



WYCOMBE  
ABBAY

## FAQs – Online Open Day, Saturday 7 May 2022

Thank you for submitting questions to our live panels. There was not time to respond to them all during the event, so here are answers to the most popular questions, as ‘up-voted’ by guests during the live Q&A sessions.

What are you looking for most in girls applying for Wycombe Abbey?

We are looking for lively girls with intellectual spark; an enthusiasm for learning; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; and an open-minded approach to new ideas and concepts. We also welcome girls offering a broad reach of co-curricular interests. As a busy boarding school, we are looking for girls who are excited by all that is on offer here.

How do you cater for girls of different abilities?

All teachers differentiate in lessons and ensure that there is plenty of extension material available for girls who want to stretch themselves, as well as support for those who need a little bit more time. We set girls by ability in some subjects – Maths and Languages.

How many girls are there in each class?

In Years 7-9 classes are normally 18-20 pupils, for GCSE the classes range from around 10-18 and for A level the classes range from 3-12, depending on how many pupils have chosen that subject – normally around 8 pupils.

How do you ensure a healthy work-life balance for pupils?

We find that girls who like to get involved in a variety of things tend to get more out of a Wycombe Abbey education. We also do keep an eye on all pupils to ensure that they do not over-commit themselves, and each girl’s Housemistress and Tutor will monitor her balance of activities, discussing her approach if things seem to be not quite right. We promote and discuss work-life balance during well-being lessons for all girls, and actively promote involvement in sports and other co-curricular activities. The value of co-curricular activities is also reinforced by our higher education and

careers programme, where important soft skills like leadership, collaboration and communication are developed.

How does Wycombe Abbey approach diversity and what is the ethnic mix?

Wycombe Abbey is proud of its global diversity. We have girls from over 30 different countries attending the School. 19% of our cohort is on a Tier 4 Student Visa.

How important is the school's Christian ethos and tradition?

Wycombe Abbey has a Christian foundation and a key part of School life is our Chapel and Chaplain. The whole school meets 3 times a week for a morning 'thought for the day' and boarders also meet as a whole community on Sunday evening. These are opportunities to reflect on the week, take time out from the busy schedules of the day and think about important values. Whilst the School has a Christian foundation, we welcome girls and families of all faiths and none; we have active Christian, Catholic, Islamic and Hindu societies within the school.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of joining at 11 + 13+?

We recruit around 85 girls at 11+ and approximately 20+ at 13+, mostly from our feeder prep schools where girls naturally finish in Year 8. The 11+ girls spend their first year in the Junior House which has the advantage of offering a gentle introduction to boarding and a home from home experience. Throughout the year girls are prepared for entry in to one of the nine Senior Houses at Year 8. Year 9 (13+) girls will go straight in to a Senior House. Girls who chose to join us at this stage have the advantage of enjoying their final two years at their prep school.

What are the criteria for selection?

At 11+ girls will sit a CAT4 test – an aptitude test looking at verbal reasoning, non verbal, quantitative and spatial reasoning - online, at their school, in mid November. They will then come here in late November to sit exams in English and Maths, have an interview, some form of group activity and enjoy lunch and meeting some of our staff and pupils.

At 13+ girls will take a CAT4 test in early October, and following that, selected candidates will be invited here in January to sit exams papers in a range of subjects, have an interview and enjoy lunch and meeting people.

At 16+ girls are required to submit a UKiset test and their summer School report at the end of Year 10. Selected candidates are invited to take papers in the four subjects they wish to study for A Level at Wycombe Abbey in the November of Year 11.

There is no specific preparation necessary for these assessments though we always encourage candidates to read as widely as they can! We are assessing potential and fit rather than attainment.

How do scholarships / bursaries work?

Scholarships are minor financial awards in recognition of academic or musical ability. Bursaries are financial support for talented girls who would not otherwise be able to attend Wycombe Abbey. Bursary applications need to be submitted to the School in the September before the assessment days and are assessed by an independent external company which will make recommendations to the School. Short-listed candidates are then interviewed by the Headmistress and a panel. Further information is available on the website.

What is Wycombe Abbey's unique selling point?

Wycombe Abbey is quite unique in terms of how its boarding and timetable are structured, and we believe this enables girls to flourish and become future ready. The Upper Sixth boarding house, Clarence House, is an excellent stepping-stone for university. Pupils live in small groups of 10 girls and all have individual study rooms, do their own laundry and have a weekly budget to do their own online food shopping for their group.

