

In Focus

Winter 2014

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Dauntsey's

From the Head Master



Lessons learnt at Dauntsey's should feed into every aspect of our pupils' lives.

Adventure encourages resilience, which in turn can help with an academic subject that a pupil is finding challenging, and teamwork translates into support and care for the people around them.

The analytical rigour pupils learn in their maths lessons will help them to select the most appropriate solutions to both everyday problems and those they encounter in the classroom.

History provides social and cultural context, bringing insight and improved understanding of our society, and its study develops vital critical thinking and writing skills.

I could go on but these few examples clearly demonstrate our approach to education. It is about developing skills, attitudes and behaviours that make our pupils rounded human beings who value the very different talents of others and who can see and make use of the connections they find.

This can take courage. Exploration inevitably involves a few wrong turns, so we work to build the confidence needed to tackle things they may not believe they can do, safe in the knowledge that, if things go wrong, we are here to help find a way around an obstacle.

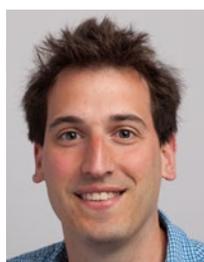
As a result, a Dauntseian is more likely to say, "I can do that!" or, even better, "I'm not sure but I'm going to have a go!" than to walk away from a challenge.

Mark Lascelles

Mark Lascelles
Head Master



A taste for adventure



Adventure is an exciting, unusual and sometimes hazardous experience, according to the dictionary. It is also an essential part of life at Dauntsey's – not simply an event but something that teaches invaluable life skills and changes attitudes and behaviour for the better. Sam Moore, our new Head of Adventure Education, explains.



A school expedition to Tibet when I was 17 made me realise how transformative adventure could be. We were plunged into a chaotic, whirling culture and had to learn how to fit into a Buddhist society, haggle with people whose language we didn't speak, tolerate long bus journeys on potholed roads and rely on each other to find somewhere to stay and eat every night. I felt I'd learned more in that month than in the rest of my school career.

I studied mechanical engineering at university but realised that I cared more about people and the outdoors than about machines, so I secured a job in a school as an outdoor instructor, then moved to a centre in Wales, where I discovered that I was more interested in the effect of adventure on people's character and behaviours than on the activities themselves. I set up my own company to focus on that, working with corporate clients and schools, before moving to Dauntsey's.

For our pupils, an adventure is an undertaking with an uncertain outcome that requires some combination of enthusiasm, resilience, organisation, learning, problem solving and teamwork.

It is also an opportunity to demonstrate and adopt the kind of adventurous behaviour that will help them to lead a fruitful and interesting life, in which they take risks that they understand, work towards goals and learn from experience.

Whether they are tackling an expedition to Wales or Bhutan, taking on the challenge of

crewing a tall ship or kayaking from Devizes to Westminster, climbing a mountain or simply camping in the school grounds, I want them to be acquiring new skills and attitudes that will stand them in good stead in the classroom and beyond, into the world of work and adult life.

Here are the components of adventurous behaviour – and the benefits of an adventurous spirit. They are attributes that universities and employers look for and that lead to a fulfilling and successful life.

Being open to new experiences and environments

The world is full of exciting, challenging, rewarding, scary and fun opportunities. Trying new things and going to new places helps us to learn and develop skills that transfer to everyday life.

Showing resilience and good humour in the face of adversity

Challenges present obstacles – the way we deal with them says more about our character than whether or not we succeed. Adventure means being willing to persevere when the going gets tough, to try again and look for alternative solutions to problems – and to do this while supporting and encouraging the people around you.

Recognising, analysing and controlling risks

All actions have risks attached – physical, emotional, financial or reputational. We need to understand the risks we choose to take, so we make decisions with the confidence of knowing how likely we are to succeed and what we stand to gain or lose.

Learning from experience

Success and failure can both be valuable experiences if we avoid too much self-satisfaction or self-criticism. Success can be analysed so it can be repeated in future, while reflection on failure can show us what we can change next time. Reflection is key.

Treating environments and cultures with respect

We have a responsibility to treat every environment and culture we visit – whether that's a disused mine, a Himalayan village or a wilderness – with respect. Where possible, we should leave them as we found them.

