



Kelly College Preparatory School



Hazeldon House, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0JS

Pupils: 83 boys, 75 girls. Ages 3-11 years. Christian (but accepts all faiths). Independent. Fees : Day. £1995-£2810 per term; Weekly boarding £5305 per term. Open mornings are twice termly and individual visits and taster days available all year round. Open mornings for Lent term 2012 are on Friday 27th January and Friday 9th March 10:00-12:00

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Head: Since September 2010 Mr Matthew Foale B.Ed, Hons, M.Sc. (42). Born, bred and educated in the West Country. Has a PE degree and has achieved his M.Sc while teaching, which must surely suggest determination and organization. Prior to joining Kelly Prep as Deputy Head in 2009 he taught at The Hall School in Hampstead as Director of Sport for 10 years and then Orley Farm School in Harrow as Deputy Head for 3 years. Married to Marie-Claire who trained as an Art Therapist and is now manager in Plymouth of a home for those suffering from Alzheimer's and Dementia. Three children. Commutes every day. 'It's an easy journey and gives us a well balanced life.' Not a bull frog trumpeting Headmaster keen to show off what he has done for the school his conversation, underpinned by a good sense of humour and concurrent sense of proportion, centres around the happiness of the children in his care and his lively staff, whom we found very forthcoming and friendly. Thoughtful and



calm and with obvious integrity, he clearly has an eye for detail without losing an awareness of the overall picture. One delighted parent who had had three children through the school told us he was fair minded and consistent, with an eye for ‘the whole child within the whole picture’. He does some teaching of I.T., is a Form Tutor and, fine games player that he is, he literally rolls up his sleeves to referee matches or supports from the touchline. He is not the sort of headmaster who barks out a hearty greeting to pupils to show he knows their names, his is a quiet and reliable presence and inspires affection and appreciation from everyone, as far as we could tell, including the ground staff. ‘Despite, or perhaps because of, his all round involvement,’ one parent told us, ‘he never loses sight of the fact that primarily the job of the school is to encourage and inspire pupils to reach their potential’. A very sound man, a good listener and readily accessible to all.

Entrance: Entry to any of the three parts of the school, Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep, is available at any time, providing there is a vacancy and providing everyone concerned feels that the school is the right place. Every candidate attends a taster day which involves attending lessons, some individual conversations with teachers, horsing about in the playground and generally getting a feel for the place. No formal tests. The main concern is whether or not he or she will fit in with the ethos of the place.

The school does run buses from a 45 minute radius and will accommodate any reasonable request. ‘We can be flexible,’ says the Head.

Exit: Most of the pupils go on to the senior school half a mile away. Occasionally parents use the Prep as preparation for entry into neighbouring Grammar Schools. Most years there is a healthy clutch of Scholarships in an impressive range of activities.

Remarks : Situated just outside the attractive town of Tavistock and on the edge of Dartmoor, the school has occupied its beautiful site since 1983 when Kelly College bought the handsome main house and grounds and established its own prep. Geographically the two schools are very close, enabling the prep school to use many of the sporting and recreational facilities of its elder brother. More importantly, the schools share the same ethos of friendliness and mutual support. The word ‘ethos’ crops up a lot in conversation with the head and members of staff and its beautifully simple, timelessly valuable code is found in reproduced shields and mottos all over the building. That is not brain washing, it is life enhancing. It serves to remind everyone of the worthwhile values and aims of the school and is supported not only by daily encouragement and example but through weekly focus on particular values. Parents are informed of which particular value is being concentrated on and encouraged to discuss it with their children. ‘It helps us become involved with the school and draws us



closer to its aims as well as understanding our children better,' said one father. The result is a particularly happy school where staff and pupils openly demonstrate mutual friendliness and respect. No wonder the most recent ISI inspection describes the quality of pastoral care as 'outstanding', a word which is used very sparingly in such reports.

Another delightful feature arising from the ethos is the existence of a Pupil Council which, among other things, has produced an intelligent and sensitive document on bullying. Everyone has a copy and the interaction of 'buddy readers', older children who help the younger ones with their reading, to say nothing of children from the senior school visiting on a regular basis, ensures easy relationships between all ages. (That, incidentally, is also a feature of the Senior School). Everyone in the top year is involved in a rotating system of prefectorial-type duties involving responsibilities for people rather than political power. Parents talk of the boost in confidence those opportunities give and how the system contributes to the overall happiness of the youthful society.

The school does offer boarding and those who do board, do so up at the senior school in the junior house. Mostly weekly, though currently with some full/flexi boarding: all combinations are available. Essentially this is a day school with boarding options being flexible to suit.

In the last few years new teaching areas have been built with thoughtful awareness of the needs of pupils. Thus there is a delightful low welcoming building for the pre-prep, a place where children can have room to work and play, feeling safe and secure; a place where teachers can move about and display colourful and promising work; a place which leads out on to a delightful terrace equipped with suitably sized tables and chairs, exciting toys, and a marvelous sensory garden. What a joy to be able to eradicate gaps between learning and fun with everywhere gentle reminders of the ultimate goal: lots of books and inter-active white boards strategically placed to enable even the tiniest to contribute.

Next door is the Art room and next to that the superbly equipped Science Laboratories. No coincidence that: one of the aspects of the lively teaching we witnessed was the refusal to separate subjects but rather to adopt a cross-curricular approach: History with Art; Science with History and Art; French everywhere, not just in the classrooms. Not a wishy-washy stew but a delectable concoction of individual ingredients merging into one delicious, intellectually nourishing meal. No risk of too many cooks... The very success of this teaching depends on staff communicating openly and frequently with each other. And for those with learning difficulties there is a Learning Support Department who aim to help pupils referred to them. This would include strengthening study skills and introducing other strategies which might help the overall performance. A



real back-up unit.

Upstairs in the main house, in a warren of rooms, is where the music takes place with a range of instruments being learned and where everyone attends music lessons weekly. Many volunteer for extra-curricular activities in and around the school. In fact the school advertises over twenty extra-curricular clubs.

The combination of the school's own grounds, 'sometimes used for launching rockets during science and DT lessons,' and the facilities of the senior school mean that a tremendous variety of sports is on offer and pupils have gained national and international success, particularly in swimming. As far as team games are concerned the results are strong and because it is a small school there is a positive feeling of "punching above their weight".

Overall this is a very happy, unpretentious school, which in its beautiful rural surroundings strives successfully to inculcate a love of learning, a genuine sense of community within and without the school, an overall sense of decency and excellent preparation for the next stage. Parents we spoke to, relished the opportunities it offers, both in smaller class sizes and extra curriculum activities. They spoke of their offspring's burgeoning confidence derived from individual nurture. One boy responding to our boringly predictable question about looking forward to the holidays said, 'home or school, it's all the same to me.' Lest cynics nudge each other, be assured: he was a very happy child.

December 2011.