Our bespoke timetable allows pupils to blend their academic lessons with co-curricular activities so that they never have to miss a lesson to attend a music, dance or speech and drama lesson. This means that every pupil has her own timetable built according to her interests and activities without having a detrimental effect on her academic lessons.

How does day boarding work?

Day Boarders are fully integrated into the life of the School and are attached to one of the boarding houses – there is no distinct day boarders' house. All Day Boarders are welcome to join boarders in the morning for breakfast from 7:30 onwards and see their friends before registration at 8:20, which is when they must all be on site. After lessons they may well be involved in some of the group clubs or activities, like orchestras, sports practices or debating. Day boarders may stay for supper in the dining room and are welcome to go up to their boarding house to see friends and do prep.

What happens at weekends?

There are plenty of activities taking place during a weekend when pupils are on site and they have the choice as to what they do. As well as having access to the music block, sports centre and libraries there are also activities such as craft club, spa days, Harry Potter movie nights, roller discos and more for girls to get involved in. There are trips to the local area for shopping, visiting museums and theme parks, and during special closed weekends at the start and end of term we organise large on-site events for all the girls. Previous examples included the Greatest Showman circus performers, an outdoor movie night, a summer music festival, and a giant fun fair within the School grounds.

What interactions do pupils have with other schools, in particular boys' schools?

Whilst Wycombe is a single-sex school we recognise the importance of our pupils being able to learn to work and socialise with boys. There are weekend social activities with boys' schools such as Eton, Harrow and Radley throughout the year. We also run a number of conferences and events with boys' schools, such as the Sixth Form Leadership Summit, the Management Conference, joint subject lectures for Psychology, Medicine and many others besides. These provide great learning and friendship-making opportunities.

What sports are played, and how do you cater for different abilities?

We have competition squads for all girls who wish to take part in Lacrosse, Netball, Squash, Swimming, Football, Gymnastics, Athletics, Cricket, Tennis and Badminton. We run recreational clubs where fixtures and competitions are arranged annually based on attendee numbers in Hockey, Climbing and Dance. In addition to these we offer a wide range of Sports Paid Extras, these run when a minimum number is reached and include Ballet, Modern, Tap, Horse Riding, Rowing, Squash lessons, Pilates, Karate, Kickboxing, Golf, Fencing and Trampolining. These last two also offer competition opportunities.

Our department mission statement is based around the principle of 'Participation creates Performance'. It is for this reason we ensure any pupil who wishes to train and play is offered the opportunity to be part of a squad. Squads are divided into ability groups at the top end and become more varied towards the bottom and throughout the whole season movement both up and down between teams is common place. This encourages hard work and talent development across all teams and age groups. Differentiation is put in place between teams whilst focusing on a common training goal so that movement between teams can be a smooth transition.

What is the policy on mobile phones?

We recognise that technology has both its advantages and disadvantages so we aim to educate pupils to self-regulate their use of mobile devices. Pupils may bring a mobile phone with them, but Upper III (Year 7) are only allowed them for 30 minutes in the evening, Lower IV (Year 8) are only allowed them in the boarding houses after school, and Upper IV (year 9) upwards are allowed to have them on their person during the day. Phones can only be used in lessons under the direction of the teacher for teaching and learning purposes, and are not permitted in the dining room as we encourage face to face communication, rather than phone to phone.

How big a problem is bullying and how is it dealt with?

We hope that all pupils have a positive experience at Wycombe and flourish. However, where bullying or friendship issues occur then a pupil's Housemistress will lead on investigating and finding out what has happened. We take bullying very seriously and it is not tolerated amongst our community, and we work hard to resolve instances with reconciliation work and sanctions as appropriate. We are proud that there are relatively few occurrences and that girls are very supportive of one another within their year groups and boarding houses.

Is it getting harder for Wycombe Abbey girls to get Oxbridge places?

Oxbridge numbers have been very consistent over the last 12 years, with around 33% of the year group gaining places each year.

What are you most proud of at Wycombe Abbey and what would you change?

We are proud to be a world-class school with outstanding results and an exciting academic enrichment programme, a broad co-curricular offer and an emphasis on service to others, pastoral care and wellbeing. Our holistic approach to education, combined with the benefits of boarding equips our girls for the global future ahead. We are always seeking to build on and improve this offer through a dynamic programme of innovation and future thinking.