Admitting to and correcting mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes and the pressures of an adventure mean that they are not only more likely – they can also make us feel worse than usual. Being able to admit to an error is a real personal attribute that also helps a team to move on and solve the resulting problems without placing stress on relationships. The rule is to admit, reflect, make new plans and move on.

Having as much concern for others as we do for ourselves

Much adventure is a group affair, so we need to put the aims of the group ahead of our own goals. When work needs doing, we should do our share and help others but not routinely do their work for them. If we are uncomfortable, other people probably are as well – we need to remember not to increase their discomfort to reduce our own. We should treat others with respect and dignity – but not at the expense of our own.

Being organised but flexible

To be in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment and paperwork is invaluable, whether you're enjoying an adventure or in everyday life. We should look at our goals, plan how to achieve them and set about carrying out the plan. When it doesn't cover the difficulties we encounter, we need to be flexible – adapt our plans, create new ones and overcome the obstacles in our path.

Being a leader – and a follower

Good leaders are decisive, caring and have an ability to combine taking responsibility with looking out for and developing members of the team. Equally, we need to recognise someone else's leadership, support their decisions and contribute to carrying out their plan.

Enjoying our experiences

Some experiences are enjoyable at the time, while others are more enjoyable in retrospect. We should seek adventures that we will enjoy and, even if they are hard, provide us with memories that evoke pride and achievement.



A SENSE OF HISTORY



History is not a series of dates, monarchs and wars, although these are among the milestones that signpost its progress. Rather, it sets the context for who we are today, how we see ourselves and the shape of our world. Ben Sandell, Head of History, explains how his department brings the past to life.



“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

This is such a catchy quotation that its origins are hotly disputed (by historians and others) and it has been picked up and re-purposed by luminaries ranging from Edmund Burke to Winston Churchill.

Fortunately, it is not a curse that is likely to afflict anyone who studies history at Dauntsey's. Whether they are exploring revolutionary Paris, talking to a man who has 'caught the Black Death' or sharing the insights of some of the top brains in their fields, we make sure that history is never a dusty relic but a force that has shaped our thinking and our world.

History grounds us, shedding light on the individuals and events who made us what we are today and showing us how we arrived at this point. That enables us to see the way ahead more clearly – as nations, as individuals and as political beings.

What is history?

For growing minds, which might otherwise accept the current situation as the way things have always been, it also helps to demystify the ideologies of the 21st century, such as political theories, the role of women and attitudes to slavery.

It highlights human frailty, showing that we have always made mistakes and sometimes got it right.

Take sexism, for example. By today's standards, the Victorians certainly were sexists. In the context of their time and their culture, their views were conventional and reasonable – they were conforming to the rules. It brings up the difficult question of when an event, trend or ideology becomes history.

Having pupils from different countries is another opportunity to investigate different perspectives. We might be able to hear first-hand the American perspective on the Vietnam War, for instance, then compare it with the view from China or Russia, all of which are very different.

Learning how to think

On a practical level, pupils learn to assess evidence and build cogent arguments. There are no right or wrong answers when they form a view and we will play devil's advocate to get them thinking around a topic and a set of circumstances.

We teach them to question every assumption and every argument in order to test their ideas – every answer needs to have been refined and to show why other options have been rejected. The process goes beyond mere assertion and it is far more than remembering a list of dates and facts or enjoying the colourful characters they encounter.

It is about teaching them how to think.

LEADING MINDS

Visiting lecturers bring new perspectives and encourage our Sixth Form History Society students to think beyond and around the curriculum.

This term, we welcomed Dr Helen Roache of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, who spoke about the German cultural school exchanges of the 1930s, along with Old Dauntseian Dick Hargreaves, a 95 year-old who shared his memories of the Dauntsey's exchange visit to Nazi Germany.

Dr Chris Read of the University of Warwick came to Dauntsey's to talk about his current work – a biography of Stalin. He also spoke to a wider school audience about the Russian Revolution, which is approaching its centenary.

“They broaden our knowledge and get us thinking well beyond what we need to cover for A levels,” says student Eleanor Skipper, who especially enjoyed two lectures that touched on the reign of Henry VIII.

“It's a privilege to hear from leading minds – it makes you want to read more widely and get more involved. You just want to learn.”

INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM

Wilf Fitzgibbon is unlikely to forget his encounter with a man suffering from the Black Death.

Part of an enrichment day for the First Form (he has now moved up to the Second), it also included dressing up, using props and, after the event, a project tracing how the disease spread, not only through England but across the world – Wilf puts the blame on pilgrims and rats.

“It really makes it stick in your mind. You realise how people suffered, how it changed their world, how terrifying it must have been to be faced with a disease that seemed unstoppable,” he says.

THE PITY OF WAR

The First World War has been on everyone's mind, 100 years after its outbreak – and this is especially true for the historians who joined our annual Fifth Form trip to the Western

Front, one of many projects and events the School has run on the theme this year.

The memorials and cemeteries made a huge impression on everyone, says Atlanta Hatch.

“Endless names, so many lives lost and, in some places, the British, French and German cemeteries next to each other – all just people at the end of the day, all with families and friends, all gone,” she reflects.

“A lot of us cried – it just brought home the human side, the human cost. It was a huge sacrifice.”





Welcome aboard

Starting a new school can be an anxious time for all the family. With 176 pupils from 90 different schools arriving in September, Dauntsey's is well practised in helping pupils to settle in quickly. Here, three pupils talk about their experience of their first few weeks at Dauntsey's.



Sasha, a First Form day pupil, joined Dauntsey's from Chafyn Grove School in Salisbury

Dauntsey's is a fantastic place to be. Settling in was so easy because everyone was friendly and helpful.

The teachers are so kind; I feel I can ask them anything or tell them if I have any sort of problem. The only thing I found tricky was the size of the School and getting lost but I know my way round quite well now and Scott House is now my home from home.

Mrs Ward, the housemistress, was a huge help, as was the buddy I was given, who showed me around the School and how to register using my fingerprint – great fun and new to me. In fact, all the teachers are so kind, I feel I can ask them anything or tell them if I have any sort of problem. I feel really supported by my form tutor who encourages me a lot.

Highlights of the first few weeks were the Lower School Funfair and the National Day of Languages Breakfast. Both events were really fun – but actually most days at Dauntsey's seem to be like that!

There are so many activities to choose from – so far, I have joined Netball Club, Baking Club, the International Schools Project, Wildlife Club, the Lower School Choir and Hockey Club. This keeps me pretty busy but there are a lot more clubs and societies that I would like to join.

There is so much going on and a lot to be involved with – and I have made some brilliant new friends. I can honestly say that I enjoy being at school every day.



“New pupils joining the First Form have lots to look forward to when they arrive at Dauntsey’s. In the first month of term we take them on an overnight adventure trip, which really helps with team building. We run lots of activities that help pupils to make new friends from different year groups. The community here is diverse and welcoming and it is easy to find friends with shared interests. The fact that more than half of the pupils have a sibling here contributes to the family atmosphere.”

Eleni Conidaris, Head of the Lower School

“Starting at a new school at any age can be stressful. We are very tuned in to what our new pupils are going through and run a lot of activities to ensure it’s easy to make friends. I have been delighted to watch this year’s new pupils settle in to Dauntsey’s with remarkable ease.”

Mark Lascelles, Head Master

SETTLING IN AT DAUNTSEY’S

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Introduction mornings during the first week of term
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Overnight adventure trip for the First Form
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Lower School Fun Fair
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Buddies to help new pupils find their feet
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Social events in each House
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Fun Day and 17 Club Welcome party for the Sixth Form
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And lots of cake!
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Third Form boarder **Morgan** came to Dauntsey’s from Tanglin Trust School in Singapore

The scariest thing has been not having my mum to keep me on track and help me clean my room; but I am very glad I joined Dauntsey’s.

There were lots of really good things about my first term here. All my new friends have been very kind and supportive and it has been great meeting new people – and getting picked for the rugby A team.

I have also got involved in lots of activities, including hockey and shooting. I hadn’t done either of them before. There are so many things that you can do here, the only problem is finding the time to fit it all in.



Sophie, Sixth Form boarder, arrived at Dauntsey’s from Howell’s School in Cardiff

This is a very good opportunity for me to try new things, meet new people, prepare myself for future life and get an excellent education. I feel very lucky to be here.

