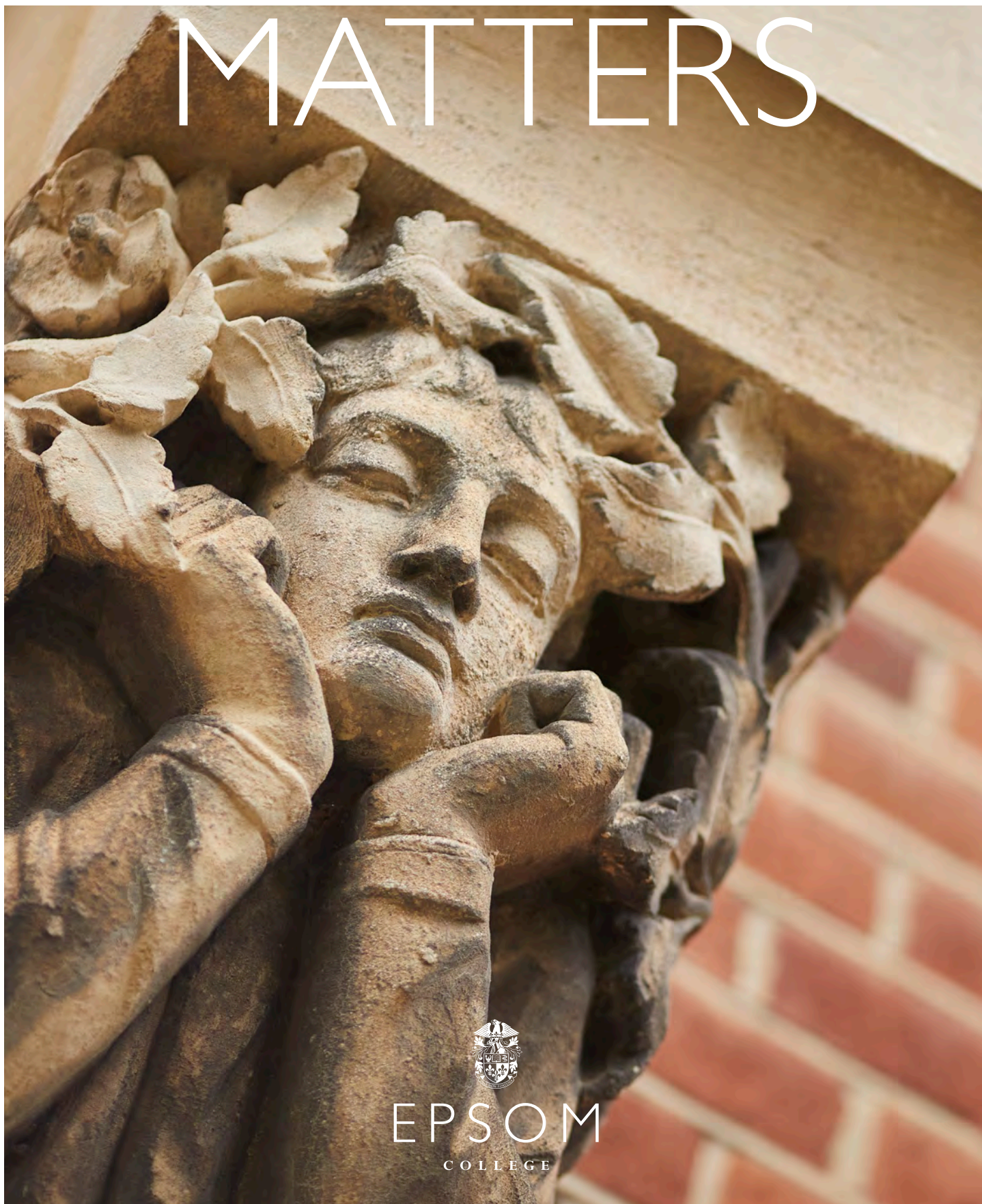


WELLBEING MATTERS



EPSOM
COLLEGE

Wellbeing Matters at Epsom

Every school in the land measures itself by the grades its pupils achieve.