What advice do you have for girls and parents considering Wycombe Abbey?

If you are unsure about whether to make the leap from day school to boarding, as many of you will be, my advice would be to keep an open mind. Having never been away from my parents for more than a week before Wycombe, I was quite anxious when I first joined, but the homesickness was worth it. With boarding comes incredible experiences and lifelong friendships.

Wycombe is an academically rigorous school but don't let that put you off. The continual support that we receive from our teachers and house staff makes the work much less stressful and they are always there for a quick chat or further support if you need it.

Finally, if you are someone who is not solely interested in academics but have passions that extend beyond the curriculum, I would definitely recommend Wycombe. There are so many amazing ways to explore your interests which would not be possible at many other schools, especially not day schools.

How was your Sixth Form experience?

We haven't completed Sixth Form yet but so far, it's been great. I was considering going to Westminster but decided to stay and I'm so glad I did. It's great to have that little bit more freedom than you had further down the school, but I think the thing that is most important is how your relationship with your teachers changes as you enter Sixth Form. A Levels are a very different learning style to GCSEs and to be able to develop such strong relationships with your teachers makes this change a lot easier. It's also been a joy to get to know all the girls who have joined in the LVI. Some of my closest friends at Wycombe now I've only known for a year, and it again amazes me how a boarding school environment enables you to become close so quickly.

How do the youngest girls get involved in school life?

From LIV (year 8) girls will be in mixed-aged dorms, so that's the main point of interaction with older girls as you form friendships with those in your house, but there are many other ways that younger girls are involved in the school community. If you're musical, you can be in a school orchestra, and if you like dance you can audition to be in one of the many groups that performs in Highlights, the school dance show. Getting involved in these co-curricular activities also means you get to know a lot of girls outside your year group, making Wycombe a really tight-knit community.

Whole school events also ensure that girls across the age range are involved in school life. We come together as a community every week for Whole School Singing and inter-house sports competitions. In the summer term, we also have whole-school barbecues out on the grass, which everyone really enjoys.

Does each House have its own persona? How does the House you are in influence a girl's overall experience at Wycombe Abbey?

Each House does have its own persona but these are by no means fixed. As new girls come into the Houses, the Houses change with them, meaning that you can talk to seniors and discover that your own House used to win all of the music events, when now you thrive in sports! This is good in that there's no stereotype whatsoever based on what House you go into. It's also important to say that everyone thinks that the House they end up in is the best. We become very passionate about that! None of us would want to be in any other House and we're so grateful to be where we are.

How did you find boarding for the first time, and how does the school accommodate first timers?

Junior House is a great way to introduce girls to boarding and a new school. Being with the rest of your year group allows you to gain a little more confidence before being in mixed aged dorms, and also encourages friendships within your own year. Over the first few weeks, phone usage is limited, a good way to encourage those who may be slightly less comfortable to step out of their shell and really make the most of being at Wycombe. Possibly most importantly, the Junior House staff are so caring and are always there for anyone feeling slightly homesick or just wanting a chat.

Further up in the school, the House team ensures that you quickly settle into boarding life. I found the pastoral staff were so understanding in my first few weeks' boarding, which I found somewhat tough. I think everyone being so incredibly friendly really helped me to settle into Wycombe, and by half-term I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else!

What do you normally have for lunch or supper?

For lunch there is a counter for special dietary requirements, two main course options at least and sometimes a third, as well as a staple of pasta and jacket potatoes. There is then a salad bar and an area for cold lunch food. There is also always a hot pudding if you want it as well as jelly and cold puddings near the fruit section. Dinner is similar but slightly more limited.

A new catering company started in January 2020 and they've made a massive effort to get a real sense of what we like more and what we like less, which means that they can adjust menu plans in response to feedback.

What have you enjoyed most about Wycombe Abbey?

That's hard - there are so many things! I think the thing which makes Wycombe is the people. There is such a diverse group of people here and it really makes the school so full of character. The friends I have made here I know are people I will

continue to see long after we leave Wycombe; they're almost a second family. I love the atmosphere, and I think it's this that makes Wycombe such a special place.

What makes a Wycombe Abbey girl?

