



“We focus clearly on boys’ needs and look to help them take advantage of opportunities in academic, cultural and sporting pursuits.”

Should boys be taught in single sex classes is a hot topic in the media.

Surely it’s a thing of the past and co education is the best way to gain a balanced education? Well those in boys’ school and educational research would argue differently and there is a worldwide movement that sees educating boys separately is a better way to provide for boys’ needs within the classroom and beyond.

At Aldwickbury we have a good ratio of male teachers who are interested in a whole range of activities including music, drama, the classics and sport acting as wonderful role models for the boys. The boys can have a trumpet lesson and discuss the tactics displayed at the last Manchester United match at the same time! Boys in Year 2 have a games session with a specialist games teacher and as they move into Year 3 they gradually have more male teachers for subjects ranging from music to French whilst remaining in the care of a female form teacher. At the same time there are female members of staff in senior positions within the school so they should have a balanced view of the world!

We are proud here that boys can be singing in a choir recital and an hour later be playing in a rugby match. One boy had within his skill set skiing at a national level and being a make up artist for the school plays. Boys are regularly seen helping each other when one might have a cut knee or is feeling unwell. Our boys don’t have ‘rough edges’ to be knocked off by girls. They are polite, caring young men who enjoy being free to be boys. We are serious about the boys’ academic progress and they leave us able to be independent learners, taking up the academic challenges at they move into Year 9 at their senior schools.

The geography of the school campus is such that the older boys walk outside from class to class giving them some fresh air and gentle exercise between lessons. Our extended day enables them to have long break times to run around and release energy without being judged for that. With play areas, adventure playgrounds, safe wooded areas, tennis courts and fields to play in there is room for all at different ages.

The Headmaster and members of the teaching staff regularly attend day conferences and workshops held by International Boys’ Schools Coalition. Here at Aldwickbury we our Head of English, Steve Lott, took part in the IBSC project ‘How We Help Boys to Become More Prolific, Powerful and Confident Writers?’ You can read his research paper by going to the English page on our website. Steve Lott also attended the IBSC conference ‘Inventions in Teaching’ this July in Philadelphia USA.

The following is an extract from the International Boys' School Coalition that Aldwickbury belongs to and gives a clear explanation which Aldwickbury would endorse.

“Why a Boys’ School in the 21st Century?”

Schools that educate only boys enjoy some powerful advantages over schools that serve both boys and girls. Boys’ schools are able to develop their resources, choose their teachers, and design their programs with only one goal in mind -- to meet the educational and developmental needs of young men.

During recent decades, ground-breaking brain research using fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), investigations into the developmental differences between boys and girls, and studies of the sociology of schools have all helped us understand how to best educate boys and girls. At the same time, ironically, it has become clear that an alarming number of boys – most of whom are attending coeducational institutions - are not succeeding in school. This well-documented and broadly publicized phenomenon, coupled with new knowledge about learning, has led to a re-examination of many assumptions underlying current educational practices. One of the results has been a growing understanding of the benefits of single-gender educational settings and an increased awareness of the advantages of boys’ schools.

Why a Boys’ School in the 21st Century?

In brief, boys’ schools provide:

A stimulating and safe learning environment that

- encourages full participation by boys in all activities (arts, athletics, community service).
- promotes self-expression and a respect for the many different paths to manhood.
- provides an atmosphere in which to explore sensitive gender and sex-related issues.

Educational programs tailored to meet the developmental needs of boys where

- boys can gain confidence in their ability to learn without being compared to girls who mature more quickly and tend to enjoy more success in school.
- books and curricular materials that excite boys can be integrated into all aspects of the school’s program.
- boys have opportunities to be taught and coached by faculty (including a significant number of males) who have been hired because they want to work with boys.

- boys can grow at their own pace and can “be boys” for as long as they need, protected from society’s pressure to get involved with girls before they are ready.

An environment free of cross-gender distractions in which

- boys need not waste energy posturing or trying to live up to the gender stereotypes so prevalent in the media and society at large.
- focus on academic tasks and achievement in extra-curricular activities can be paramount.
- frank and direct communication foster development and growth.

A setting in which boys develop strong bonds of friendship and camaraderie with peers and teachers so that

- the impact of positive male role models can have its fullest effect.
- a distinctive esprit de corps enriches the lives of boys.”

International Boys’ School Coalition website

The following books may make interesting reading on the topic of boys and education.

Raising Boys by Steve Biddulph

Why Gender Matters by Leonard Sax

Boys and Girls Learn Differently by Michael Gurian

The Minds of Boys by Michael Gurian

Teaching The Male Brain by Dr Abigail James