We are no different.

But, for a long time, we have placed equal emphasis on their mental health and wellbeing.

In simple terms, we care about the happiness of our pupils.

Mental Health and Wellbeing have become popular terms in recent years – with welcome efforts to break down stigma and encourage healthy conversations gaining momentum.

The teenage brain is a delicate, precious thing and, if we are to provide a truly transformative education, we must put as much effort into developing our pupils' emotional intelligence and wellbeing as we do their academic ability and sporting and creative prowess.

That is why we have a governor and three members of SLT with specific responsibility for the welfare of pupils. It is why every member of the Epsom community, from teachers and librarians, to medical staff and matrons, is offered training in mental health first aid. It is why we partner with some of the nation's leading practitioners in adolescent mental health – such as the Anna Freud Institute, the Carnegie Centre, Wellbeing Hub, TellMi and Pride Youth Network.

It is why Epsom was voted the overall Independent School of the Year and the Independent School of the Year for Student Wellbeing in 2022. And it is why we are one of only four UK boarding schools to have been awarded Gold by the Carnegie Centre of Excellence in Mental Health in Schools.

“

Epsom is one of just four UK boarding schools to achieve Gold status for its focus on mental health and wellbeing



National Awards for Student Wellbeing

In the past 12 months Epsom has scooped three major awards as a result of our focus on the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff.

Epsom College has been awarded ‘Gold Status’ for its outstanding whole-school approach to the mental health and wellbeing of its pupils, staff and wider community.

The Mental Health in School Award was established in 2017 by the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools – part of Leeds Beckett University – and social enterprise Minds Ahead.

Following the Carnegie Award, judges at the annual Independent School of the Year Awards gave Epsom the top prize for its work on student wellbeing, and then crowned the College the overall Independent School of the Year.

For the Carnegie Centre’s award, schools are assessed against eight key criteria, with inspectors looking for examples of evidence-based approaches that align to the latest professional guidance surrounding mental health. Judges award Bronze, Silver or Gold awards accordingly. To achieve Gold Status, schools must demonstrate that they not only have the proper structures, strategy and support in place to care for the mental health and wellbeing of their own community, but that they are also sharing knowledge, resources and best practice nationally, and internationally, with other schools and external agencies.



“With an ethos of serve, share, and care, Epsom College provides a holistic personal approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing in their community and beyond,” said Tracy Shand, at the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools.

Over 1,000 schools have signed up to the award, with Epsom College one of just four UK boarding schools to achieve Gold Status. “Epsom College demonstrated they are excelling in all the Mental Health Award competencies,” said Tracy, “with particular attention to the opportunities to lead and share their knowledge and experience both locally and globally.”

PUPIL EMPOWERMENT

Judges celebrated the support Epsom provides for local schools, as well as its sister school in Malaysia, while also praising the strong national partnerships in place with Royal Springboard, the Boarding Schools Association and the Anna Freud Centre.

They were also quick to praise the leadership and empowerment of Epsom’s pupils, saying “students clearly feel listened to and empowered. In fact, youth empowerment in mental health is a key theme at Epsom. For example, Sixth Form students being trained as national ambassadors for the Mee Too app providing peer-to-peer support.”

Dr Steve Burton, Interim Dean of Leeds Beckett’s Carnegie School of Education, said: “Achieving this award is not just recognition of a whole-school approach to mental health, it’s a recognition of the school’s commitment to improving the life chances of children and engaging with the wider community including staff and parents/carers. “We’re truly proud to have worked with Epsom College in this vital work and look forward to further collaboration.”

Dean Johnstone, founder and CEO of Minds Ahead said: “This award shines a light on the excellent work schools are doing to promote mental health for their community of children and adults. “It is thrilling and humbling to learn about Epsom College and the many other schools engaged in the quality award process. I’d like to offer my congratulations on this deserved recognition.”