A Wycombe Abbey Girl is not afraid to be herself (even if that is a little weird) and is also not judgemental of others. She loves to learn and her curiosity makes her excited to find out new things. A Wycombe girl also has the ability and passion to contribute in any and all of the enormous range of activities and opportunities the school has on offer. Lastly, a Wycombe girl is kind.

How easy is it for Sixth Form new joiners to integrate?

I think it's pretty easy for new Sixth formers to integrate. LVI is our last year in our Senior Houses so we're all together in a 'mons' area with our own common room and kitchen. This makes it easy to get to know your year in house very quickly. Lessons are also in smaller groups and more discursive in Sixth Form so it's easier to get to know people within them.

Additionally, every Monday and Friday the year bonds at 'Sixth Form Café', which is an opportunity to chat to people who do different subjects to you. By the end of the first term, I had genuinely forgotten that some people hadn't been at the school with me for 5 years.

What do you know now that you wish you'd known in U11?

That I should take every opportunity I could before I got too busy! There are some really fun trips and activities which I wish I had appreciated more and taken advantage of. I was also very homesick in my first term of Wycombe so I wish I could tell U3 me that it will all be alright! I am so incredibly glad that I stuck it out because I love Wycombe so much now. It can be quite hard to adjust to such a different environment and I was a little unprepared for just how different it would be, but it was definitely worth getting through the first few weeks to enjoy all that Wycombe has had to offer me!

What are the five academic qualities and how does Wycombe Abbey teach them?

We identified Risk Taking, Resourcefulness, Determination, Reflection and Development as being the five key academic qualities. It is not possible to "teach" these as such, but they occur naturally if pupils are exposed to tasks and activities with the appropriate level of challenge.

What does Wycombe Abbey offer that other schools don't?

I think that without doubt the greatest asset of Wycombe Abbey is its passionate teaching staff who have the academic credentials and love of their subject which is necessary to inspire the next generation. Boarding helps facilitate both strong pastoral care and helps foster collaboration, which is a key 21<sup>st</sup> century skill.

How do you guide to students to reach top universities?

Again knowledgeable staff are crucial to this, and several staff including myself have been admissions tutors at Oxbridge or have come from academic research backgrounds. As a teaching body we know precisely what Universities are looking for, and I would say that providing the necessary skills for elite universities is a key priority right the way through the curriculum. It is crucial that we promote critical thinking and problem solving right from the start of U11, as these skills take a long time to acquire, and if left too late you can end up with pupils who attain highly on public examinations but fall short for entry to top universities.

Do you also promote question asking, no matter what the questions?

Absolutely!! I mentioned earlier that the academic qualities we promote require pupils to be given work which is suitably rich and stimulating. However, this is only possible if the prevailing culture is one which is supportive, and where making mistakes is not just tolerated but encouraged. The qualities of reflection and development are about encouraging a growth mindset where pupils expect to see their understanding grow over time and counters an unhealthy perfectionism. Boarding helps significantly in terms of giving pupils more opportunity to ask questions, and it is always amazing how much learning can take place in the questions which are asked on the walk to the pitches or on the way to Chapel.

How do you teach thinking outside of the box?

Again, this is not something that can be taught and is just a matter of giving plenty of opportunity for pupils to think independently. As an example I always give my U11 classes the question about the ice creams in their first problem solving lesson in the Creative and Critical Thinking course. I think it is also ingrained in the teaching practice across the curriculum where "spoon feeding" is ruthlessly avoided and where we encourage pupils to always think for themselves. In too many schools teaching practice revolves around telling pupils precisely what to do and expecting them to repeat this, and while this will work up to a point it will not get A\*s at A Level and it will not prepare children for the flexibility of thought expected by top universities or employers.

How are girls taught to take risks?

As a teaching staff we have been exploring the work of Mary Myatt who speaks about creating a culture that is "high challenge - low threat", where pupils are exposed to rich and challenging activities but without an associated fear of failure. Children take risks when they know they are in a loving and supportive environment.

What will the curriculum look like in five years' time?

To answer this question I think one should look at the most progressive universities in the US, where creativity, digital skills and entrepreneurship are increasingly replacing more traditionally acquired academic knowledge. I therefore expect creative subjects in schools, like Art and Design and DT Engineering, to see the biggest growth, and I further expect to see the subjects almost completely reinvented as technological skills in high spec software and machines. I'd generally expect to see digital skills becoming more and more mainstream, and I expect the greater



collaboration that is facilitated by technology to be a lasting legacy from the Covid-19 experience. I'd also be shocked if curricula did not become far more global in their focus, as pupils who only have an appreciation of Western culture will not be equipped for the modern international world.

