

# In Focus

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Spring 2015

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Dauntsey's

# Bursting the bubble



*From the Head Master*



**On television and radio, in the newspapers and on doorsteps around the country, politicians in one of the most closely fought elections in recent decades have been telling us repeatedly that every vote counts.**

It is a message I want Dauntsey's pupils to take on board – not only because universal suffrage is precious and hard-won but also because the same principle applies to so many of the apparently overwhelming issues facing the world today.

Every individual matters and every one of us can make a real difference, even in the face of huge problems such as climate change, poverty, intolerance and religious conflict.

This is one reason why we make sure that education here isn't confined by the curriculum and doesn't stop at the school gates.

Insights into major global, cultural and social institutions, trends and events help to prepare our pupils for their future.

When combined with the Dauntsey's ethos of tackling new challenges, facing up to risks and persisting through adversity, it equips our pupils to tackle whatever problems they encounter, personally and in the wider world, with courage, compassion and conviction.

They may start now by raising money or awareness for causes close to their hearts, by analysing the validity of different systems of governance or by working to reduce hardship or pollution. Ultimately, I hope they will have the potential to make the world a better place.

Mark Lascelles

*Against the background of a general election, turmoil in the Middle East, disease in Africa and persistent economic woes in the Eurozone, Dauntsey's can seem like an idyll – a rural bubble where the world does not intrude.*

*In fact, pupils throughout the School are actively engaged with the issues of the day, from global warming to poverty and democracy via projects as diverse as our fund-raising International Schools Project (ISP), the Mercers' Lectures, the complementary curriculum and, of course, a mock election featuring not only the mainstream parties but also New Suffragettes, the Workers' Alliance and even a Dressing-up Party.*

*This range of opportunities helps pupils think beyond the confines of their own lives and the formal curriculum, to decode the world around them, gain cultural awareness and prepare for a future in an interlinked, global society.*

**H**ow does democracy work and why does it matter? This is just one of the questions that Dauntsey's pupils have been addressing this term.

There have been candidates, hustings, lobbying and a Question Time-style debate in our mock elections but we approach this, and other key issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from many different angles.

The complementary curriculum in the Fifth Form features topics such as modes of governance, the legacy of Empire, human rights, global institutions, cultural diversity and the role of the media, all of which are familiar themes to any voter.

Meanwhile, pupils raise funds for schools in Afghanistan and Uganda, writing to their counterparts and learning how political decisions directly affect their lives and opportunities. They also raise money for a Romanian orphanage, which they visit annually (see *In Focus, Spring 2014*) and discover the shocking reality of poverty and extreme hardship for themselves.

Demelza Hills, newly appointed Head of the Complementary Curriculum and the driving force behind the ISP, believes these experiences play a crucial role in the pupils' development.

"If you only learn what's necessary to pass exams, you miss out on what's really going on in the world and you could get a nasty shock when you leave school," she says.

"The complementary curriculum encourages

young people to explore beyond rigid boundaries and to understand how cultures and societies function. It is not only invaluable for their intellectual development – it is essential for their personal growth.

"Through the ISP and our links with Romania, pupils learn first-hand that other children might be grateful for something like a biro that we take for granted and that education, which we see as a right, is a privilege to millions of children around the world.

"They also learn that fund-raising has a specific purpose and to make a human and emotional connection with the people they support. Given that Dauntsey's pupils have raised more than £200,000 for their chosen charities over the last ten years, that is a significant lesson.

"All these experiences equip them to thrive in the real world after school."

Housemaster Nigel Yates organised the mock election and also runs the Debating and Sceptics Societies. In the latter, members watch documentaries on topics such as civil liberties and the banking crash and then discuss them. His aim is to encourage participants to think independently, question apparent certainties and explore alternative perspectives.

"It's especially important for boarders to get involved in this kind of debate because they are living in a very protected place," he says.

"It is invaluable that we have pupils from around the world, so we can explore a variety of cultural perspectives on any subject. It helps all pupils to think beyond

David Nussbaum, CEO World Wildlife Fund meets pupils before his Mercers' Lecture.

their own social background, ethnicity and received opinions. It mitigates against complacency."