Wellbeing in the Lower School

Each year, around 90 girls and boys join Epsom at Year 7. Coming from a large number of Prep and State schools, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, we ensure each child is seen as an individual who has something valuable to contribute to our community.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL LITERACY

From day one, we help our pupils to understand boundaries and consequences. We begin to lay the foundations for building emotional literacy and resilience, helping our youngest pupils to see that sometimes unhappiness and stress are normal parts of all our lives. We help them to develop empathy, acceptance and understanding of self and others. This is delivered through a programme of assemblies, tutorials, Chapel services and classes dedicated to mindfulness and wellbeing.



A WHOLE-SCHOOL FOCUS ON WELLBEING

Right from the start of their time at Epsom, pupils benefit from our whole-school approach to wellbeing. Every member of staff - from teachers to librarians, medical to support staff - works together to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of all our pupils remains a top priority. For those in need of specialist support, two College counsellors offer confidential 1-1 sessions. This gives each child the chance to discover happiness, gratitude, social connectedness, respect and a sense of belonging. They benefit from focused guidance on personal health topics such as sleep, diet, exercise and staying safe on and offline. Mindfulness and resilience training are embedded throughout the academic and co-curricular programmes.

CREATING DIGITAL CITIZENS

Staying safe online is a vital skill – and one that all pupils learn when they join Epsom. We don't demonise the internet, we educate children on how to inhabit digital spaces safely and creatively. Each pupil takes part in a digital diploma course, learning about staying safe online and using technology as a positive tool, both in an educational setting and for the future workplace. On completion of the course – partly delivered by our Sixth Form students who act as mentors - pupils earn Digital Citizenship Passports. Crucially, pupils can only use their mobile devices in school once they have received this passport. This programme earned Epsom the title of Digital School of the Year from Parent Zone, and has since been shared with a number of other state and independent schools.



BECOMING PART OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM

Epsom was founded in 1855 on the twin Victorian values of excellence and benevolence. Today, these values are evident in the College's award-winning service programme.

Our Lower School pupils spend an hour each week volunteering with local organisations and charities. They support schools, care homes and community initiatives – providing social support and developing their own sense of social connectedness.

We strongly believe that our pupils learn as much outside the classroom as they do inside it. Understanding their place in society, and the part they can play in helping others, is of huge importance and an essential part of every Epsom pupil's development. We believe that giving to others helps our pupils also to contribute to their own positive wellbeing.

Mindfulness & Wellbeing as Part of the Curriculum

The WHO estimates that 20% of teenagers experience a mental health problem in any given year. That’s why – for the past 10 years – we’ve put mindfulness at the heart of everything we do at Epsom College.

Mindfulness was introduced to Epsom in 2013 as part of the Personal and Social Development (PSD) curriculum. It is now practised throughout the school and plays an important part of every pupil’s education “Mindfulness involves paying attention to what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment, as well as our thoughts and feelings as they happen,” explains Helen Keevil, Assistant Head: Pupil Welfare. “It is easy to stop noticing the world around us and lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling, or being so caught up in our thoughts that we don’t stop to notice how they are driving our emotions and behaviour.” Mindful practice was introduced to College life because we had observed that calmer and happier children lead to calmer and happier parents and staff, which in turn leads to happier outcomes – academically, personally and socially.

POSITIVE RESULTS

The Anna Freud Centre – one of the UK’s leading children’s mental health charities – has undertaken the world’s first scientific study examining the long-term benefits of mindfulness techniques. They are creating an evidence base of what works and highlighting best practice for all schools to follow. Epsom has been held up as an exemplar of what works best for children.

Epsom entered into a pilot study with the Anna Freud Centre in 2018 in which the link between behaviour, academic outcomes and mindfulness were the focus. It involved surveying pupils, parents and staff at various points of the academic year to see if mindfulness practice had meaningful benefits and one thing we saw was a clear reduction in sanctions and a boost in merits as the pupils participating gained a greater understanding of gratitude, control and the benefits of being calm.