Pleasingly I think that Wycombe Abbey is ahead of the curve in each of these areas, and in particular the vast array of different backgrounds that our pupils come from, with thirty nationalities represented, makes the Wycombe Abbey a vibrant international community and helps our pupils develop an essential global awareness.

Is there a balance between structured and independent learning?

Yes! Indeed I think that is the greatest advantage of boarding with pupils having free access to all the School's rich resources in their free time. Any Sunday afternoon would see the Art rooms, libraries and computer suites full of pupils working independently with the ability to follow their own academic and creative passions. There is no Victorian style silent prep time and evenings give pupils a great opportunity to either work alone or to collaborate with their peers, but still with all the School's facilities and teaching staff contact if they need it.

How is everyone given an equal chance of excelling?

I think one of the remarkable features of Wycombe Abbey is how many pupils end up excelling at something, and I think this is a function of the range of different opportunities which are on offer. Pupils whose passions lie in Music, Sport or Drama will not only find world class facilities but they will also have exceptional teachers and coaches on hand.

In terms of providing pupils with an equal chance of excelling I think the tutorial and boarding system is important as it really guarantees that no pupils are missed and that it is possible to give support and attention to all pupils. In a day school environment I think it is easier for individual pupils to become slightly anonymous.

How do you support students who are not top of the class?

There are of course all the things that you would expect from a well-resourced independent school, especially outstanding SEND provision and small class sizes. Subjects that are set according to attainment, like Mathematics, enable very small teaching sets for those pupils who need it. However, I also feel that there is an incredibly positive collaborative culture within the pupil community, with higher attaining pupils providing help, support and encouragement to their peers. Sometimes this is organised within Houses, with older girls providing mentoring, but more often it happens organically within friendship groups. I think the prevailing culture of high achievement and the esprit du corps amongst the pupils is central to Wycombe Abbey's success.

Do many pupils experience homesickness? What support is available to them?

Girls are kept very busy during the day with lessons and life in the House is always busy and welcoming. However, it is normal for girls to miss home. This is where girls being in mixed dorms is key as there is always an older girl close by to comfort. The House team will also be there to support girls who are struggling with not being at home. Additionally, because girls are allowed to go home most weekends this also helps them to settle, but for girls who can't get home there are lots of weekend activities to keep them occupied.

How are day girls supported by the school?

Day Boarders are integrated within the other houses in the School. Housemistresses, Tutors and Heads of Year are there for Day Boarders and houses often arrange Day Boarder teas to catch up. There is a particular Day Boarder representative on the School Council as well. Indeed for many the only difference between Day Boarders and Full Boarders is where they sleep at night.

How do you deal with safeguarding the girls on and off campus?

Safeguarding is at the heart of our Wycombe Abbey community and each member of staff has a role to play in ensuring the young people in our care remain safe. The girls are educated, through the Wellbeing programme, Boarding House and Tutor periods in how to keep themselves safe online, and the 5<sup>th</sup> form and above have bespoke Child Protection training to raise their awareness as they take more positions of responsibility in the School. The girls are reminded regularly of the support that is available to them both in and out of School. The whole staff have annual Safeguarding training and there is a designated Safeguarding team who work to promote the safeguarding culture.

What does the school do to look after the girls when they get sick?

We have a Health Centre which is always staffed by Nurses and we have a School Doctor too who the girls can make appointments with. Should a girl require extra medical attention, they will stay in the Health Centre rather than the Boarding House. If this happens, parents will be informed and if they wish they can of course take their child home to recover.

How much pressure do pupils feel to be 'successful'?

A little pressure is beneficial to us all as it makes us productive and motivated. However, the team around each child is very quick to spot when pressure maybe becoming too much for the girls in their care. The girls are highly ambitious and we find that it is the girls who are most likely to put the pressure on themselves to succeed. Wycombe Abbey promotes a culture of balance in which the young people in our care are far more likely to thrive. The Wellbeing department works with the girls to define what success is, what it feels like and what it looks like. They also learn to challenge the assumptions that high levels of pressure are the only way to experience success.

How often can girls come home, and what are the arrangements for international students?