Other opportunities include the Mercers' Lecture series, which attracts an impressive roll call of speakers. The current season has included the Bishop of London speaking about the way that religion affects all our lives, and Nick Hardwick, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, who shared insights into the life of a prisoner and the challenges faced by the Prison Service.

Environmental issues, too, are high on the agenda – not surprisingly, given that Friends of the Earth founder Richard Sandbrook is an Old Dauntseian, with a travel scholarship in his name.

The pupil society The Big Green Thing raises awareness of green issues and promotes sustainability and has led school-based projects including the installation of solar-powered showers, geothermal heating, a biomass digester and tree planting, as well as organising a conference that attracted leading environmentalists.

Organiser James O'Hanlon, Head of Careers, says, "If we can't look after the world in which we live and rise to the environmental challenges around us, nobody will have a future. Our role is to ensure that our pupils know this and that they take this message into the world after school."

# INSPIRING CREATIVITY

*Set apart from the main school building is an old Victorian village school. It houses Dauntsey's thriving Art Department and is a hive of creativity.*



*“Art students learn not to be satisfied with the norm but to search for new ways of seeing, questioning and making choices.”*

Victoria Rose, Head of Art

**D**rawing and painting are joined by sculpture, graphic design, photography, print-making, textiles, typography and film. Exhibitions and history of art lectures stimulate curiosity and give a wider context

This is the Art Department – or, as Sixth Former Kristina puts it, “This is an Art School, as good as many in further education. It is pretty much always open, so all the possibilities are there all the time and the teachers are incredibly supportive, really open to exploring ideas and encouraging you to break down barriers.

“It is just inspiring.”

Kristina should know. She has been offered places on the art foundation course at Central Saint Martin's, to read graphic design at Ravensbourne and visual communication at Kingston – the art equivalent of offers at prestigious Russell Group universities.

And she is not the only one. Recently, other students have gained places at the Ruskin School of Fine Art in Oxford, Goldsmith's at the University of London, Edinburgh College of Art, the London College of Fashion and many more.

“We offer students a sense of adventure, excitement and discovery,” says Head of Art Victoria Rose. “The Art School is a place where they can take risks and not worry if they get it wrong. We aim to build creative confidence, so we can develop innovative, risk-taking, ambitious visual communicators who stand out from the crowd.

“Everything students learn is relevant to other aspects of their lives: to have an enquiring mind, to be questioning, to search for new ways of seeing and understanding – these are all invaluable life skills.”

To Jenna, who is in the Second Form, the experience has been a revelation.

“At my old school, there was only one art



lesson a month and it was usually linked to something like a history project. I wanted to come to Dauntsey's because they take art seriously here,” she explains.

“The staff look for what you're good at and encourage you to pursue it. They'll help you to tackle more advanced projects and you can carry on in prep time because the Art Department is open for you and the teachers are there to help or just to talk, if that's what you want. It has more than lived up to my

Hinson, who is in the Upper Sixth and has won a place to read design at Goldsmith's in London, appreciates this approach.

“It's shown me that there is more to art than painting and drawing,” he says.

“I have the freedom to do far more – 3D modelling is what I like best, in clay, plastic, whatever material I want to explore. I really enjoyed putting together my portfolio, researching my project on columns, discovering their development, context,

History of art, which was recently introduced as a separate A level, is woven into all teaching, with individual pupils pointed at material that will help to expand their ideas and provide context. There is also a series of lectures and trips, ranging from full year visits to London galleries to a joint art and classics trip to Rome at Easter.

Another important factor is Victoria's own background. She has had a range of roles, from art director in advertising to a freelance illustrator, designer and artist, as well as the experience of running her own business. She uses all this to help pupils discover their artistic talents and understand how they are relevant to specific careers.

“It means that I can discuss the different career avenues open to them and give them a breadth of understanding of how their skills and abilities will be relevant to the world beyond education,” she says.

“Some people are makers and some are thinkers. Understanding these creative nuances and their value and place in industry helps us to point them in the right direction.

“It is crucial that a student, when considering a career, thinks about their broader study and combines art with the relevant disciplines. For example, maths and art are fundamental to a future in architecture.”