“Mindfulness has a huge positive impact on those year groups preparing for exams,” says Mrs Keevil. “There is huge pressure on academic outcomes in many schools these days - our mindfulness focus at Epsom helps us all stay in the moment and be satisfied with where we are, rather than looking back on any regrets or worrying about any future events which we cannot control. It has helped us to have conversations with pupils around healthy habits linked to sleep, nutrition, exercise and finding enough ‘me time’ or self-care in their busy lives.”

PART OF DAILY LIFE

Every pupil has one 50-minute PSD and wellbeing lesson every week. These lessons often begin and end with a moment of mindfulness for pupils to take stock of how they are feeling.

Mr Lance, Head of Lower School, often begins Monday morning assemblies with a short session of mindfulness and the Lower School tutors are encouraged to practise these techniques in morning tutor time. And we reduce pupil’s phone usage during their school days. In the Lower School (Year 7 and 8) pupils hand their phones in at the start of the day, and similarly Year 9 and 10 children will leave theirs in the safe hands of their matron. From Year 11

upwards we believe that students can manage their usage more generally but have noticed that some still opt to hand their phones in, in acknowledgement of the distraction they can be at times such as prep where they want and need to focus on the task at hand. The Dining Hall is a no phone zone, to encourage everyone to engage in conversation and mindful eating.

All College iPads have the Headspace app installed, which enables pupils and teachers to connect to some guided mindfulness and meditation exercises any moment in their schedule that suits. Pupils have told me that they often use the app before or after prep, and some even on their journey to and from the College. And in the analogue space, the College has a therapy dog, Luna, a three-year-old cockapoo, qualified as a Pets As Therapy dog in late 2022 and is available to students for walk and talk sessions with myself or one of the College Counsellors. Luna is also there for breaktime sessions and if anyone is feeling particularly anxious, she is a good resource to call in and help calm a child. She is proving a very popular addition to the College.



Healthy Minds in Year 9

As pupils enter the senior years,
our House system comes into its own.
Core values are embedded, common bonds
are formed and friendships are nurtured.

In Year 9, we welcome around another 90 pupils to the College, they arrive from a variety of different feeder schools both locally and internationally. This is the point at which the House system begins, and our 13 houses are integral to the success of our pastoral provision. Core Epsom values, such as embracing diversity and difference, are strengthened within the Houses, and form part of the PSD programme that begins in Year 9.



OUR HOUSES

In Years 7 and 8, the Lower School acts as a ‘house’ in its own right, forging a community and readying pupils for the senior years. But from Year 9 through to the final days of Sixth Form, every pupil joins one of our 13 Houses. These are physical buildings that act as a home from home. A child’s House is a place to study, to relax, to socialise and to form lasting friendships. A child’s House is their community, the place where they learn core common values such as teamwork and camaraderie, provide leadership to their younger Housemates, and benefit from Epsom’s outstanding pastoral provision. Each one of the 13 Houses, brings together pupils from Year 9 to Year 13; tutors look after 12 or so tutees, and the whole House is run under the guidance and stewardship of a Housemaster/ Housemistress, their deputy, a Matron and a team of dedicated pastoral staff.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Staff and pupils work alongside one another, dedicating time and energy to ensure all pupils share, and understand, a common set of House and College values through PSD lessons and House assemblies. All Year 9 pupils engage in a series of ‘character education’ lessons, developing an awareness and understanding of self-perception and the perception of others. This is a key component of Epsom’s drive to instil a culture of acceptance, support, understanding and appreciation of diversity, and one that was celebrated in our last full ISI Inspection.

CRITICAL EVALUATION
AND SOUND JUDGMENTS

Our Year 9 pupils build on what they have learnt in earlier years and hone their skills of critical evaluation. We help them to assess what they consume online, and offline, and develop their critical faculties – be that through use of the library, or by delivering mini-presentations to their peers. On topics such as becoming ethical consumers, relationship and sex education, and emotional intelligence. Some of this work is delivered by their peers

in the Sixth Form, which helps to break down barriers and open up authentic discussions. These presentations and discussions help pupils to become confident and accomplished public speakers, as well as active and attentive listeners. Topics include improving confidence and personal presentation, dealing with and celebrating being different, understanding disabilities, peer pressure, thoughtfulness, kindness, tolerance and the importance of clear, honest, open communication.



