



The Good Schools Guide Review

of Newland House School, Twickenham, TW1 4TQ

April 2013

Our View

The pre-prep is run by the approachable and calm Tracey Chong. All-female staff ('by coincidence,') give it a homely air. Building very tired-looking building but there are plans afoot for a major refurbishment before a possible move to a new site bang next door to the main school. Pupils venture across the road to main school for ICT and games. 'We're very much one school despite being on two sites', says head. 'The teachers at Number 11 (the Pre-Prep) are lovely and smiley and it rubs off on the children,' says one parent.

Classes at the prep are mixed ability, maximum 20 children. Lessons are lively and fast-paced with specialist teachers for PE, art, music and ICT from the start. Separate sciences taught from Year 4. Children set for English, French and maths from Year 5. Days are long, especially for those who start with the full cooked breakfast on offer at 7.30 am.

Once the girls leave at the end of Year 6, the boys are placed in two mixed ability classes and one small scholarship set; vacancies left by girls are not filled. Greek on offer to potential scholars. Parents love the fact that children get so much individual attention at the top of the school, 'A real strength,' says one. Children are well-prepared for 11+, 13+ and scholarships. As the head puts it, 'We are a preparatory school. It's our job to prepare them for the exams for entry to their next schools.' Parents report that a massive amount of coaching goes on in the final years, of which the head is critical. 'It's not necessary. We are all fighting a coaching culture but people get sucked into it.' Head gives out CE results to boys as they sit around a camp fire on the Year 8 trip to Wales. 'A lovely touch, and the boys never forget it. It's a gesture typical of the school,' says one parent.

Classrooms are spacious and light, with traditional wooden desks are arranged in neat rows. Impressive ICT suite, tablets about to be introduced but head keen this shouldn't be a gimmick. The school enters a huge number of national and international competitions with frequent success. Recently won three World Maths Day trophies, out of a total of five awarded to UK schools. DT department is the envy of other schools and recently assembled a car for the Shell Eco-Marathon that achieved a mileage of 1000 miles per gallon. Currently a group of senior boys is investigating the effect of tyre pressure on the environment and presentations have been made to MPs.

Plenty of choirs for each year group, new pop choir for Year 7/8 boys is thriving. Several hundred individual instrumental and singing lessons take place every week. Lots of bands, ensembles and orchestras. Children have recently taken part in performances at the Kingston Music Festival and concerts at the Barbican with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Art clubs include weekend activities where parents can become involved. Local artists exhibit and sell their work in the reception area and include a couple of inexpensive pieces so that children can buy a picture if it catches their eye.

Sport is a real strength of the school. Boys play rugby, football and cricket; girls play netball, rounders and hockey. Swimming, cross-country and athletics also on offer and even more sport possible through numerous after-school clubs, including golf at neighbouring club. Main playing fields are five minutes away by mini-bus; two multi-purpose, all-weather courts and four cricket nets on site. Lots of tournaments and matches mean everyone gets the chance to compete.

Full-time head of SEN appointed in 2011. Head believes, 'a good learning support culture enhances what you do'. Provision for mild dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia, though not the place to send a child with severe difficulties.

Many long serving staff. Head did away with 'teaching' and 'non-teaching' labels when he arrived. 'We're all teaching the children in different ways,' he says. One satisfied parent commented that staff were 'prepared to go the extra mile for the children.' Teachers are lively, good humoured and passionate about their subjects. Two gap year students help with sport and a French assistant teaches conversational French.

Parents are typically hard-working professionals. 'The school reflects the local community and lots of the children arrive at school on foot or by scooter,' says head of pre-prep. Active PTA raises substantial funds, half money raised goes to charity, the other half to the school - recently paid for a climbing wall.

A competitive, purposeful and demanding school which has retained old fashioned values (the pupils call the head 'Sir' and scramble to their feet when an adult enters the room). Pupils are challenged on all fronts and, as one parent put it, 'By the time the children reach Year 5, they are under pressure to perform. It's not a soft school but, for the right child, there simply isn't anywhere better in the area.' One mother felt, 'It's not for the retiring child. I think they'd get trampled underfoot.' The head disagrees and feels the school caters for all personalities and abilities as there is so much on offer and so many chances to shine.

Headmaster

Since 2010, Mr David Alexander BMus (Hons) Dip, NCOS (early fifties). Previously head of Norland Place School and Haddon Dene School. Warm, welcoming and with a good sense of humour. Very kind and doesn't have a bad word to say about anybody. Justifiably proud of his charges, 'Our 13 year old boys are a delight, as are our 11 year old girls. I'm very proud to know any of them. I like what the school has done for them.' Parents say, 'What you see is what you get. Pupils and parents respect him but he knows how to laugh too.' Believes one of his main jobs is to steer parents towards the right school for their child: he wants his pupils to be at the top of their game at their senior schools. The children adore him because he's such fun: he is currently keen for the school to buy a boat which can act as a floating classroom on the Thames. Holds a commercial flying licence and commands a reserve RAF squadron at weekends. Mr Alexander selects the head boy and head girl by deciding which pupils he would most like to have lunch with.

Entrance

Over-subscribed, best register your child as soon as possible after birth. Two main points of entry: 4+ and 7+. At 4+ entry is on a first-come, first-served basis, with siblings given priority. Forty places available at this stage and a waiting list in operation. Once at the pre-prep, a place is guaranteed at the prep school. At 7+ pupils are tested in English and maths. Assessments take place in November for entry into the school the following September. Twenty more places available at this stage.

Academic and music bursaries available – up to 50 per cent of fees, negotiated on a yearly basis. Ten per cent discount for third sibling when all are in school together.

Exit

Predominantly private day schools, including St. Paul's, Hampton, KCS Wimbledon, St. George's College, Reeds, Surbiton High, Wimbledon High and Lady Eleanor Holles. A couple each year head for boarding schools such as Marlborough and Wellington. Girls leave at 11 and boys at 13. Girls can stay on to 13, but don't. 'It would be a leap of faith' says head. Consistently high number of academic, sports, music and all-rounder scholarships. Head puts this down to outstanding teaching and the fact that the children are in a happy environment and so want to learn.