational skills required will be given through



the tutor programmes. The self discipline required to use study and free time effectively will be one of the most difficult to acquire but most valuable to learn. Periods not time-tabled for lessons are intended for private study and must be used for this purpose, either in the Sixth Form study area, the library, vacant computer classrooms or other designated areas. Students are expected to use these facilities quietly and respect other students' rights to peaceful study.

## **SIXTH FORM LIFE**

In addition to gaining further examination qualifications, Sixth Formers will, under the guidance of the Director of Sixth Form, Head of Year and personal tutors:

**use the opportunities available to develop new skills and interests;**

**take greater involvement in their own future;**

**develop study skills;**

**plan the use of free time;**

**become involved in helping other areas of the school/community.**

### **LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES**

The aim is to promote interest in leisure activities and to provide motivation for Sixth Form students to seek and maintain an active life style. A wide variety of activities is offered to cater for individual tastes and to encourage teamwork. Current examples include team sports, multi-gym and clubs.

### **MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS**

An essential part of each student's induction in the Sixth Form will be the negotiation of a personal 'Action Plan' with their personal tutor. The subsequent discussion and updating of these plans will inform personal tutors of the progress their students are making in reading widely, reading recommended texts, making notes, completing coursework and contributing to the wider school community.

Throughout the Sixth Form the progress of students' academic studies will be monitored on a regular basis. Students' progress is assessed with regard to potential, effort, ability to meet deadlines, attendance and the students' likely attainment in their examinations. If there is cause for concern parents will be contacted. A parents' evening for all students will also take place in which the subject staff will be in attendance.

All students are expected to fulfil the requirements of the courses they have elected to study. If they fail to meet the required standards of any of the elements of their course, their future on that course will be carefully considered.

“a chance to learn at your own pace and where you are respected as an adult”

## **HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CAREERS**

### **Before entry to the Sixth Form**

The School and Connexions service work together to ensure that all students joining the Sixth Form are aware of the opportunities open to them at the end of their period of compulsory education. Once students have decided to apply to join the Sixth Form they will have a transition meeting with the Director of Sixth Form and Head of Year 12 to discuss their subject choices and career plans. These meetings will be held during the Spring Term.

### **THROUGHOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

Students' careers education and guidance is provided through their personal tutor and academic programme and the Connexions service.

Students are given detailed guidance on the UCAS university admissions system and all students use the UCAS website database to assist them in selecting appropriate courses to apply for. The school works closely with Connexions, who make regular visits to the Sixth Form to assist with careers and higher education guidance. All Sixth Formers attend the Higher Education Fair in the Spring term of Year 12. This gives them an opportunity to talk to university admissions tutors and discuss their higher education plans with representatives from universities and colleges of further education. There are also opportunities for students to gain an insight into the world of work and training.

### **SIXTH FORM RESPONSIBILITIES**

Sixth Formers at The Downs will be expected to participate fully in the life of the school community and uphold its high standards.

By choosing The Downs Sixth Form, students indicate that they wish to support the general aims of the school. Thus members of the Sixth Form have a responsibility to set standards of work, dress and behaviour. They will also be expected to contribute widely to the life of the school through clubs, events, duties and in providing help with younger pupils. The school is a non-smoking community.

### **SIXTH FORM DRESS**

Students entering the Sixth Form are expected to exercise a disciplined and conventional attitude to dress. It is expected that the following general principles will be met by all students.

Sixth Formers are the role models for the rest of the school and are often asked to meet and show guests around. Their appearance is therefore very important, both in school and on the way to and from school. We expect them to dress in a smart, business-like manner and bear in mind the following:

- ✪ No one should wear denim, sports clothing, trainers or sweatshirts/hoodies.

- ★ Male students should wear a shirt and tie with smart trousers and a jacket on formal days.
- ★ Female students should wear skirts that are not too short or full-length trousers. Both items must be of a smart nature. Avoid casual tee-shirts or anything too plunging or cropped. A shirt with sleeves is a much better option
- ★ Jewellery should be kept to a minimum and no nose studs or other facial jewellery should be worn in school time.
- ★ Shoes for male and female students should be formal – no skateshoes/converses/trainers/sandals/flip-flops. Female students are advised not to wear high/stiletto heels because of health and safety issues.

We believe the guidelines above allow students to express their individuality but within a framework that recognises their responsibility to promote the highest standards of dress and appearance to the rest of the school.

## The Sixth Form facilities are spacious and comfortable

### **ATTENDANCE**

Students are full time members of the school and are expected to attend all time-tabled lessons, both registrations, assemblies and private study lessons. Those who, for any reason have to leave the premises during the normal school day, must first obtain permission from either the Director of Sixth Form or their Head of Year. They must sign out in the usual way.

### **COMMON ROOM AND STUDY AREAS**

The Sixth Form facilities are spacious and comfortable with ample room for study, careers and higher education research, and recreation. There is a well equipped social and kitchen area and lockers are provided. It is the collective responsibility of the Sixth Form to keep these areas clean and tidy.

### **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Members of the Sixth Form are encouraged to become involved in a variety of activities outside time-tabled lessons. Such activities are decided by the Sixth Form Committee, under guidance from personal tutors and the Director of Sixth Form. Activities could include theatre visits, sporting fixtures against other Sixth Forms, helping with the community (e.g. hospital visiting, in-class assistance within The Downs School/play group helper), clubs and social activities and fund raising activities for charity. The Sixth Form has developed links with World Challenge and a major month long expedition visited Venezuela during the summer of 2005. Further expeditions will be planned for the future.

The Head Boy, Head Girl and their deputies are chosen at end of Year 12. When they reach Year 13, they will work with senior prefects to plan and carry out the usual prefect duties around the school.

## **HOUSE ACTIVITIES**

Sixth Form students are expected to become involved in the House System within the whole school by providing leadership for the five houses.

They are encouraged to develop further the healthy competition which already exists between the houses in inter-house activities in music, sporting activities and drama.

The Leaders of House will assist with house assemblies and actively encourage the involvement of younger students.

## **SIXTH FORM ADMISSIONS CRITERIA**

The admissions policy of The Downs Sixth Form is open, subject to the availability of the appropriate courses and particular entry course requirements. Admission to the Sixth Form is dependent on the student's acceptance of the study requirements of the courses taken and compliance with the school code of conduct. Students are expected normally to follow their chosen subjects for the duration of the course. GCSE mathematics and English language will be retaken if a grade C is not achieved. Students taking Advanced Level courses are required to have at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* - C, and B grades are usually expected in the subjects, or related subjects they choose to study.

The entry requirements for BTEC and Level 2 courses are four GCSE passes at least at grade D level.

If there are more applications than places available, then priority will be given to:

Those already attending The Downs School.

Those with strong family connections with the school, e.g. a sibling at the school or the children of staff.

Those who have strong social or medical reasons for admission.

If the application does not fall into one of the above, then a final decision will be made by reference to the radial distance of the student's home from school.

The Downs School is an inclusive school and we welcome students to our Sixth Form to continue their learning and help them make informed choices that will open pathways that lead to further success.

# learning for life

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