



EDUCATION FOR *life*

While academic results and league tables are at the forefront of every parent's mind, **Caterham School** digs a little deeper, providing students with a lifelong love of learning as well as the grades says **Charlotte Luxford**



League tables can be misleading, yet many parents rely on them when considering where to send their children. While Surrey based Caterham School is in the top 35 of the Financial Times' top independent schools survey and in the top five co-education schools, Caterham believes it is all about 'adding value' rather than raw results.

In the Government Performance Survey, the 'value added' is based on a more accurate formula, which examines how the child has progressed from start to finish at school. It takes into account that at schools with children of mixed abilities, achieving better results is tougher, rather than at a school that already has a high intake of academic students. Caterham is the only school that is in both the top 35 of the Financial Times' list and top 1% of value added, which speaks volumes.

Head teacher Julian Thomas says: "At Caterham we believe in a holistic approach – education of the whole person is at the heart of everything and I think our results prove this works. We want our children to have a lifelong love of learning which ensures that each pupil leaves here ready for the challenges of life at university and beyond.

"With the transient nature of career paths these days we now change jobs on average around three times in our lifetime, so it's important that students are adaptable and get a broad education, including time spent outside the classroom."

Julian's approach to teaching is refreshing and it is clear he has a passion for his job. He worked in the city for BP in a highly successful position, but realised it wasn't what he wanted to do. He recalls: "I remember walking into work one day and just thought, 'What am I doing?' I wanted to find a career that would make a difference. The next day I signed up to do a PGCE and never looked back. I come into work every day and look forward to what it will bring."

The teachers are encouraged to approach students for

feedback on what they want from lessons and adapt their teaching styles to suit individual children. Julian believes in motivational teaching and interacting with the students, leaving them wondering "Where did the time go?" rather than being spoon-fed the basic information necessary to pass the exams.

"Education is not about hot-housing children; there are a myriad of ways to get great results and many children often leave schools with good results but not a fulfilling educational experience," he explains.

The school provides accommodation for over 150 boarders in two houses and is tucked away in the peaceful countryside with fantastic sports and creative facilities. The day pupils benefit from the wide range of activities of a boarding school, while the boarders benefit from daily contact with the local community. This broad social and cultural mix ensures that the school has a national and global outlook and often children make life-long friendships that will lead them abroad to discover countries they might not otherwise have visited.

The school believes in encouraging students to develop new interests surrounding their passion for learning. As Caterham is home to the 'Caterham' racing car, the school has a kit car club and there's over 35 co-curricular clubs including fencing, knitting and even a circus club! As well as being successful in sports, especially lacrosse and hockey, pupils are also encouraged to take on charity work, making its pupils incredibly well-rounded individuals who are independent thinkers and vibrant, sociable people – as well as academic achievers.

Forget league tables: if you're looking for a school that provides your child with an education for life, Caterham School is the one.

■ Caterham School, Harestone Valley Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6YA. Visit www.caterhamschool.co.uk or call **01883 343028** for more information

