

International Links

Keen on international links. Not only is the head from New Zealand but the head of art is Spanish, head of science is French, a senior French teacher is Zimbabwean, the German teacher is Swiss, the Mandarin teacher is Chinese, the EFL teacher is Swiss, gappies come from New Zealand and Australia – not to mention the 12 pupils from abroad (four each from Hong Kong, Russia and Spain). Breaking the mould when it comes to languages. In years 1 to 4 pupils learn French, Spanish, German and



Mandarin (one each year). Everyone hunkers down to French in years 5 and 6 plus Latin/classical civilisation. In the final two years, when streaming kicks in, pupils can continue with French or shift to Spanish. Pupils in the CE stream may drop Latin and opt for Spanish alongside French, emerging with two living languages – an option not available to scholars (though the keen can do extra languages on Saturdays).

School Life

Lovely children with nice manners. What do they like best? Their 'funny, nice teachers'. Gripes? Would like better match teas ('we get baked beans and sausages instead of cakes'). Retains some of the best prep school traditions like an intricate assortment of lapel badges to indicate accomplishment or responsibility, and teachers dolloping out lunch family-style. Many teachers double up their teaching in weird and wonderful ways eg DT and maths, science and maths, art and basketball and, in the music department, you will find one busy (talented) gentleman teaching cello and violin and all the brass. Cosy girls-only common room for years 6-8, an unusual touch. Religion present but inconspicuous. Boarding appealing (especially girls'), flexible and low key.



Boarders are mainly children of local working parents, plus pupils from overseas and small Services contingent. The majority pop home on weekends, including non-Brits who may enjoy the hospitality of their local friends. A trip is organised on Sundays for those who remain in school. Cheerful pre-prep and nursery, with small classes and much encouragement. Also mother-toddler group. OBs include poet Louis MacNeice and the literary Powys brothers.

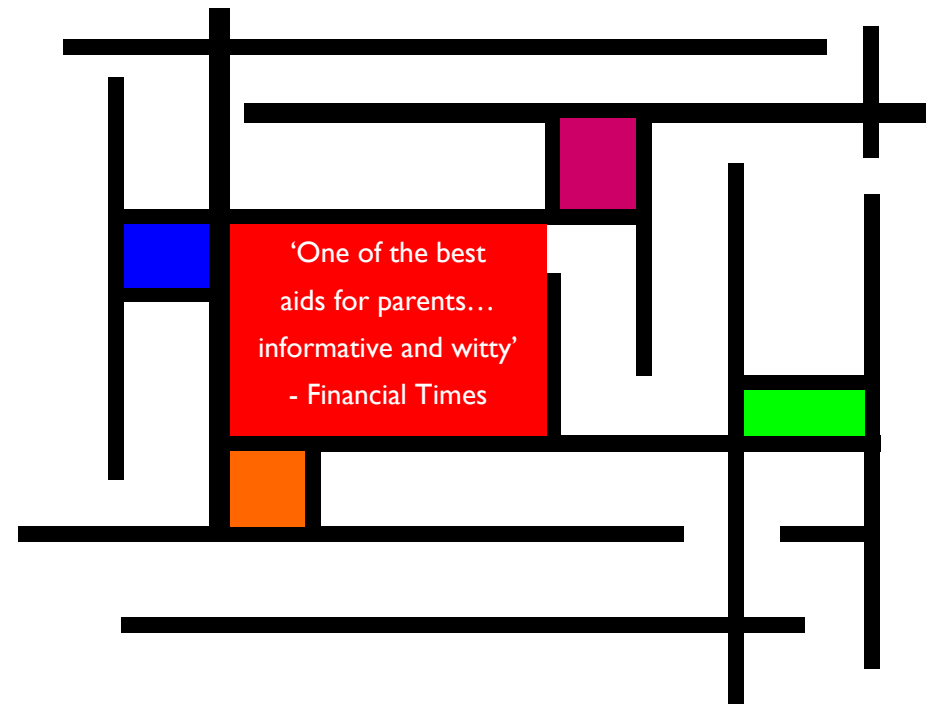
Sherborne Prep School

According to

THE

Good Schools Guide

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Please contact the Registrar, Mrs Sophie Harris, to arrange a visit

