

# Teaching at St. Helen's

Staff at St. Helen's enjoy teaching very able girls from a wide variety of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, a number of whom are supported by generous bursaries and scholarships. The school has just over 1,000 pupils from 3-18 years and a small boarding house (although boarding is due to cease here in July 2009). With beautiful and extensive grounds, outstanding academic results and excellent facilities, competition for places is fierce. Pupils are taught in relatively small classes; usually 16 in the Nursery, 20 in Little St. Helen's, 20 in Junior School, 24 in Middle School (Years 7-9), 18 at GCSE and 10 in the Sixth Form.

Throughout the school, the pace of teaching is fast as the girls are well motivated and eager to do well academically. Sixth Form students have a choice of study: either A Levels or the International Baccalaureate. Staff teaching the IB are provided with training either in-house or on specialist courses. So far, courses have been attended in Geneva, Paris, Madrid, Gdansk and Dubai!

Although St. Helen's is a single-sex school, strong links with a number of boys' schools, particularly Merchant Taylors' School, mean that the girls can flourish intellectually while taking advantage of joint activities such as CCF (where we are one of only eight girls' schools nationally), drama and music productions and charity work. In addition, 20% of the teaching staff is male.

## What Kind of School Are We?

Visitors to St. Helen's regularly comment on its special atmosphere; although the school is ambitious academically with a high priority placed on achievement of all kinds, it is also friendly and supportive of each individual girl and member of staff. Our Code of Conduct, put together in consultation with staff and the School Council, ensures that mutual respect, tolerance and consideration for others lie at the heart of all relationships.

## Our Facilities

St. Helen's has extensive grounds which house lacrosse pitches, tennis courts and a new, purpose built Sports Centre with indoor swimming pool, fitness suite, a large gym, squash court, fencing area, a dance studio and seminar room. The department also has a purpose built gym with squash courts.

Both the Nursery and Little St. Helen's offer superb new facilities in attractive, well-equipped buildings. Junior School has its own Library and specialist facilities for Design Technology, Music, Art, Science and ICT. Junior School is due to undergo some considerable refurbishment in the near future.

The Senior School Library is an excellent resource centre, run by a full-time Librarian and two assistants, stocked well in excess of the recommended allocation of books and generously fitted out with computers.

Provision for ICT throughout the school is excellent. St. Helen's and Merchant Taylors' School were the first independent schools in the country to have a 100Mbps broadband Internet connection. The school site is fully wireless networked, including the working staffroom, as ICT forms an important part of our teaching and learning. Many staff have school laptops and a mobile bank of laptops is available for teaching. In addition there are two specialist rooms and a third room fitted out with laptops which can be used anywhere in the school.

In Senior School, specialist areas exist for the Sciences, Music, Drama, Art, Design and Technology and for Sixth Form teaching. Generous departmental budgets and technical support ensure that a wide range of up to date resources is available to support innovative teaching.

All sections of the school have their own staffrooms with facilities for making tea and coffee. In Senior School two staffrooms exist: in the working area each member of staff has their own desk and access to shelves; in the social staffroom daily newspapers and a coffee machine are provided to help staff relax in comfort during breaks.

## **Co-Curricular Activities**

All staff contribute to the wide range of activities, which enrich and extend the curriculum. There are plenty of opportunities to become involved in the CCF, the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, in school trips and visits at home and abroad or in setting up a new club or activity. Staff enjoy supporting girls' initiatives such as the Asian Cultural Society Evening, the Year 7 Dance Display and fund-raising for charities such as PHAB or UNICEF. Being so close to London provides exciting opportunities for visits to galleries, exhibitions, museums and to the theatre.

## **Looking After Staff**

The professional development of staff is important at St. Helen's. The Professional Development Manager, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, oversees the welfare of all staff and manages a generous INSET budget. An induction programme is run for all new staff and for NQTs who join us each year. Our links with the Institute of Education also mean that we often provide placements for those training to teach. Opportunities exist, for those considering Middle or Senior leadership posts, for shadowing senior member of staff, for taking on whole school responsibilities or for joining a variety of working parties. The staff committee meets to discuss wider school issues and to plan social events. After school sessions in Tai Chi and yoga have proved a popular way to relax and the fitness suite and swimming pool are available to staff at certain times during the school day. Discounted memberships of the Sports Centre are also available to staff. Staff may also use the sports facilities on a pay-as-you-go basis. For those who enjoy music, the Choral Society, run jointly with Merchant Taylors' School, provides the opportunity to take part in a major choral work each year alongside parents and pupils. All staff do lunch, break or coach duties and, in return, a choice of free lunches is provided alongside refreshments at the end of each day in the staff dining room.

## **Benefits**

- Membership of Teachers' Superannuation Scheme
- Free Coach Travel
- Optional BUPA Scheme
- Salary above that of maintained sector
- Longer holidays than maintained sector
- On-site parking
- Enhanced maternity benefit package
- Generous sick pay arrangements