

I was thinking about the size of our school and some people think the longer the school photo, the better the school. On our latest photo, all faces can be seen in detail! Being 300, or a relatively small school, is not a disadvantage; it is an opportunity to get it right with each person. We passionately believe in education rather than just teaching. Skinner defined education as being "that which you remember when the teaching is forgotten". Knowledge of capital cities; The Treaty of Versailles question and the chemical formula for toluene are vital for passing exams, but of less use in living life to the full.

At Greensteds the values of the heart - the aesthetic, spiritual and creative - and the values of "gut thinking" instinctive and common sense - are crucial. It is about developing the key organs of thought in a person, namely: the head, the heart and the guts.

Some Schools excel in areas which only can be measured. Exam results, reading ages, spelling ages and even the combined points scored in rugby matches over a season. Our school, because of our size and personal quality, value the immeasurable just as much as everything else. How can you calculate honesty, integrity, ability to cope with difficult people or even failure? And yet it is surely these values which are at the very essence of what education should be about. There is a bit of magic here but, magic by its nature is hard to define but our advantage here is that of size. Little schools have big hearts. With only 280 or so in the school, everybody knows everybody else as people.

Individuality can be prized rather than made to conform to the pattern of the majority. Inherently we prove to be a fertile ground for all abilities and all sorts. We can cater for a wide intellectual ability range because we can get to know and like each of our pupils. Bigger schools cannot achieve this as they are too big. They must be run by complex bureaucratic systems and are unavoidably impersonal. People, both staff and pupils, can easily get lost especially at times when they need the most help. By their nature, institutions institutionalise.

Big schools claim their success as corporate successes whilst at a small school it is not the bundled academic statistics and the games lost, or, won which are the measure, but rather the personal achievements of boys and girls. To us it is more thrilling for Sam to have gained a C grade in his A-level than the fact that Davis got 4 straight A's and is off to Medical School. The latter was always going to be the case, but Sam had performed way beyond anyone's expectation.

At Greensteds, we have achieved what other, bigger schools strive in vain to achieve: an intimate community in which achievement in any area of school life, is never rated more highly than quality of character. Because of our size, no one is overlooked. Everyone is famous and vitally, kindness underlies the community.

It is by learning to live and work with others that we discover who we are. If boys and girls are to grow up to be the best possible version of themselves, they must grow up in an environment in which they will feel safe to be themselves, in which they will be nourished, supported and frequently praised - and picked up, ticked off and dusted down when they get it wrong.

We, in small schools can show our pupils how they can make the most of themselves in all areas of growing up. We can help them to achieve the best exam results they can; at the same time we are able to guide and nourish them, because we all get to know them so well, in their personal and social development. For their success and happiness in life will be founded on all three of these, equally. On the way they meet, let's be realistic, with triumph and disaster, from which they are able to learn invaluable lessons.

By the fact that all in a small school are so well known, we are able to guide them through the inevitable failures with rigorous kindness based on our liking of them, and our knowledge of them, as individuals. We cannot guarantee success. No school can. Human nature cannot be engineered; education can only be a consensual process. If all goes well - and it almost always does - it is likely that, five years on, the achievements of pupils will greatly exceed parental expectations.

School is not an end in itself. We are proud that Greensteds pupils go on maturing long after they have left us, continuing what they have learnt here long after they have forgotten, everything they were taught.