ISI Report Praises the House and Pastoral System

Our Houses are the bedrock of the College and are one of the main reasons that our pupils develop the high levels of empathy, tolerance and understanding noted in the ISI Inspection. Here's what the Inspectors said:



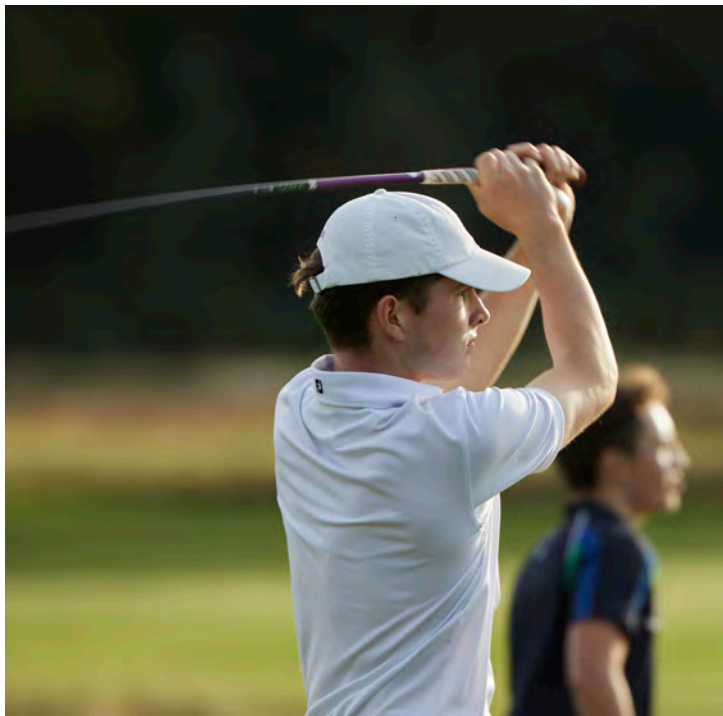
“Pupils are socially and personally aware; they aspire to achieve, and older pupils act as positive role models for younger years. Pupils of different ages work together in ‘families’ within the house. Collaborative projects such as soirees enable them to work effectively as a team to achieve a common goal.”

“Pupils have high levels of empathy and tolerance toward each other. Diversity and difference are celebrated, and pupils are able to play to their individual strengths. They are inclusive and supportive of each other’s differences, which is reflected in the inclusive ethos of the school.”



“Senior pupils have been trained as peer mentors, providing a valuable source of support, whilst learning about the importance of listening to and recognising the needs of others. Pupils spoke sensitively about the important of their wellbeing. They were open about the ways in which they would seek support if they needed help, showing an appreciation for the outstanding pastoral care and guidance they receive.”

“Pupils collaborate very effectively and genuinely enjoy opportunities to work together to achieve common goals. Pupils, both day and boarding, have a strong sense of mutual support and loyalty in their houses. They value the contribution of the many staff involved in the houses.”





Learning Skills for Life Years 10-11

The GCSE years are when our pupils deepen knowledge and practice from the earlier years, and begin to take on leadership roles that set them up for Sixth Form, University and life beyond the College.

As our pupils enter their GCSE years, they embark on a two-year programme which seeks to build on that which they have covered already, and make it appropriate for the age and stage of their development. Lessons incorporate various disciplines of what personal and social development is for a 14-16 year old as part of a holistic framework that helps all our pupils prepare for life beyond the College, with diversity and healthy relationships at the heart of it. This award-winning programme develops our pupils physically, spiritually, economically and morally through a series of debates, active lessons and an interactive curriculum.

