

SKIPTON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

An Engineering Specialist School

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

GENERAL

Skipton Girls' High School was established in 1886 - and in September 2003 became the first girls' school to achieve status as an Engineering College in the government's specialist schools initiative. We are a selective 11-18 school of 770 students, of whom 210 are in the Sixth Form. We are regularly among the highest achieving schools in the North of England and in 2006 our GCSE results were the highest of any state or independent school in the North of England.

In January 2007 we became a foundation school, a move which the Governors and Leadership Team felt was important in enabling the school to continue to develop in the future.

Reported by Ofsted (March 2008) as an "Outstanding School" we were delighted to gain Grade 1 in 25 of the 29 categories. Following this, we have gained a second specialism as a Leading Edge School with a focus on gifted and talented students. We look forward to this next exciting stage in our development.

Teachers in a selective girls' school are spared some problems faced by colleagues in more difficult areas, but the rewards of working with able students and their parents present their own challenges, and expectations of staff are extremely high. The staff team at Skipton Girls' High School combine good academic qualifications with a high level of commitment. We believe we provide a challenging, but supportive environment.

The school is situated on a pleasant site, about half a mile from the centre of Skipton, with a variety of architecturally interesting buildings which range from nineteenth century houses to modern purpose-built extensions. A major refurbishment programme has taken place over the last few years, including ICT facilities, Technology rooms, and the Sixth Form Study and Resource Centre.

SCHOOL AIMS

As a girls' school with specialist Engineering College Status, the school challenges gender stereotypes, shares innovative practice locally and contributes nationally to the pool of able young women entering the professions of science and engineering.

We aim to create an environment where every student is challenged and can develop her full potential, prepared for adult life in the 21st Century. To this end, we have been reviewing all aspects of our life as a school over the last few years, including the way our curriculum is put together, the use we make of ICT, and the role we give our students as young leaders within the school. Our culture is innovative, technological and creative, but still committed to academic excellence. We are increasingly involving students in working alongside staff to innovate in order to continue to improve the quality and relevance of the experiences they have as they move up through the school.

We work actively with other schools locally and nationally through the SSAT in sharing good practice; we are particularly well-regarded for our development of Student Voice, Student Leadership and our tutorial system.

CURRICULUM

As part of our innovative approach to the personalising learning agenda, we are investigating a stage not age approach to student achievement, and have task groups developing approaches to learning which focus on new technologies, student voice, vocational contexts and assessment for learning. Our curriculum structure offers students a two year Key Stage 3 leading to an innovative approach to Key Stage 4 which encourages acceleration of learning (as appropriate) without losing sight of the need to maintain a breadth of study. Imaginative use is being made of our VLE (Moodle) in particular to allow students to work in an independent but supported way. As part of this we introduced personal netbooks for one year group in September 2009.



Our curriculum is enhanced by our status as an Engineering Specialist School; we contribute to world class achievement in science, mathematics and technology using the focus of engineering as a theme to connect the disciplines of mathematics, science, technology and enterprise.

Key Stage 3:

In Key Stage 3 all students follow a common curriculum which includes two modern foreign languages and the teaching of separate Sciences. Key Stage 3 is completed in two years, with end of Key Stage Levels reported to parents at the end of Year 8

Key Stage 4:

Following our Key Stage 3, we aim to allow for increased personalisation and flexibility with more able students having the opportunity to take some Level 3 courses in Years 10 and 11, while still maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum for all, including Mathematics and Statistics, English Language and Literature, three separate Science GCSEs, a Technology subject and at least one Modern Foreign Language. GCSE examinations are increasingly taken at the time most suited to the individual, with assessment spread through the three years of Key Stage 4.

Key Stage 5:

In the Sixth Form the curriculum is based around a wide range of AS and A2 subjects. Almost all students continue into the Sixth Form with a growing number of candidates recruited externally each year. Choice at A Level is extended by our collaboration with Ermysted's Grammar School, our partner boys' school, through which we offer joint provision in minority subjects. From 2010 we will be offering the Level 3 Diploma in Engineering and hope to introduce the "umbrella qualification" of the AQA Baccaulaureate for 2009-10.

Extra – Curricular Activities

We place great emphasis on the development of individual responsibility and encourage students to take part in a wide variety of activities. The regular drama productions and music concerts give students a chance to perform in public and there are opportunities for residential experience, field work and visits abroad, including school exchange visits. Other trips, both recreational and educational, to theatres and a variety of places of interest, take place regularly. We have an active Duke of Edinburgh Award group. Students of all ages develop their potential as leaders through participation in the Student Executive, acting as mentors in a wide variety of areas, and running clubs and societies. Young Enterprise and Young Engineers Clubs have met with great success in local and national competitions.

ORGANISATION

Entry to the school at 11+ is by the Local Authority selective scheme, and for older students by tests set by the Authority and the school. Since 2003 there has been a four form entry, with a maximum admission limit of 112 . Our popularity locally means that we are almost always over-subscribed with students who have been successful in the selection test.

Students are split into four houses (Bronte, Curie, Franklin and Johnson) and are taught in house groups for most of their Key Stage 3 lessons. Each house is divided into "Family Groups", or vertical tutor groups, with around three students from each year in every tutor group. At the moment, almost all teaching is in single age groups, but mixed age teaching will become more common in the school over the next few years.

The Sixth Form have their own building, West Bank House, with separate teaching and study areas, but Sixth Form students are included in the family groups and play a full part in the life of the school.

Our programme of in-service training allows staff both to participate and contribute so that our skills as practitioners can be shared and developed. We have a full induction programme for newly-qualified teachers.

CONCLUSION

Skipton Girls' High School combines an ethos of academic and technological excellence with an approach which emphasises the importance of each student as an individual with her own unique needs and abilities. Staff and students have high expectations as well as the freedom to innovate, and we work together to make sure that we meet the challenges of a changing world; this makes the school a very exciting place to work and study.