Direct: 01935 810911

Email: sh@sherborneprep.org

www.sherborneprep.org



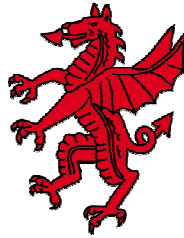
From the Good Schools Guide 2009

Sherborne Prep

Acreman Street Sherborne Dorset DT9 3NY

Tel: 01935 812097 Registrar: 01935 810911

Email: sh@sherborneprep.org www.sherborneprep.org



Head

Since 1998, Peter Tait MA, DipEd, DipTeaching, FRSA (fifties). Non-conformist, hands-on New Zealander whom we found crouched under his desk when we arrived (digging in a toolbox, preparing to hang a picture). Educated in New Zealand and spent much of his teaching career there (deputy head of a prep, then head of English, head of history and housemaster in senior schools). Two separate spells at Sherborne Prep in the eighties swayed him to settle there permanently when the headship came up. Wife, Sarah, heads English. Brought school back from the brink (down to 101 pupils in 2000). Governor of Chafyn Grove prep and Chair of the IAPS education committee and involved in the management of the Independent Schools Examination Board (the



folks who create CE papers). Campaigning gently, from within, to transform CE: 'the current exam tyrannises two years of the curriculum.' Not averse to putting pen to paper, Mr Tait publishes collections of his think pieces from school newsletters (on education, childhood, modern life, international relations, history) in compilations called 'Headmaster's Musings'. Wrote hard-hitting article in IAPS magazine (Winter 2007) bemoaning prep schools' submissiveness to senior schools and their willingness to straightjacket themselves to the CE syllabus rather than provide education for life. Hates spoon-feeding – 'it goes on all the way up to A level while universities are crying out for creative, independent learners!' Keen to keep prep down to a manageable level – '40 per cent of prep set in most schools is a waste of time.

Entrance

Non selective, non snooty. Interview with head and school report. Informal assessment when the pupil comes in for a trial day before joining the school. Mainly local families, plus London drift, plus a dozen from overseas. Scholarships available for academics (papers in maths and English), music, sports and all-rounders. Bursaries awarded on a case by case basis for existing parents. New parents may apply if their child wins a scholarship. Forces discount. A few JET (Joint Educational Trust) children accepted.



Exit

Mainly to Sherborne School – some years more children move there than to all other destinations combined. Surprisingly few to Sherborne Girls' however. Others dot around in ones and twos to schools in the region (Leweston, Bryanston, King's Bruton, Clayesmore usually feature). Loads of scholarships – for everything – with more variety of destinations. Occasional pupil to a state school.

Atmosphere

Characterful prep marching to the beat of its own drum. Founded in 1885, the school is now a bustling community hidden behind a mild-mannered Sherborne street-front. Difficult to capture in words – Sherborne Prep looks traditional but thinks outside the box. Open to new ideas; indeed Mr Tait actively seeks them out. Has looked closely at IB early years programmes, among other options and we nod approvingly, noting that this was the first prep in the area to dump Key Stage exams. Ditched Saturday school in 2007 in favour of optional, non-academic Saturday morning programme. Pupils may choose from vast menu of activities and come along – in mufti – for only one hour, or up to three. So families used to their children being occupied on Saturday mornings are happy, teachers enjoy the variety, there is more flexibility for the child who has Saturday commitments outside school etc. Also takes pressure off weekdays – play rehearsals can take place on Saturdays rather than after school or during lunchtimes. Ambitious offerings include eg extra languages for pupils and/or parents, rock and music tech workshop, sports coaching, tae kwon-do. Sounds fab, and parents we spoke to were enthusiastic. Two years on, 90 per cent of the children take part and according to parents, 'it is an outstanding success' with activities supported by Sherborne School and Sherborne Girls. Saturday afternoon matches continue as before.



Academic & Sport

33 pupils currently receive help for SEN in big, airy learning support room. Beauteous new library (shoes off before entering) and art room – a wonderful open space, full of light and colour. Having glass walls, 'our art room is a place of discovery; pupils learn about themselves while looking at the world, literally!' DT, also well-housed, produces interesting projects, a notch above standard prep school fare. Main computer room adequate rather than cutting edge. Lots of sport, with girls' sport on a high, says school. Netball best season ever and reached final of Dorset Championships, the U13 girls hockey team were undefeated last year winning 9 and drawing 1 of their matches (against the County Champions). Swimming going from strength to strength with new swimming coach in place and pupils competing at the IAPS National Finals. Head says one of his first moves upon arriving was to cut down the school's obsessive rugby training schedule. Seems only to have excited them: the 1st XV was unbeaten 2005-6. Three pupils took part in the IAPS national athletics finals in 2007. Makes use of some Sherborne School sports facilities eg its Astro (school has its own smaller version). 90 per cent of pupils play a musical instrument, from beginners up to grade 6; three concerts a term. School now fundraising to double the size of the music block. Head has recently appointed Sherborne Prep's first head of drama to indicate the subject's importance within the school.