EMPATHY, DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY

A key aim underpinning all of our work is to develop young people into young adults who understand the part they can play in society and the value they can add to it. Support empathy and a deep understanding of difference - cultural, social, economic, experiential - is central to this. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils embark on a programme with subject specialists that teaches:

Relationships & Sex Education

healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and coercion, gender identity, healthy body image, pregnancy and family planning decisions, staying safe

British Values and Law & Crime

what it means to be a British citizen in the 21st Century, what is the role of government, human rights, creation of laws, your rights as a citizen

Social Media and Drugs & Alcohol Education

laws and responsibilities online and offline, power of social media, potential risks of social media, substance use and abuse, risks and boundaries, the law around alcohol and drugs

Morality & Spirituality

the role of religion in the 21st Century, what happens if religion clashes with other morals and expectations, marriage and civil partnerships, gender and sexuality within religion

Physical Wellbeing

staying healthy for life, the responsibilities within a gym-environment, body image, diet & nutrition.

ACTIVE, CONSIDERATE LISTENERS

This is the stage in their school career that pupils begin to take on leadership roles; supporting younger pupils, representing Epsom on a national stage, contributing to wider public debate and informing research, for example, with the assistance of a Masculinity in Schools programme and Fearless, a crime prevention youth programme.. To help equip them for this vital next step, we teach them presentation skills and give them confidence to lead class discussions. Our PSD lessons – and the approach taken throughout our academic curriculum - ensure that our pupils are active, considerate listeners, able carefully to listen to other opinions and make evidence-based decisions after exploring their choices.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

The Department for Education has recognised our work by awarding Epsom College “early-adopter” status, which credits those delivering high quality Relationship and Sex Education. Other schools in our local area observe our teaching, and we share high-quality teaching resources and PSHE material. Local feeder schools observe our PSD programme with a view to replicating it at their own schools, and members of the Boarding Schools Association are trained using Epsom as a model of best practice. The teaching team regularly host conferences to share the best practice of PSHE provision in schools.





Stepping Up in the Sixth Form

Sixth Form students act as positive role models, as they develop their own mental wellbeing while supporting fellow pupils and people from the wider community.



Sixth Form is the point at which Epsom students step up to take the lead in a variety of pursuits. These are the two years in which the lessons learnt throughout the previous five years - about empathy, understanding, acceptance, mindfulness and difference - are put into practice.

Opportunities open up to lead Societies, provide service in the community, become a peer mentor for pupils in the younger years, and to enjoy the fulfilment of giving to others.

Academic lessons are structured to help students grow in confidence and acquire vital skills for the workplace, university, and adult life.

The classroom climate is high challenge, low threat; with a mixture of debates, external visitors' lectures and student-led presentations. All we ask is that students are willing to engage, be confident, brave, and prepared to treat other people and ideas with respect.



PEER MENTORING

As they start their life as Sixth Formers, a large proportion of Lower Sixth students are trained to become peer mentors. They are equipped with the skills to support younger pupils in the 13 Houses. The Sixth Formers receive extensive training for their role, attending stress and anxiety management, basic mental health first aid and brain training courses so that they can teach coping strategies and improve their metacognition. The peer mentors provide one-to-one advice to any younger pupils in need of confidence or self-esteem/self-efficacy help. They also present topical assemblies to promote awareness on a wide range of issues such as drugs education (see below), anti-bullying, promoting strong mental health, exam stress awareness, mindfulness, equality and diversity, anti-racism awareness, and digital safety. Similarly, the majority of these Lower Sixth students become digital peer mentors. They are trained to support younger pupils in relation to healthy online behaviour, helping to deliver a digital safety course to Year 9 pupils as they embark on their journey through the senior years at Epsom. The course has been so successful our pupils now deliver it to vulnerable adults in the local community, through a partnership with a local charity.

CULTURAL HOUR

The Cultural Hour is a time each day dedicated to artistic, intellectual and cultural events that travel beyond the classroom and set curriculum. The programme provides pupils with the chance to explore topics of particular interest and also to gain insight into cultural activities they may have never previously experienced.

