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Winchester is the oldest of the ancient schools of England in that it has an unbroken history of teaching boys in buildings created for educational purposes since 1382. The School has, of course, added buildings over the centuries so that what you find today is a strikingly beautiful blend of ancient and modern.

The School is full boarding, operating seven days a week during term time, providing teaching activities throughout every day and evening. We think of ourselves as a family enthusiastically engaged in a way of life based on the love of learning. Every member of the staff lives in the School. Our examination results are excellent, but preparation for examinations does not dominate a boy’s time. We offer a distinctive and rigorous curriculum with a strong non-examined element, as well as a very wide range of sport, music, art, drama and other cultural and physical opportunities.

Our mission is to prepare a boy for life, not just for examination success and university entrance. To that end, we give every boy in our care a broad, liberal formation which will lead to the habit of a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of intellectual and cultural matters; and we try to treat every boy with kindness and sympathy and with as much tolerance as is consistent with good order.
The Chapel, a grade I listed building consecrated in 1395 and in continuous use ever since, is the living expression of our understanding of the nature of the human person. The young men entrusted to our care must be carefully and wisely formed in mind, body and spirit.

We strive to cultivate in our pupils habits of disciplined organisation and clarity of thought, together with a deep respect for the best that has been thought and said in the Western European tradition. In so doing we nurture their spirits in the qualities of tolerance, patience, truthfulness, joy and reverence for beauty.
The School offers generous bursaries to those who need them. Admission is based on the combined criteria of academic strength and the ability to contribute in other ways to the cultural, sporting and social life of the School. It remains our ambition, consistent with our Founder’s intention and charitable purpose, to admit any boy, whatever his background or means, who can participate with profit in our community of learning.

We value highly our international links and manage them carefully in our admissions process. We recognise that applicants from outside Britain require individual assessment and care, and we encourage overseas applicants, wherever they live, to feel confident that we will take a serious view of their academic promise.
In its origins Winchester College consisted of seventy Scholars who made up College. Over the centuries ten Commoner Houses were added. The Scholars still live in the original medieval buildings (modernised to a high standard of comfort) continuing a tradition of academic excellence unbroken over six centuries. The Scholars are the academic pace-setters and are taught together with boys from the Commoner Houses, but they return to study in their Chambers and to take their meals in College Hall. The Master in College looks after them.
The great majority of boys are Commoners. They live in Houses, all within easy walking distance of the teaching areas, games fields and other facilities. A House is a family, a self-contained community to which the boys return from classes or games to study, relax, eat and sleep.

Our admissions process fosters close contact between parents and prospective Housemasters. Housemasters select boys for their Houses and are responsible for the pastoral, academic and disciplinary well-being of the boys. Each House also has the dedicated support of a resident Matron and a team of Tutors.

The Houses are, in turn, a part of the greater School community in which the Headmaster sets the tone and maintains overall standards of discipline. Nearly all the dons live in or around the Houses. There are thus many opportunities, formal and informal, for building the good professional and personal relationships which are the basis of proper pastoral care. When the time comes for them to leave, the boys will have not just good academic qualifications but also the ability to work effectively on their own and in a group, with a well-developed sense of values and a strong respect for others.
Teachers at Winchester are known as dons. Our work depends ultimately on the quality of our teaching staff. It is not possible to explain the perfection of a poem, a work of art or music, the precision of a piece of Latin, the soundness of a mathematical proposition or the elegance of a piece of machinery, without trying to make these things attractive to those we teach.

It is essential to the love of learning that teachers commend to their pupils a respect for the things they love themselves. Winchester dons are an exceptionally able group of men and women who are themselves committed to a life of learning.
The origins of the School are a work of genius. The Founder, William of Wykeham, was twice Chancellor of England in the second half of the fourteenth century and Bishop of Winchester, then the richest see in England, for over forty years. His great project at the end of his life was to endow his double foundation, Winchester College and New College, Oxford to guarantee a competent educated clerical service for the government of the realm. In creating these two places of residential learning, meticulously planned in their architecture and their regulations, he established the model of the Oxbridge college. The Founder set *Manners Makyth Man* as the School’s motto. It means that a man will be judged by his morals and his bearing. This sets the overarching tone for every aspect of life and work. Wykehamists are noted for both their open-minded approach to learning and their consideration for others. We encourage a broad approach to learning for life; a co-operative sense which develops a willingness and enthusiasm to learn. Good relationships between boys and dons ensure a high level of personal support and imbue social confidence. We take a serious approach to public examinations with a commitment to reading and discussion beyond the confines of examination syllabus. The School’s several libraries of books, ancient and modern, and its extensive collections of pictures and artefacts, are used for teaching purposes.
Division
Div is the hallmark of a Winchester education. It expresses our principal objective to offer a broadly intellectual, well-rounded education.

Up to six lessons each week are given to Division. A boy’s Div Don will see more of him than any other of his teachers, and it is the Div Don who takes him through courses designed to foster a love and respect for learning for its own sake. For junior boys History, Religious Studies and English Literature are taught as a cultural entity that encompasses and goes beyond its constituent parts.

In Sixth Book (our term for Sixth Form) Div can lead almost anywhere, according to the interests of the boys in the group and the Div Don himself, covering a very wide range of history and literature, from Ancient Egypt to the Gulf War, from Plato to Shakespeare, from the history of cricket or Mathematics to the fugues of Bach or the plays of Tom Stoppard. Members of a Div write a regular task in order to organise their thoughts on topics touched on in the course, including philosophical and ethical questions. A boy will often be asked to offer a presentation to his Div.
On the evening the School closes for the Christmas holidays, parents join their sons for Illumina.