The term is structured around closed weekends at the beginnings and ends of term where pupils stay in for the weekend. On these weekends there is an array of School and House activities. There are also short leaves each half of term where all the pupils go home for the weekend for some time away from School. Other weekends are “open weekends”, where pupils may go home after commitments on a Saturday and return in time for Evensong or the Junior House thought for the day on Sunday evening.

What are the most important soft skills that Wycombe Abbey develops in its pupils?

Time management and strong work ethic: the girls from LIV (year 8) upwards are in charge of their own learning, with no official supervised study periods. This quickly makes them independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning. The Housemistress and Tutor are there to provide additional support when needed. Teamwork: the girls are constantly working in different teams throughout their time with us at Wycombe Abbey. They become extremely skilled in working with different people who will think and operate in different ways. The co-curricular projects, Duke of Edinburgh Award, house competitions such as the UIV dance competition and the Carrington Award programme all give them experience of working in and leading a team. These are safe environments in which they can make and learn from their mistakes and successes. Communication skills: Wycombe Abbey girls are articulate and happy to share their opinion with confidence. They learn to listen to the opinions of others and know that the world is made better by having a mix of ideas and ways of thinking. They are able to stand in front of a large group of people, a room of their peers, at a dinner party or whilst networking with ease and know how to present their best selves.

How do you ensure no-one is excluded in a fast-paced environment?

The vast majority of pupils flourish within the fast-paced and academically rigorous environment of Wycombe Abbey, many of them looking for further ways to extend themselves through competitions and extra-curricular activities. There is, however, always support available for pupils who need it. This is provided by Tutors, Housemistresses and Heads of Year as well as through our dedicated Learning Enhancement department who offer a variety of different types of support including individual lessons in a number of subjects.

Can you explain your approach to mixed age boarding?

Senior Boarding Houses will mix up the years into different dorms so that a spread of L4 – L5 are in each room. This helps build the family within the Boarding House and the feeling of a sisterhood which is key to life at Wycombe. This also helps girls learn how to be considerate to the needs of others and the younger girls are able to learn from the older girls.

How does the school tackle bullying?

Like all schools we are completely opposed to bullying in all of its forms. The School works hard to promote kind supportive relationships between pupils both within their year groups and across year groups. The House family system is particular good at

helping to forge these bonds. The School promotes anti-bullying messages through Anti-Bullying week and Digital Awareness week each year. Our Housemistress, Tutors and Heads of Year give particular support to pupils with any issues they face and all concerns related to bullying are followed up thoroughly. Wherever a pupil feels they need support, for any reason, there are always staff available including fully trained counsellors and our peer listening scheme.

What is a typical weekend like at Wycombe Abbey?

Every weekend is jam-packed with weekend activities that allow us to enjoy some entertainment and downtime after an academically rigorous and busy week at School. We attend Saturday School in the morning and Saturday afternoons are usually dedicated to competitive sports matches and competitions against other local schools. For the rest of the weekend, however, the girls can choose from an amazing choice of activities, some may be internal, such as Milkshake Bars, Spa Sessions and Movie Night, musical and drama activities whilst in other instances there are opportunities to go to Thorpe Park and shopping trips to London. Once a year, there is even a funfair brought to the school, with rides, ice-cream machines and more! Girls are allowed to go home for most weekends, however, many opt to stay in school; I know that when I first started boarding, the exciting weekend activities available kept me engaged and busy and helped to keep the homesickness at bay - I barely wanted to leave when the time came!

How much time is available for co-curricular activities in a day?

Girls have a few free periods during the day between their lesson times which can be taken up by extra-curricular activities. However, this will all be fitted around timetabled academic lessons, so girls do not need to worry about missing those. Activities during the day consist of instrumental music lessons, speech and drama lessons or sports team practices, just to name a few. Later on in the day, there are other opportunities to go off-site for horse-riding or participate in evening activities.

How are girls' co-curricular activities monitored, so they strike a balance with academic work?

Tutors review timetables with girls one-to-one at the start of each term to assess the balance of various commitments. We track the academic progress of girls routinely and this balance will also be reviewed if pupils are falling behind. Our provision of bespoke timetables reduces the impact that one-to-one extra lessons have on their studies, as pupils never miss academic lessons for routine extra lessons.

Do girls or their parents pick co-curricular activities?

