THE DOWNS SCHOOL
SIXTH FORM

Learning together, learning for life
thedownsschool.org
The Sixth Form is outstanding. Students make exceptional progress.
Welcome to our Sixth Form

At The Downs School, we are wholly committed to ensuring that our Sixth Form continues to build on its long-standing track record of success.

Visitors to our Sixth Form comment on how special the atmosphere feels. We are welcoming and inclusive, vibrant and purposeful. Our ethos is formed from the partnership between staff, students and parents, who work together to create an environment in which young people are supported to realise their full potential and achieve their personal goals.

The Downs School Sixth Form has a proven track record of success with young people of which we are very proud. Our results continue to place us as one of the best performing Sixth Forms not only in the immediate area but also nationally. This tradition of academic success is built upon the foundation of excellent teaching and learning. Our teachers are passionate subject specialists who welcome the chance to share their enthusiasm with their students.

Academic success, however important, is not the only achievement we value in The Downs School Sixth Form. We provide a rich provision of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities to our Sixth Form students, helping them develop into well-rounded young adults, able to venture into a rapidly changing world with confidence and determination. These principles are encapsulated in our vision:

"Educating today's young people for the world of tomorrow."

I am extremely proud to be the Headteacher of such a vibrant school community and encourage you to make a visit to see us in action. We very much look forward to welcoming you and your family to The Downs School Sixth Form.

Mr C Prosser – Headteacher
We know how important it is for students to make the right decisions about their futures, so we make sure we provide them with outstanding careers support.
The Personal Development Programme is the starting point of our careers support. Students will be given the skills and knowledge needed to access Higher Education, apprenticeships and employment after leaving school. The Downs School encourages interactions with local employers, both through employee representatives coming into school to speak to students about their industry, and through students visiting workplaces for taster sessions and work experience. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in a number of careers events whilst in the Sixth Form. These can be whole year events, such as the After Eighteen careers day, as well as more specialist careers events for specific industries and careers, such as medicine. Previously these have included trips to Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Industry Spotlight events and attendance at Berkshire Apprenticeship Careers Fairs.

The Sixth Form students also benefit from the provision of a Student Manager, who provides individual support for students deciding which career pathways to take. The support includes exploring the financial aspects of going to university and investigating the companies offering apprenticeships, as well as providing guidance with creating CVs, writing letters to companies and completing applications. As a result of the support provided by the Student Manager, increasing numbers of our students are securing places on highly regarded Higher Level Apprenticeships.

Students wishing to apply to university are provided with highly personalised support from a dedicated UCAS Co-ordinator. Supplementing the support, advice and guidance provided by tutors, the UCAS Co-ordinator ensures that all students are given the guidance they need to select courses and institutions that suit their aptitudes and career plans, resulting in extremely high numbers of students securing places at prestigious universities.

Staff are very friendly and go out of their way to give you extra support if you need it.
Supporting your learning

In The Downs School Sixth Form we create an environment in which all students are provided with the care and support they need to flourish.

Teachers care about their students' well-being and not just about their results
Our Head of Sixth Form, supported by a Deputy Head of Sixth Form, leads a team of tutors who are responsible for the day-to-day welfare and academic progress of their students. Our tutors work extremely closely with their students, providing them with the guidance and feedback they need to achieve their full potential. We know that some of our young people may need additional pastoral care, and therefore have a full time Sixth Form Student Manager to provide more intensive support to help students overcome particular challenges. Our Head of Sixth Form works closely with the SENDCO to ensure that students with special educational needs and disabilities are given the support they need to excel in their chosen courses.

We expect our students to take a professional approach to learning and have a dress code that ensures our students have the same high standards of personal appearance as our members of staff. Our expectations for attendance and organisation are also high. Our students understand the importance of independent learning to consolidate what they have learned in the classroom. We therefore provide a library and a variety of study rooms in which students work independently.
Students will begin A Level or Level Three BTEC courses in Year Twelve and complete them in Year Thirteen. We also offer a Level Two Pathway, which is a one year course, intended to support students to access Level Three courses the following year.

**Level Three Courses: A Level and BTEC**

Study at Level Three requires high levels of motivation and interest in the subjects taken, backed up by prior attainment in similar disciplines. Students will need to show independence and initiative, including the ability to plan and use their independent learning time effectively.

The Downs School Sixth Form offers a range of Level Three BTEC courses equivalent to A Level. These can be studied exclusively or alongside A Level courses. Although BTECs are as challenging as A Levels, some students are better suited to the BTEC style of ongoing assessment, and we encourage all students to carefully consider which courses are the right for them.

Year Twelve students can take up to five but not less than three Level Three courses and, while three courses is the usual minimum to gain entry to higher education or employment, we believe that high achieving students should have the freedom to choose more than three courses if they wish to do so.

