



Joint efforts at CATERHAM SCHOOL

Once again **Caterham School** is at the top of the table for its A Level results. So what's the secret to the school's success? Hard work of course, but its award-winning learning initiatives also have a large part to play, as Charlotte Luxford discovers

It is no wonder that Caterham School was ranked as the top independent 11-18 co-educational school in England, with the school's A Level students achieving an astonishing 76 per cent A* and A grades last year. With success like this, the future looks bright for the younger students, especially with the recent award-winning Student Lead Learner Programme, headed by Director of Learning and Teaching Kim Wells.

The Independent School Award for Education Initiative of the Year was well-deserved for the school's 'study buddy' scheme, which was set up by Kim Wells back in 2009 with 28 sixth formers taking part. Sixth form students volunteer to be trained in coaching and mentoring skills and are then paired with younger students to assist in academic work. The scheme has taken off since then, with around 60 per cent of sixth formers taking part and over 300 students participating.

The students meet formally once every week in the sixth form centre (considered quite a privilege among the younger students) for 20 minutes to discuss everything from how to memorise vocabulary to managing long-term projects. But the bond between them tends to go further than that, especially as around one in five board, giving them time to develop friendships outside the boundaries of the classroom. Third year student Georgie Waterman is paired with Georgia Feldmanis who has a place to read Classics at Cambridge:

Georgie says: "I really think the scheme has worked. It has boosted my confidence and I can go to Georgia when I have problems with my homework – maths just didn't stick before Georgia helped me and I wasn't expected to get a good grade in physics, but I got 70 per cent in the end. My grades have gone up in all but one of my subjects this year and I think Georgia has helped me a lot. It's also good because we both play Lacrosse so we have that in common and I'll see her on the pitch and have a chat."

Georgia agrees and finds it satisfying playing the role of teacher, coach and mentor. "I think it's rewarding,

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Above from left to right: Georgia Feldmanis, Georgie Waterman and Maisie Bayley with The Independent School Award for Education Initiative of the Year

knowing that you have established a friendship and, more importantly, the scheme has broken down barriers between sixth formers and younger students, helping maintain the school's strong sense of community."

Sixth former Maisie Bayley, who is hoping for a place at Durham, says the key to success is making friends with your buddy first. "They can be a little intimidated to start with so you have to put them at ease and also speak to them on the same level. You've got to build a relationship before trying to give them advice."

Harry Wandless is currently Maisie's study buddy: "It is very helpful being able to look over work I have completed with my buddy and look at how to improve on it in future. Maisie has been there and done GCSEs recently so she is full of good advice."

The scheme isn't just for students who need additional help to reach their potential; it's also for extremely talented pupils who will benefit from mixing with sixth formers who are on a similar academic level.

Maisie joined Caterham in the sixth form: "I think I would have benefited greatly from a scheme like this at my old school – it's also about getting another person's perspective on the same piece of work. Someone else can suggest something you hadn't thought of and it can be really eye opening."

To underline the positive impact of the scheme, all 34 of the fifth year students who had been 'buddied' in their GCSE year of 2010 volunteered to become buddies themselves on entering the sixth form.

Headmaster Julian Thomas said: "I am particularly pleased because the students who participate in this project are demonstrating a very strong sense of community, supporting and encouraging each other to achieve their very best."



Georgia Feldmanis and Georgie Waterman in their study buddy sessions.

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