In most cases, we encourage pupils to make decisions on which co-curricular interests that would like to pursue. Some activities, such as talks or special events, do not take place every week and girls will choose to attend those that interest them. Other activities, such as Model United Nations or Debating, meet weekly but there is no compulsion to attend every session and pupils will attend as they wish. Any activity that involves an additional charge has to be approved by parents after

discussion with their daughters. This includes one-to-one Extra lessons, such as learning a musical instrument, and some trips.

What is the range of activities on offer?

The range of activities on offer here truly is limitless. In addition to the standard extracurricular options of Sports, Music and Drama, girls can also be involved with Creative Writing Society, Beekeeping Society, Model United Nations, Modern Languages Society, Maths Society and many, many more. It's safe to say that whatever your interests, there will be a society or club that you can join in order to come together (usually once or twice a week) with like-minded individuals to explore your interests and develop your thinking. Many of these societies are student-run and this means that new activities are always popping up that reflect the interests of the current students. Especially during the younger years, girls are encouraged to visit the annual 'Societies Fair', and try their hand at a many different activities in order to discover any hidden talents or passions. Crucially, all of the societies and clubs are hugely inclusive, so whether you're a total beginner or a seasoned professional, you will receive all the support and encouragement you could ask for.

Are all activities offered to all pupils?

The majority of activities are offered to all pupils. Some activities are restricted to older pupils as they require more maturity or physical development to participate. These activities include, for example, Model United Nations, enterprise and rowing. LAMDA drama and public speaking lessons are only available to pupils in the LIV (Year 8) and above because the girls benefit from a full drama and performance programme in their first year.

Are co-curricular activities compulsory?

Some activities are compulsory with the level of choice increasing as the girls grow older. Some physical activity is compulsory for all pupils, and it plays an important role in ensuring good health and wellbeing. Team sports help develop skills such as teamwork, confidence and perseverance for the youngest year groups. Participation is also strongly encouraged in House-based sports competitions, with the shared experience building community and House spirit. All girls participate in Whole School Singing once a week and there is also a compulsory singing session for the Upper III (Year 7).

How many co-curricular activities do most girls do?

It depends on the girl. Some girls prefer occupying spare time with co-curricular activities more than others. There are girls who only participate in one co-curricular activity a week because it is a passion that they want to focus on, while others do more. While there is no set limit to the number of co-curricular activities that girls can do, it is still important to maintain a balance between work, activities and rest.

What opportunities are there for girls to develop leaderships skills?

We encourage girls to develop leadership skills in all group-based activities and in all year groups, from captaining sports teams to training other girls in debating or Model United Nations. Girls are also encouraged to pursue their own projects as much as possible, such as establishing and organising charity events. All societies are headed by pupils, who take on genuine responsibility for organising activities. All Sixth Form girls are taught about the theory of leadership as part of the Carrington Award, which analyses different modern styles including authentic, servant and transformational leadership. They also receive one-to-one feedback on their leadership skills during our Management Conference and Leadership Summit, which both last two days during the Lower VI. All year groups elect a number of members to the School Council and, in the Sixth Form, there is the opportunity to take on a wide range of leadership roles including School Prefects, Head of House, Sports Captains and Heads of Societies.

#### What trips are available to pupils?

The school offers more than 450 trips each year, ranging from a weekend trip to the local shopping mall to large international expeditions. In the last year, girls have visited all five continents of the world including a visit to the First World War battlefields; a netball tour to South Africa; Model United Nations trips to Ireland, Spain and New York; an expedition to the Peruvian Amazon; a ski trip to North America; a science study trip to university labs in Japan; and participating in a leadership summit in Singapore. Academic departments organise a range of visits relevant to the curriculum such as drama trips to London theatres or Classics trips to the British Museum. Trips at the weekend have fun as their only aim and include ice skating, Cadburys World and the Warner Bros. Harry Potter studios. Our sports teams regularly visit other schools and sports grounds to compete, and the Model United Nations team is often on the road participating in conferences around the country.

#### How do you make sure new joiners integrate well?

We allocate a buddy for each new girl. The buddy will not only explain the routines and show her how to tie her House tie, but also helps the new girl to meet new friends. New LVI girls will also be given house responsibilities through which they can get to know girls in other year groups. There are also events and activities organised both in the house and for the year group to give opportunities for girls to get to know each other.