My grandfather is an Old Dauntseian, which was how I had heard of the School. When I visited I loved the atmosphere and it was my favourite of all the schools I looked at.

No-one from my previous school came to Dauntsey’s with me, so I joined not knowing a single person, which was very daunting at first. But I needn’t have worried – I found friends quickly and settled into the School and boarding life easily.

Evans House was really welcoming and I felt at home straight away. The Sixth Form Fun

Day was a great opportunity to meet new people, as were social events like the 17 Club party and the House parties.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities was something that really drew me to Dauntsey’s. I went on the School’s tall ship, *Jolie Brise*, for the day, which was an amazing opportunity and led me to join the Sailing Club. I am also involved in Young Enterprise and Gold Duke of Edinburgh, which have been a great way to meet other members of my year group. The Mercers’ Lectures have also been very informative and enjoyable and I have been lucky enough to attend two dinners at the Head Master’s house with the guest speakers.

I am so glad I joined Dauntsey’s. Right from the beginning I knew I had made the right decision.

A closer look at... maths

Maths can be a subject that causes pupils to curl up in a defensive ball, wailing, "I can't!" It need not be that way, says Head of Maths Pete Mobbs.

Maths is an essential, lifelong skill. You need it to make sense of the modern world, from finding the best mortgage to understanding what's going on in the economy. At school, many other subjects depend on your mathematical ability – sciences, geography, economics and design & technology are just a few examples.

This is a core subject that every pupil takes at GCSE level and even those who do not have a natural aptitude can obtain decent marks if they can build some confidence through practice and engaging their brains in the correct way. At A level, more than 60 per cent of Sixth Formers choose maths as one of their subjects at AS and A level.

In real life, the best solution to a problem is often not immediately obvious, so we have introduced a problem-solving approach to lessons. We want to encourage our pupils to think for themselves and become more resilient in their learning. Not only will this improve their maths, it will also have knock-on effects in other subjects and as a general life skill.

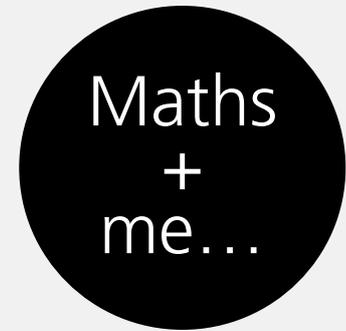
We use logic problems, puzzles, investigations and real life situations that pupils can relate to, which helps make the subject more relevant and stimulating. They have to break the problem down into steps and select the most appropriate approach. If that does not work, we encourage them to think again, consult their friends or ask their teacher for a hint, check their books or use the internet for research. It is an active process, something an entire class can tackle together.

Technology also helps to bring the subject alive, with tablets, apps and games. We subscribe to an online learning system and there are also maths competitions and enrichment events to open minds to the potential of this subject.

As well as (hopefully) inspiring all pupils, we provide support to anyone who is having trouble. We have an open door policy and there are also two maths clinics every week. All 11 of our maths teachers ensure that a pupil who asks for help will get as much individual attention as he or she needs.

Much of maths is about having the confidence to experiment, to put your ideas out there and to keep on trying, so we create an atmosphere where it's OK not to get everything right first time, where everyone learns from each other's experiences.

Maths demands independent thought, rigorous analytical skills, resilience, a willingness to question and push the boundaries of our understanding. These skills are more important than ever in our technological, data-driven world.



A few weeks before my AS exams, my teacher volunteered to give me some extra help as she saw that I was struggling a bit. I saw her every day and suddenly everything came together, like the pieces of a puzzle. Now I'm getting A grades and, instead of reading sports science at university, I have decided to apply for design technology and engineering. Mastering maths has been life-changing.

Josh Rice, Upper Sixth

Using technology makes maths brilliant fun. We play a game called *Dragon Box* on iPads – well, it starts as a game but turns into algebra. You're engaged in it because it's fun but you learn a lot too.

George Moulding, Second Form

They give you time to think for yourself, break a problem down and work out what to do about it. Then the teacher goes through it, step by step, to see why you've made the choices you have and whether they were the best ones. If you've got it wrong, it isn't a bad thing because it gives everyone a chance to understand the steps you really need to take.

Livi Keppel, Fourth Form



Dauntsey's

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