Over the past year, students have had a variety of lectures and presentations from poets, critics, journalists, economists and many more. The Lord Rosebery Lectures are a series of presentations from inspirational people and leaders from across the cultural spectrum, giving pupils unrivalled opportunities to question and learn.

Recent guest speakers have included the editor of BBC Radio Four's Today programme, the editor of the Observer, the political correspondent for the BBC, the chairman of Deutsche Bank, a polar explorer and the UK's Ambassador to Estonia.

The biggest coup was when Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England and named by Time Magazine as one of the world's 100 most-influential people, delivered a lecture on the unpredictability of modern macroeconomics.

"The Cultural Hour broadens students' experience of the world," says Mr Nick Russell, Head of Sixth Form. "To meet and listen to experts from various fields is inspiring, and it gives students an insight into worlds and lives far beyond Epsom. Listening is a hugely important and much-underrated skill. Those who listen, learn. The Cultural Hour hones this skill and is the catalyst for further student research and enquiry."



PSD LECTURE SERIES

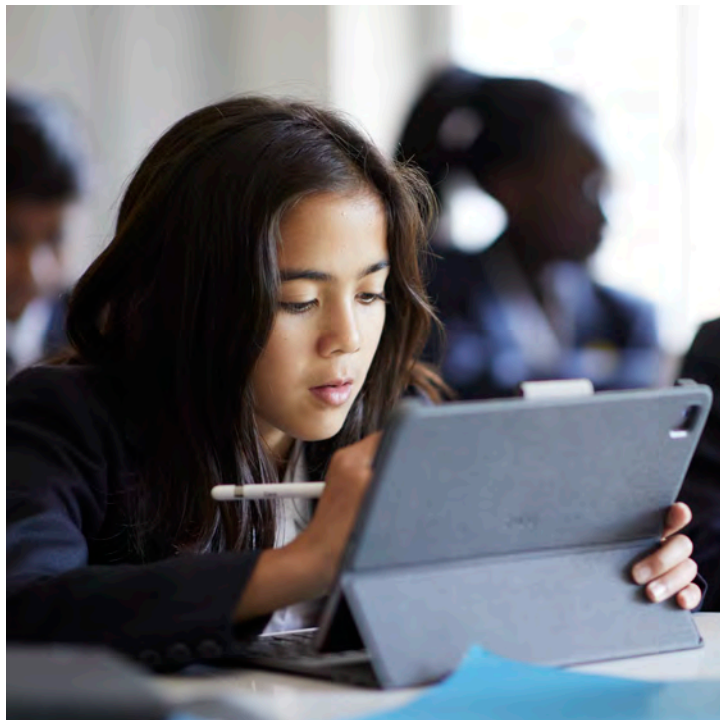
The PSD Lecture Series welcomes experts to the College who are able to lead insightful, provocative and inspiring discussions in a wide range of topics. These lectures help to prepare our Sixth Form students for life beyond the College, encouraging them to explore, assess risk and opportunities, and to reduce harming behaviours. Examples of speakers we regularly host are Dr Aric Sigman on screen time, alcohol, body image and modern day parenting; Allison Havey from the Rap Project, on staying safe at university and on a gap year and preventing harm both on and offline; and John Hoskison, a former pro-golfer, who talks about the biggest mistake of his life which led to time in prison.

Safely Navigating the Digital World

We want pupils to embrace every opportunity of the online world. But we want them to do it safely. Our award-winning programme informs, educates, entertains and empowers.

For the past five years, and in response to digital technology sitting at the heart of all aspects of College life, we launched an extensive, robust and cross-curricular approach to digital safety. Rather than simply focusing on the risks – online bullying, sexting, over-sharing – we seek to empower our pupils and help them understand the rewards. Our programme encourages children to consider the ways that technology can enrich their lives, and how they can embrace those opportunities safely and mindfully.