#### What support is given to international students joining for Sixth Form?

Each girl is supported by their Housemistress, Tutor and Head of Year to suit their needs. If a girl needs specific support in English, for example, the Learning Enhancement department offers one-to-one lessons. This is regardless of whether they are an international student or not. As a full Boarding School, we have many girls who stay in for weekends to benefit from the many activities on offer. There are also opportunities to embrace our diverse community in whole School events such as Cultural Appreciation Day.

When do 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils choose their subjects, and how many do they do?

We are asked to make a general agreement of our subject choices in the autumn term of U5, however, within reason you can change up until the summer holidays. Pupils must choose at least four to start with and then some will drop down to three at various points throughout the LVI, after discussions with Tutors and Department Heads.

What support is given to university applications / careers choices?

In the Sixth Form we are given incredible support throughout the application process. It begins in LVI when you have regular individual meetings with your House Tutor where you go through what subject you are considering studying and the criteria needed to apply for this subject at University. These regular meetings keep you on track and encourage you to consider a range of options before narrowing down in the UVI. You also have a wider discussion about how you want this to set you up for your future goals. We have career seminars from the UV to the UVI where you are able to ask questions and receive advice from people in a range of job sectors. The Sixth Form Carrington Award gives us tools to navigate the working world - from writing CVs to job interviews. As a way to explore where we would like to study, universities from across the world give talks at Wycombe so girls of any year are able to begin considering what sort of institution and further education is suited to them.

What sort of subjects do girls go on to study?

A very broad range. All the sciences – pure and applied – are well-represented, as are all arts, humanities, and social sciences. Medicine accounts for approximately 10-15% of the applications.

What support does the school offer for Oxbridge and US university applications?

The school has University Preparation Lessons tailored for each subject. During these we do practice questions for the pre-interview assessments which are required for most Oxbridge courses. We also study and discuss other topics and content which is not covered in the syllabus to help broaden our knowledge of our chosen subjects.

In addition, the School offers a number of ways to prepare for the interview. Teachers are always willing to do practice interviews and the school also enlists external companies to give mock interviews.

In my experience, throughout the process, many different staff from across the School were always happy to give advice and help me with anything to do with university applications such as subject choices, university choices, personal statements, and any other questions about the UCAS process.

The School offers wide ranging support for applying to the US as it is a multi-faceted and long process. The application to the US requires a full picture of the person so the teachers make sure they know who is applying early on so they can advise them on the standardised testing, CommonApp and individual university questions. This is facilitated by individual Tutors and the School's US Universities counsellor who supports the progression of the application through the Sixth Form. We are given the platform to find out about US Universities through talks given by Heads of Admissions of phenomenal American institutions throughout our time at Wycombe.

Can 6<sup>th</sup> form girls go out at weekends? How much more responsibility are they given?

We can go out every weekend except for the first and last weekend of term. The majority do go home or will go out for the day, however, some chose to stay in at the weekend, which is also enjoyable as there is always something to do. We have a lot more responsibility as we are given more trust and independence.

Do Sixth Form girls wear uniforms?

In LVI girls wear the school uniform however instead of their House coloured ties they wear a black tie striped with their house colour. If you are a Prefect in the LVI you wear a dark grey tie with the Wycombe Abbey Emblem of a dove patterned across it. In the UVI girls are able to wear their own clothes.

How has Sixth Form helped to shape you?

Sixth Form at Wycombe Abbey has helped me to gain independence. As a result of the strong sense of trust between teachers and girls, we are progressively given more freedom and responsibility throughout the two years. These have included learning how to cook, do my laundry, more control over my time-management and taking up roles of responsibility in House and School. For me, the constant lectures, conferences, and competitions on offer also helped to inspire curiosity and broaden my knowledge in areas outside my A Levels. In particular, the advice and knowledge of my teachers has been invaluable in helping me to develop academically and decide what path I want to take in Higher Education.

How does 6<sup>th</sup> form boarding work?

In the LVI, girls are the Mons (Monitors) in their Senior Houses. They take on positions of leadership and responsibility, acting as role models for the younger girls in the House. In the UVI, they move to Clarence House, which is ten individual units, each with its own kitchen and single dorms. Girls cook for themselves, do their laundry, and otherwise have much more freedom and responsibility than in their Senior Houses. We see this as a kind of interstitial experience, preparing the girls for life at university and beyond.

Please email the Admissions Team [admissions@wycombeabbey.com](mailto:admissions@wycombeabbey.com) if you have further questions.