**Level Two Course**

Our Level Two course is a one year course, intended to provide students with an opportunity to increase their numbers of GCSE passes in order to progress to studying at Level Three the following year.

As well as resitting GCSEs when necessary, students study English and mathematics functional skills, develop key work skills and participate in a broad and engaging BTEC programme of study.

**GCSE Courses**

GCSE resit courses are available to students who need to retake English language or mathematics.
Challenge for all

The Downs School Sixth Form’s academic success is based on exceptional teaching, high expectations and highly motivated students.

Our staff are passionate about teaching and learning opportunities for all our students. Every teacher aims to engage, inspire and challenge every student, in every lesson, every day, to ensure that all students are able to thrive.

We challenge our students to extend their learning by participating in a programme of super-curricular learning. Set by their teachers, the super-curricular learning activities support students to explore their subjects beyond the confines of the curriculum, guiding students to develop a broader appreciation of the richness and diversity of their subjects.

Our Sixth Form students also help younger students develop their learning. Our long-standing paired literacy and numeracy programmes, in which Sixth Form students work closely with younger students to develop the skills they need to achieve success across the curriculum, are an example of the positive impact Sixth Form students have upon the rest of the school. Similarly, many of our Sixth Form students are subject ambassadors, working with teachers and younger students on projects that celebrate the subjects they feel passionate about, and also contributing to the on-going development of teaching and learning across the school.

I really like the strong sense of being part of a community

Student
Develop your leadership

At The Downs School we believe that all young people have the capacity to become leaders. We expect our Sixth Form students to view themselves as leaders.

Our student leadership programme provides our Sixth Form students with opportunities to act as role models to the rest of the school, using their leadership to make an invaluable contribution to the whole school community.

The Head of Sixth Form works with the Head Boy and Head Girl to run a cabinet style of Sixth Form student leadership. The Head Boy and Head Girl are the ambassadors of the school, meeting with students and parents and presenting at major events such as Open Evenings and end of term assemblies. Some leaders focus on running Sixth Form events, such as the Pink and Blue Charity Day; some edit and contribute to the school magazine; some organise sports events that involve the whole Sixth Form. Other Sixth Form leaders focus on student voice and work in collaboration with younger students on the School Council on projects to enrich the school community.

Whatever individual skills and attributes our students have, there are leadership opportunities that enable them to use their talents to make The Downs School a better place.

I am very proud to be a Downs School student

Student
This allows our Sixth Form students to develop their interests in their subjects, develop skills that help them become well rounded individuals, and just as importantly, to have fun.

Lessons are brought to life through a wide range of educational trips both in the UK and abroad. Our students visit galleries and museums in Oxford and London, and take advantage of highly professional local theatres, as well as travelling to Stratford and the West End. Our performing arts and media teachers take students to New York, many of our subjects run residential field trips and the Geography Department runs an annual trip to Iceland. Every two years, our Sixth Form students have the opportunity to take part on a ski trip. For the even more adventurous, we run regular expeditions, which in previous years have visited Ecuador, Norway and India.

Many of our Sixth Form students are keen sports men and women, and successfully represent the school in a variety of sports such as netball, hockey, football and rugby. There are many other opportunities to take part in sport, such as participating in the weekly recreational sport events, visiting the school gym, or getting involved in highly competitive House matches.

The Arts, including drama, music and dance, showcase the immense talent of our Sixth Form students, who compete in regular House competitions and also take leading roles in our annual productions, the most recent of which have been Calamity Jane, Billy Elliot and The Little Shop of Horrors.

Learning extends beyond the classroom through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety number of trips, both within the UK and overseas.
Our most important goal is to provide each of our students with the opportunities to discover their individual strengths and talents, enabling them to realise their full potential by the time they leave The Downs School.

An extremely high number of our students achieve places in elite Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge; our students become doctors and vets, lawyers and engineers, actors and artists, Civil Servants and members of the Armed Forces; our students secure places on competitive and prestigious apprenticeships; our students enter the world of work with the qualifications and attributes they need to achieve success.

At whichever stage in their educational journeys our students join us, we provide them with high quality teaching and learning, pastoral care and careers guidance that enables them, at the end of their time in The Downs School, to take the next steps of their journeys with confidence.
The university and careers support is excellent.
How you can apply

Catchment areas do not apply in the Sixth Form, nor are we restricted on the numbers of students to whom we are able to offer places. We are therefore able to provide places to many students who attended other schools before they joined The Downs School Sixth Form, and have been notably successful at integrating students from other schools into the Sixth Form community.

We run a wide variety of events, such as the Sixth Form open evening and Sixth Form open mornings, that are designed to showcase our school to students and parents considering whether or not they wish to join The Downs School. We would encourage you to come to these events to see for yourself what a special place The Downs School Sixth Form is.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions about our Sixth Form or how to apply for a place.

email sixthform@thedownsschool.org
website thedownsschool.org