

# Life Long Learning at CATERHAM SCHOOL

At **Caterham School** independent learning plays a fundamental part in ensuring individuals are adequately prepared for the challenges beyond school

Private schools are commonly highly focussed around exams and are in constant competition to achieve the highest results possible. Kim Wells, director of Teaching and Learning at Caterham, spotted an essential gap within the education sector pointing out that students need to become self-sufficient learners in order to leave school with the confidence to succeed at university and in later life. If students have the ability to think independently with a deep understanding of their own learning styles, it will ensure an all-rounded, confident and prepared individual. Kim believes that too many students are spoon-fed and simply act as the recipients of information rather than really engaging with it.

As one of the very few schools who have recognised that if they are to prepare students for the adult world, some fundamental changes and shifts in thinking will need to be undertaken. With that in mind, Caterham have introduced initiatives that are not subject-specific, but can be applied across all areas of learning.

Caterham uses multiple intelligence testing to find a student's preferred learning style and has introduced a study skills programme where students cover areas such as lateral thinking, mind maps and learning styles. When exam time approaches, courses are provided that focus on memorising, note-taking, speed reading, examination technique and even dealing with stress.

An extremely successful innovation is the 'Study Buddy' scheme in which Sixth Form students volunteer to help younger students in all areas of learning. With over half the school involved in the Study Buddy scheme and 220 sixth formers who are fully trained in coaching and mentoring, it is a highly successful scheme ensuring pupils can source additional help as well as developing essential life-long skills. In 2011 this scheme was recognised as the Education Initiative of the Year at the Independent Schools Award.

The school also has a 'Study Surgery' in which pupils are able to speak to Kim and the staff to verbalise their worries and problems. By communicating their issues or simply knowing

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Kim Wells, Caterham School  
Director of Learning & Teaching



that there are members of the school who are willing to listen and advise them gives reassurance and encouragement to the students.

Training sessions are also available for parents where the different learning methods are explained and so they discover how to influence and understand their children. This helps them to realise

why some children may learn in ways that seem slightly unconventional. These teaching methods have proven to be a great success and is evidenced through Caterham being the only independent co-educational school to be one of the top schools for both A Level results (A\*- B grades) and the "value added" tables. They were also the first independent school in the country to achieve Thinking Schools status from Dr Edward De Bono and have since been upgraded to Training School status.

Learning to learn lies at the core of Caterham's values but somehow Caterham have managed to capture the magic that is great examination results combined with the development of transferable life skills and a love of learning. A rare and model school indeed.

■ For more information call 01883 343028  
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