



WESTMINSTER  
SCHOOL

# A WESTMINSTER EDUCATION

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#### **ABOUT WESTMINSTER**

Westminster is an independent boarding and day school with a long history, a distinctive ethos, and a unique sense of place.

It is an ancient school in the heart of London, the only one still to occupy its original site, immediately next to Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Its origins can be traced to a charity school established by the Benedictine monks of the Abbey of St Peter, and it is more than likely that this spiritual and educational tradition goes back as far as 960 AD.

After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540, King Henry VIII personally ensured the School's survival by statute. His daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, confirmed the royal patronage in 1560 whereby the Abbey and School formed the one collegiate foundation. She is therefore celebrated as the School's Founder and her importance is marked by a statue in Little Dean's Yard by Matthew Spender OW, unveiled by her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in June 2010.

Today, Westminster is one of the leading academic schools in the country. Pupils achieve exceptional examination results and entrance to some of the top universities in the world. It is a busy, passionate and purposeful place where independent and deep thinking is enjoyed, encouraged and respected by all, and where holistic excellence is nurtured and valued.

Fundamentally, we want our pupils to engage in a constructive, thoughtful process of loyal dissent. While we encourage them to embrace the principles of a liberal education, respect genuine scholarship and appreciate a deep and rigorous learning process, they are equally encouraged to challenge, question and explore the content of that learning, to push boundaries and overturn expectations – mindful at all times of the feelings of others.

Most importantly, we want our pupils to use their skills and intelligence to help others, to build up not put down, and to benefit society. For centuries, Westminster School has been the educational cradle of some very distinguished people. Our task is to help future generations of pupils to follow in their footsteps and make a positive difference in the world.

## **OUR ETHOS**

The ethos of the School resides in the tradition reflected in the 1560 Elizabethan Charter, which declares: "The youth which is growing to manhood [today we would properly say adulthood], as tender shoots in the wood of our state, shall be liberally instructed in good books to the greater honour of the state".

Westminster is a highly academic school where individual and institutional excellence are expected and promoted in an atmosphere of open-minded enquiry without dogma, prejudice or unthinking conformity. This is what we mean by 'liberal', enshrined in a broad curriculum which supports the widest possible range of disciplines and activities and encourages the search for deeper understanding which goes well beyond any examination syllabus.

Central to Westminster's approach is the open dialogue between teachers and their pupils, both inside and outside the classroom. This dialogue inspires passion for the subject, conveys knowledge and develops skills of informed, rational, independent thought which sustain a lifelong love of learning. What makes Westminster so special is that enjoying one's learning, seeking true mastery of a subject, is warmly encouraged by pupils and teachers alike, supported by the administrative and support staff whose work enables everyone to flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect, generosity and compassion.

Thus, while academic and other attainments are highly prized, the School is fully committed to the development of each pupil's moral, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing and development. Westminster pupils are all individuals, but they tend to share a commitment to the pursuit of excellence, critical engagement and ethical action. These qualities equip them for admission to the top universities worldwide, and for success and fulfilment in whatever careers they choose to pursue as well-informed, well-rounded and kind, responsible adults.

The atmosphere at Westminster is happy, busy and purposeful. The pupils are intellectually, socially, morally and politically engaged. They enjoy opportunities to articulate their views, and to listen to other perspectives - in the classroom, society meetings, twice weekly services in Westminster Abbey, and in Latin Prayers. Everyone is welcome, and all may have a voice.

Just as the Founder wished, the School seeks to prepare responsible young people to lead good and useful public and private lives far beyond their formative years at Westminster.

## OUR VALUES

The values of an institution reflect its ethos. At Westminster, they serve as a benchmark against which words and actions (and the values themselves) can be measured or tested. That iterative process in turn informs the ethos and shapes the evolution of the institution.

The following might be said to characterise a Westminster education. It is a series of statements designed neither to exhort, nor to exhaust, but hopefully to encourage.

- *Enjoying an academic education in which we are “liberally instructed in good books” and encouraged to develop intellectual curiosity, critical self-reflection and a passion for seeking truth through evidence, informed discussion and a healthy scepticism.*
- *Cherishing a culture which balances ambition with compassion, integrity and empathy so that each individual, with all their particular enthusiasms, can flourish safely and happily in a climate of mutual respect and physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.*
- *Embracing opportunities to be creative and collaborative, recognising that through the arts, sport, spiritual exploration and service we can develop our full range of talents and build resilience, confidence and insight as fully rounded human beings.*
- *Challenging prejudice, promoting justice and committing to fairness, equality and inclusion in all our interactions with individuals and communities, proudly conscious that we are a progressive school in the heart of one of the world’s most diverse cities.*
- *Promoting personal responsibility in all that we do, including our behaviour towards others and respect for our shared environment, so that subsequent generations have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a liberal education and to make a difference.*

Westminster has always cherished idiosyncrasy. At the same time, we know that individual talent is stimulated and supported by the collective pursuit and celebration of excellence.

By working together, with kindness, resilience, rigour and respect, we can each be nourished intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually as we strive to be good citizens and to achieve distinction.

## **OUR VISION**

The School's vision is predicated on its ethos and values and seeks to outline the strategic direction of travel over the medium to long term. The precise means by which these goals are to be achieved constitute the School Development Plan, which is reviewed annually.

Broadly speaking, our vision for the 2020s can be expressed as three main objectives, ever mindful of the need for patience and humility which is implicit in the School motto: *Dat Deus Incrementum*.

### **1. Transforming lives**

We are committed to widening access and becoming needs-blind on entry, as well as supporting families in the School who encounter unexpected difficulties. Mechanisms to achieve these goals include the Ben Jonson Foundation and the George Herbert Fund both of which are supported by our generous donors.

### **2. Transforming experience**

We want to ensure that the experience of all our pupils – drawn from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible – continues to evolve and improve over time. This will be achieved by structural and curriculum reviews, capital expenditure, and the harnessing of digital opportunities. A commitment to increase diversity, equality and inclusion in all areas of school life will further enrich the experience of all and equip pupils for informed and sensitive engagement with the twenty-first century world.

### **3. Transforming impact**

We believe in the value of a liberal education and want to work with local and global partners to contribute to positive outcomes for young people in the UK and beyond. This will be achieved by existing programmes like Platform and Horizons, by national and overseas ventures, and by digital means in order to have the greatest impact.

Taken together, our vision is to cherish, sustain and develop a community of well-rounded scholars, irrespective of financial means, background or beliefs, who care deeply about the life of the mind and the lives of others and who have the educational wherewithal to be good ancestors for those who will build upon our stewardship.

*Floreat!*