With Jenna set on interior design, Kristina on a job in advertising and Hinson and Erica aiming to become designers, this approach clearly works. Or, as Erica puts it, “After Dauntsey's, I know I can make a career from art.”

**“Art has stretched me intellectually more than any other subject. I nearly didn't take it but am so pleased I did.”** Jim, Fifth Form

expectations – I've learned so much already.”

Her classmate Erica agrees. “The staff look for talent and help you to develop it,” she says. “I love exploring different media and approaches. It's always fun and always different. My favourite was a speed drawing challenge, when we had 30 seconds, then 20, then 10 to capture an object. At last, I feel I can show what I can do.”

Victoria and her colleagues embrace the Bauhaus ethos, which gives equal status to all artistic disciplines. Students are taught by a range of specialists and the breadth of knowledge among the teaching team is core to each success.

meaning and symbolism and making a two-metre high column from plaster.”

Observational drawing is, however, at the forefront of teaching, since it underpins all art and design disciplines. The department is very proud of the standard of figurative work in particular.

In the Lower School, the emphasis is on mastering technical skills, exploring materials, techniques and processes. Upper School teaching promotes conceptual thinking and independent study, encouraging both traditional and contemporary art forms, from oil painting to dance performance pieces.

# Our girls can!

*Dauntsey's girls could be role models for Sport England's This Girl Can campaign. In fact, the campaign inspired the girls to make a film showcasing a single day's sporting activities in the school to celebrate their energy, enthusiasm and talent – you can see it at [www.dauntseys.org/news/this-girl-can](http://www.dauntseys.org/news/this-girl-can)*



*With an alphabet of activities on offer, sport and exercise are an everyday event, whether that's in the gym, a dance studio, the pool or on our playing fields and courts in the glorious Wiltshire countryside.*

*From aerobics and climbing via dance and kayaking to rifle shooting and squash, as well as*

*team sports such as hockey, netball, tennis and athletics, there's something for every girl to enjoy.*

*Of course, sport is not only about physical fitness. It also builds self-confidence, leadership and teamwork skills; and teaches pupils how to win and lose with equal grace. Above all, it's about being willing to try something new.*



**Being a girl is no barrier**  
Charlie, Lower Sixth

It never occurred to me that I couldn't do anything because I'm a girl. I've always thought it doesn't, and shouldn't, make a difference. You should be able to tackle anything, be fit and enjoy using your body.

My main focus is swimming – I'm in the swim team and compete at galas. I'm also a lifeguard at the school pool. I came in the Third Form and was already a swimmer but I've improved so much.

Being a boarder means everything is here for me whenever I want – it's not just a matter of having access to great facilities and friends who share them, but of having that opportunity 24/7.

I love cross-country running too. Being out in beautiful countryside is a great way to work off stress, especially when you have exams coming up. I do circuits in the gym as well, partly to improve my swimming but mostly because I love it.

Training and competing in the Devizes to Westminster canoe race was an amazing experience, too. I wanted a challenge and I'd never kayaked before. I thought, why not? Let's go for it.

I can't imagine a world without exercise, ever.



**Sport is a new world**  
India, Second Form

At my old school, sport was very limited – we did hardly any. When I came to Dauntsey's there was so much and it's really opened my eyes. I didn't know that I'd be any good or that I'd love it so much.

I'm an all-rounder but I seem to stand out at athletics. I recently equalled the school record for the 100m in 13.9 seconds and got a new one in the 200m, at 28.6 seconds. I train several times a week, both at school and at Marlborough Athletics Club.

Sport and exercise are part of everyday life at Dauntsey's and I love what I'm doing. That's the way we all feel here. It's normal.

I never imagined that I'd get a sports scholarship but it's given me such a boost. It would be amazing to reach the Olympics, but if not I've definitely got my sights set on being a national standard athlete.

I'm so looking forward to the Moonrakers adventure programme next year and to experiencing all the opportunities: canoeing, climbing, orienteering and the annual camp in Wales. I can't wait!

Discovering a love of sport has been like entering a new world. I hope to make a career in it and, if not, perhaps become a physiotherapist, so I can still be involved.