A bonfire is lit, candles are placed by the Scholars around the ancient walls which enclose Meads, and Chapel Choir sings carols beneath the stars.
Music has always been central to the life of Winchester. Our Quiristers, the sixteen choirboys who live in the College and sing for the services in Chapel, continue a unique tradition. Music is a part of the lives of most boys. Two-thirds of them learn a musical instrument – many learn two or three. Nearly seven hundred individual instrumental lessons are taught each week by a visiting staff of over sixty. The School currently has over sixty Music Scholars.

There are several orchestras, a symphonic wind band, a double-reed ensemble, clarinet ensemble, jazz group, rock groups, a flute ensemble, four choirs, numerous smaller ensembles and a regular programme of chamber music. There are several informal concerts every week which enable every boy to perform to an audience. The School is also active in commissioning new music for its choirs and instrumental ensembles.

The Music School was enlarged in 2004, including fifty practice and teaching rooms, a fully equipped music technology classroom, a recording studio, an editing suite, a percussion studio and a rock room.
A vigorous sporting programme complements academic work. It is a vital component of what we offer.

A junior boy will participate in some compulsory sport during timetabled PE, the Sports Induction programme and Wednesday afternoon sport. Beyond that minimum the opportunities are many: the individual will make choices in consultation with his Housemaster and his Tutor.

Most boys will play the major game each term: soccer, Winchester College Football, cricket.

There are then lots of options: aikido, archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, canoeing, clay-pigeon shooting, croquet, cross-country running, fencing, fishing, fives, golf, rowing, squash, sub-aqua, swimming, tennis and weight training. The School also runs an Adventure Training programme.

There are teams of all sorts and all standards. Many of our coaches are top-class sportsmen. The important thing is to join in, even for boys who do not think of themselves as games players. Almost every day of the year there is plenty of sport to enjoy.
A full programme of Drama allows boys to take part in high-quality productions throughout the year. Scarcely a week goes by without a new production, often directed by boys. The menu includes the whole range of theatre: classical, experimental and musical. Some plays are performed in a foreign language. The Queen Elizabeth II Theatre, which seats 230, is well-equipped and adapts easily to various theatrical needs.

Our productions are open to the public and are valued as much by the communities of local and surrounding districts as they are by members of the School. There is a tradition of senior Wykehamists, together with boys and girls from other local schools, performing a large-scale musical annually during the summer holidays. Occasionally professional theatre groups come to the School to perform a play during term time.
Boys are given every encouragement and opportunity to explore and develop their creative potential. Art School and Mill (as we call our DT centre) enable boys to learn about drawing, painting, print-making, sculpture, the history of art, design and the manual arts. Information technology is used extensively throughout the curriculum: boys may create their own designs through a Computer Club.

Whether or not boys follow a formal course in Art or DT, all boys have access to Art School and to Mill to pursue their private projects under supervision and with advice from our academic staff. Regular exhibition opportunities are offered for boys to show their work in the Angelus Gallery or in Mill. Professional artists and designers also mount exhibitions at the School.
Beyond the classroom
All boys join one of the Combined Cadet Force units in Middle Part (the second year). After that they choose either to continue with the adventure training CCF provides or to contribute to one or several of the forty Community Service projects through which the School serves the local community and charitable organisations further afield. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme offers further scope for leadership training. We organise regular trips to different parts of the world for linguistic development, cultural enrichment and personal challenge. There are over thirty academic and cultural societies.
Almost all boys leave Winchester to go to good universities in the United Kingdom, the United States of America or continental Europe. A substantial number, about a third of the year group, sometimes more, go on to Oxford and Cambridge. We do not produce a ‘type’ – Wykehamists will be found in most professions and the arts.

The young men leave with a quiet but confident sense of who they are, well-motivated and well-equipped to continue their studies. The marks of the Wykehamist are his sense of social responsibility and a lifelong love of learning.
What does a boy remember about his time here? His Housemaster, who was interested in him and encouraged and helped him; his Div Don, who saw him on a daily basis and maintained a close interest in his academic, social and moral progress; his Matron, a kind lady who kept an eye on him; the other boys in his House who shared his ups and downs; teachers who knew what they were talking about and who showed him what it is to be in love with the life of the mind; a Headmaster who was approachable.

He will remember his School as fairly informal, one where he was treated as an individual, but where he learnt that we meant what we said – work had to be done properly and on time, he was expected to honour his commitments in the team, or the orchestra, or the cast of the play. In more mature years he will reflect that, while the School understood adolescent rites of passage, and was pretty tolerant of mistakes and errors of judgement, there were high standards of conduct to meet.

He will know that our aim was not merely to get him a passport to a good university, but to inspire in him a deep and lifelong love of learning and beauty; that while he lived among some of the most beautiful buildings of any school in the world, what really mattered was the quality of Winchester’s teaching and the friendships that flow from it; that what William of Wykeham’s motto means when it says Manners Makyth Man, is the cultivation of an unselfconscious and natural courtesy, respect and modesty in all he does, so that while he will be deeply grateful for what his parents did for him in sending him here, he will not be arrogant or boastful, and he will respond to the opportunities life affords him with confidence, imagination and sensitivity.