YEARS 7 AND 9

At the points at which new students enter the College, pupils complete a Digital Citizenship Passport course on digital safety, online bullying and developing a 21st Century Moral Compass. Delivery of the programme is supported by Sixth Form ‘digital peer mentors’. Pupils are encouraged to critically evaluate what they consume and share online, and to consider the digital footprint they are creating and how this may affect their later lives. Graduation from this course earns pupils a Digital Passport.

YEARS 10 AND 11

During these years we develop what pupils learnt when acquiring their Digital Passports, exploring in more detail the digital footprint left behind on social media, sharing of personal data, gaming, and making virtual ‘friendships’.

This initiative won Parent Zone’s Digital School of the Year Award. Judges commented on being “blown away by the standard of entry... winners have gone the extra mile to maximise opportunities for pupils while informing the entire school community of the risks the internet can pose.”

A complementary calendar of activities – including regular PSD Awareness Days – runs across all year groups. For example, in the Michaelmas term, online behavioural expert Teresa Hughes works with 180 Lower Sixth students to tidy their digital footprint ahead of starting UCAS applications and work placements in the near future.

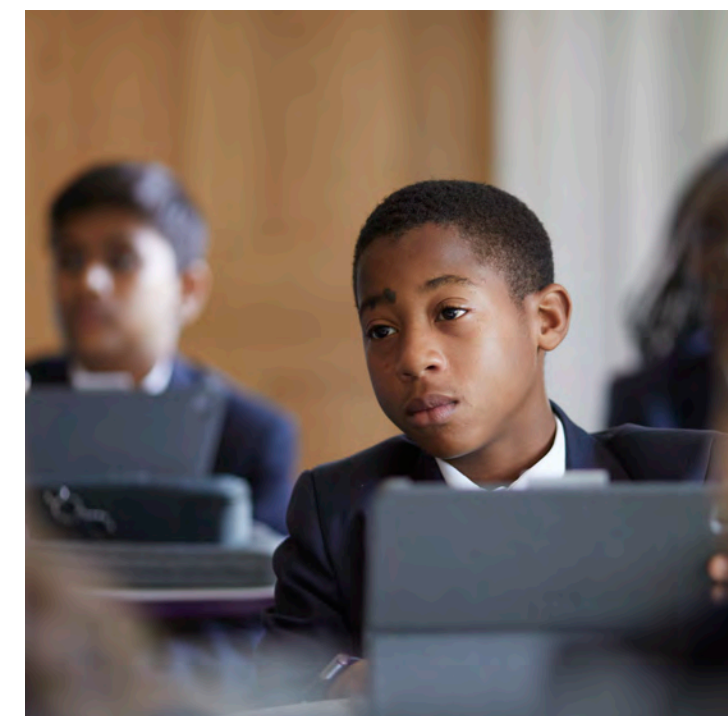
Pupil feedback has confirmed that checking privacy settings as well as their online images and data was “a vital lesson for life”. Googling themselves regularly has become common good practice.



Former cricketer, Patrick Foster, regularly speaks to pupils about the perils of online gambling, while Isla van Tricht speaks about addiction to pornography and the representation and objectification of women online.

“Working alongside the senior students, it’s been enlightening hearing their views on promoting positive behaviour both on and offline,” Helen Keevil, Assistant Head: Pupil Welfare, said. “For the younger pupils, hearing this school message reinforced by senior students is most effective.”

Parent Zone’s Deputy CEO Sophie Linington, says: “Epsom College works hard to embed the digital world into its learning environment, embracing technology whilst ensuring students are well equipped to manage the risks and make the most of the benefits.”





Independent School of the Year

OVERALL WINNER, 2022-23

Independent School of the Year

STUDENT WELLBEING, 2022-23



EPSOM
COLLEGE

COLLEGE ROAD, EPSOM, SURREY, KT17 4JQ 01372 821000
ADMISSION ENQUIRIES 01372 821234 ADMISSIONS@EPSOMCOLLEGE.ORG.UK
EPSOMCOLLEGE.ORG.UK