**Forget appearances – just have a go**  
Moir, Lower Sixth

At my old school, the amount of sport done by girls was really minimal. There was a lot of hanging around. I was lucky to join out-of-



school clubs but most girls didn't really do anything, in or out of school.

First and foremost, they worried about their appearance, but it's also about not wanting to get stuck in, for fear of making a fool of themselves, or not being seen as feminine.

I've never met a Dauntsey's girl who is like that. We all have a go. For me it has been refreshing to see how completely unselfconscious the girls are here about getting stuck in to sport.

I've discovered tricross since I arrived here – we have a professional coach as well, which is just one example of the standard of sport here. I also play third team hockey. We have lots of teams, at all levels, so everyone gets a chance to play in matches.

The opportunities to expand your boundaries are amazing. I went on a trip to Glencoe in Scotland in February – me and six boys. I'd never done anything that extreme before, just family walking, but I thought, why not?

I learned a lot from the extreme environment,

how quickly conditions can change, the importance of the right equipment and teamwork, discipline, persistence, the need to look for the positives even when things are a bit grim and overall about dealing with what life throws at you. So much.

In this school, you'll never be judged for failing – but people won't be impressed if you won't even try.



# A closer look at... The Manor

*The Manor was built as a family home back in the 1860s. Today, some 150 years later it still is. The difference is that there are rather more (up to 70) 11 to 14-year-olds than the original owner, Sir Edward Pleydell-Bouverie MP, anticipated. In its role as Dauntsey's Lower School boarding house, it is also considerably noisier.*

Many boarders join in the Third Form (Year 9), spending a year at the Manor before moving on to senior boarding houses. Others spend three years there after joining us in the First Form (Year 7).

"Boarding at The Manor makes the transition from prep or primary school to senior school a lot easier," says Eleni Condiaris, Head of Lower School.

"They've experienced being the oldest in the house before moving on to become the youngest in senior school. That means they've acted as role models for younger pupils and have become used to a degree of responsibility, whether that's as head of house or being a sports or social rep."

**"It's my home from home. I love my proper home but I also love living here."**

As a co-educational house, boys and girls study, socialise and eat together, forming friendships that often last a lifetime. The boys' and girls' quarters are on separate floors and this gender separation prepares them for boarding in single-sex houses on the main school site.

"As the Manor is five minutes' walk away from the main school site and set in 65 acres of grounds and ancient woodland, the children are less affected by peer pressure

from older pupils," says Deputy Housemistress Anne Sampson.

"They are free to enjoy a proper childhood for that bit longer," she says. "I'll often find them playing outside under the floodlights in winter, making camps and, in summer, climbing trees."

You'll also find Manorites honing their skills on the tennis courts, navigating our seven-hole golf course or investigating wildlife, on foot or by mountain-bike, in the Manor Wood. If they are lucky, they may see a raptor hunting its prey or one of the roe deer that roam former parkland and if they want to learn more about the local flora and fauna, they can join the Wildlife Club.

"There's always so much to do and new things to try. Some of my day pupil friends envy me quite a lot," says Tiggy, a Third Form boarder.

There are also plenty of opportunities to unwind together, with activities such as

**"Film and popcorn night is my favourite! Along with the woods. And the games. And the trips."**

camping, ice skating, playing Laser Quest in the woods, learning to cook, regular film and popcorn nights, frequent Lower School socials, such as the Halloween disco and a highlight of the year is the annual surfing trip to Cornwall.

Each week, two girl and two boy Sixth Formers act as big sisters and brothers on Manor duty, helping with prep, organising games and instilling bedtime routines. The youngsters can talk to them and the Sixth Formers are there as friendly faces during the day at the main school.

Pupils always have a sympathetic adult to turn to, just as they do when they're at their family home. A nurse is available, in case anyone feels ill. Pupils can even keep small pets in a dedicated outbuilding.

In fact, life at The Manor is such fun that day pupils invite themselves for weekend sleepovers with their boarder friends. It is part of the bonding process and helps to prepare both borders and day children for life in the Upper School.

"There's a point fairly early on when teachers and staff know that a child has settled in," says Eleni. "It's when they stop asking each other, 'What time are we going back to the Manor?' and start saying, 'What time are we going home?'"



Dauntsey's

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