

SCHOOL NOTICEBOARD

The benefits of boarding

*At half past three we go home to tea
or maybe at quarter to four
and its ten pairs of feet
go running up the street
and in through their own front door*

WHEN I was at primary school I remember singing this verse thinking that this song was particular to our school. It was only some years later that I realised that children up and down the country sang this song as they trooped out of the door at home time. I recently met a prospective pupil looking around Warminster who told me that her current school finished at ten to three. I have to say I was quite taken aback that her school day seemed to finish halfway through the afternoon.

Having lived and worked in boarding schools for over twenty years, I have always been used to much longer school days and the opportunities to fill that time with learning, sport and activities. Here at Warminster our day finishes at five o'clock, but of course for a lot of our pupils, although the school day has ended they continue to be in school and enjoy the opportunities offered by residing in one of our five family orientated boarding houses.

For those of you who haven't experienced boarding school life other than by reading Tom Brown's Schooldays, Harry Potter or Mallory Towers, you are in for a surprise. Long gone are the days of cold showers and iron bedsteads, early morning runs and huge dormitories. Boarding in 2020 is actually very homely and at Warminster, revolves around trying to create a home away from home where children and young people feel very supported and nurtured. The benefits of boarding are many, but here are some key considerations when thinking about a school for your children:

Work

Doing your homework in the evenings at school, usually in a quiet supervised environment, is far more conducive to success and working without distraction. There will also always be members of staff or fellow pupil on hand to help them with a tricky assignment. They may even be lucky enough to have a teacher of their worst

subject as a tutor in their House who can sit with them and work things through together.

Friends

The friends they make at boarding school will last them a lifetime. They are predominantly the same age, have the same things in common and can build a deeper relationship than they might in a day school environment. Living together brings them closer and the ability to share the rough and the smooth helps to create incredibly strong bonds.

Activities

Not having to go back and forth from home every day, spending hours in the car or on the bus, means that your children can more easily throw themselves into a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Staying on for that play rehearsal or not worrying about a fixture arriving back late, means that parents and children can relax into school life without the 'taxi service' always having to be available.

A different outlook

At Warminster we are very fortunate to have pupils from all over the world; we celebrate the cultures of Bermuda, Mexico, Italy and Thailand, to mention just a few of the 30 nationalities represented. Our furthest boarder lives thousands of miles away and our nearest only a few minutes. As Headmaster and a parent of three children at Warminster, I am very proud that my own children will make friends with children from other cultures and backgrounds. We live in quite a monocultural part of the country and therefore our multicultural community provides an important window on the world in West Wiltshire.

Flexibility

Long gone are the days when parents dropped their children off at the start of term and only saw them when the holidays came. Warminster offers a very flexible model of boarding where some pupils stay for a few nights and other stay for the entire term. For working

parents who may need to be away from home, the ability for your child to stay in school for a night can be very helpful and reassuring. We sometimes get phone calls in the morning from parents who have been called away for work and the child comes to school with an overnight bag, a toothbrush and a big smile, knowing they will be with friends and very well looked after.

I strongly believe that a thriving and active boarding community benefits everyone at a school. It provides a different ethos and atmosphere and gives families the flexibility to live their lives in a modern way. We have superb staff on hand to support and nurture our pupils and to make sure they are getting a wonderful home from home experience. If you think half past three is a little early to be going home to tea, do think about the benefits of a boarding education.

• www.warminsterschool.org.uk

• *Matt Williams, Headmaster, Warminster School*

