



QUINTON HOUSE SCHOOL

The importance of developing the whole child

Headteacher of Quinton House School, Catherine Cozens, shares her thoughts on what makes a good education.

What makes a child well-educated? In over twenty-five years of teaching, this is the question I have repeatedly come back to. If asked at the beginning of my career, I would have, like most people, considered it akin to scoring top marks in exams and leaving school with a string of A*s. This is still the approach of many 'exam-factory' schools, who view pupils, not as individuals, but as percentage points in league table rankings. The importance of developing a child's character, nurturing a child's talents and inspiring a child's creativity are, sadly, neglected at the expense of driving up academic results.

It is not wrong of parents to expect their child to achieve the best results – and Quinton House School is no exception. This year, an impressive 83 per cent of our students gained 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE – a staggering 17.6 per cent above the national average. Likewise, students in our sixth form go on to pursue a wide variety of higher education routes – from studying law and medicine at Russel Group universities to estate management and landscape conservation at agricultural college.

But let's be honest, academic success is only part of the story. I have met parents from all walks of life and different backgrounds, who, when choosing a school for their child, have one burning question in the back of their mind: "Will my child be happy here?". It's not a question that can be answered by state-of-the-art facilities or by impressive league table results. Rather, it lies in the very ethos of the school.

For a child to flourish, they must be recognised as individuals. A dangerous belief still prevails among schools, exam boards and the wider education establishment which stipulates that the role of schools is limited to simply getting pupils through exams, often at the expense of extracurricular activities. But through participating in extracurricular activities character is built, creativity is sparked and talents are fostered. The skills that pupils develop - individuality, perseverance, ambition – complement the core curriculum. Is it any wonder why the child who captains the football team on the sports pitch is more likely to exude confidence in the classroom? Or the child who turns up to music practice every morning before school is likely to show the same dedication toward their academic studies?

Not every child will grow up to become the next Einstein or Dickens. Nor must teachers expect them all to aspire to such ideals. Children who have dreams of becoming the next Grammy nominee or luxury fashion designer have ambitions that are just as legitimate as those who desire to win a Nobel prize in maths, physics or chemistry. It is as much the role of schools to inspire the actors, musicians and artists as it is to develop the mathematicians, the physicists, and the chemists. Anything other than this is counter-intuitive to developing the whole child.

To build character, schools must create an environment where pupils are able to express themselves. A child with a passion for food technology but with little interest in sports is likely to feel out of place in a specialist sports school, among the football, cricket and the rugby stars. But by



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providing children with the opportunity to pursue their interests, however niche they may be, enables them to feel at ease to be who they really are. This doesn't mean they can simply opt out of doing things they don't like because they learn a valuable life lesson in taking part – that of how to persevere through activities they don't wholly enjoy.

At Quinton House School, this is the balance we strive to achieve for all our pupils, which is why we make it compulsory for all our students to take at least two extracurricular activities. Pupils can try their hand at anything from journalists' club to table tennis, African drumming to trampolining. The wide array of activities on offer means pupils have more chance of discovering hidden talents or igniting dormant interests. And being a small school with just over 400 students means we possess a certain level of understanding of our pupils that often goes amiss in larger schools, allowing us to identify these talents and nurture them from the outset.

If asked now, what makes a well-educated child, I would have no hesitation in claiming it lies firmly in understanding the individual, their needs, strengths and passions and responding to them with equal enthusiasm. A holistic approach is what lies at the heart of developing the whole child.

Quinton House School is an independent non-selective school for girls and boys aged 2 to 18, offering a Nursery, Junior School, Senior School and Sixth Form set in 31 acres of picturesque grounds at Upton in Northampton. Established in 1946, the continued success of pupils is a result of high aspirations, hard work, traditional values and a tailored programme of individualised learning.