



Old Palace *of* John Whitgift School

Independent Girls' School

Pre School to Sixth Form



"The more able... progress particularly well as a result of the stimulus provided by the school for both academic and talent enrichment."

ISI Inspection Report 2016



Realising Your Academic Potential

The Palace **Group**

For academic scholars and
high achievers



Stafford



Anselm



Hatton



Laud

The Three Cs

An Old Palace education allows our students to become confident, capable and connected individuals, well positioned for a successful and meaningful future.

Confident

Our students' confidence grows during their time at Old Palace through the excellent pastoral care and support provided by all staff, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Capable

Our students become capable in their academic subjects through the excellent teaching provided at the school and through developing their own independent learning skills.

Connected

Our students benefit from the school being a smaller learning environment and on joining us they immediately feel part of the Old Palace family.

What is the Palace Group?

Old Palace is committed to ensuring each student **fulfils their academic potential**. We believe that girls thrive when they feel **capable, confident and connected to the world around them**.

We understand that all students are individuals with their own areas of strength, and as such our teaching is tailored to meet their needs. Students who have been identified as having exceptional academic potential, either at entry or throughout their time at Old Palace are invited to join the Palace Group.



The Palace Group includes:

- Students who have been awarded Academic or Music Scholarships at 11+
- Students who have demonstrated exceptional ability in lessons and assessments
- Students who have been awarded Academic Scholarships or Exhibitions at 16+



This booklet outlines the specialist provision we provide for our most able students. Please contact our Deputy Head Academic, Ms Hannah Ford if you would like further information.

Mentoring

Personalised guidance

All students in the Palace Group have a **staff mentor** who meets with them regularly to support them in their academic and personal development.

The one-to-one or small group format of the mentoring programme means students' progress is monitored and personalised guidance can be given. The mentoring programme is also an excellent preparation for interviews and for the tutorial teaching style favoured by top universities.



The mentor will:

- get to know the student's academic interests; encourage her to talk about what she is particularly enjoying at school, what her future plans are, what she is reading, what extra- curricular activities, lectures, trips or events she is involved in and what extension work she is doing.
- discuss any concerns she may have about her studies and guide her to think through strategies for addressing these issues – is she doing too much? Afraid of making mistakes? Not challenging herself?
- support her completion of a Palace Group Project (a self-directed research project on a topic outside the curriculum). This might result in a presentation, a piece of writing, a poster or even a musical composition, a play, a work of art or a dance.
- promote lectures, workshops, extra-curricular activities, trips and events related to her academic interests.

In the Classroom

Intellectual challenge – every lesson, every day

The expert teaching staff at Old Palace are committed to providing a challenging curriculum for the most able.

Teachers are aware of the Palace Group students in their classes and differentiate tasks so that they are intellectually stimulated.

Tasks which require problem-solving, creativity, higher-level thinking and advanced subject knowledge are built into lessons and homework. Larger-scale projects, such as the Science Crest Award, develop students' ability to carry out independent research.

Our whole-school Assessment Criteria take into account our high expectations of our most able students. In order to achieve the top grade for academic achievement on their reports, students are expected to demonstrate:

- A consistently outstanding standard of work
- Excellent conceptual understanding
- Completion of a significant number of extension tasks
- Ongoing independent background reading
- Excellent retention of learning over time
- The ability to apply learning in a new context

- Confident use of higher-order thinking skills
- Concise, eloquent and accurate written responses
- Well-structured, logical and thorough work

Crown Stickers in students' exercise books indicate where a student has successfully completed an extension task, enabling parents to see the frequency with which their daughter is choosing these tasks.



Points of Departure

The curriculum is just the beginning

Targeted at Palace Group students, our vibrant programme of lectures and workshops (known as “Points of Departure” or PoDs) stimulates new interests and motivates students to explore beyond the curriculum.

These take place at school during the lunch break and are led by teaching staff and visiting speakers. They involve a member of staff delivering a session about a topic that particularly interests both themselves and also the students. Each PoD is run by a different member of staff and they are aimed at particular year groups.

Recent PoDs have included:

- Why do humans laugh? A rib tickling mystery...
- Malcolm X: Black Power and Radicalisation in the 1960s
- Murder and Metaphysics: philosophical questions and the law
- The science of scuba diving
- Introduction to game theory
- Inside your head: the neuroscience of the teenage brain.

Palace Group students are encouraged to attend PoDs each term, including those which are targeted at an older age range (for example a Year 8 student attending a PoD for GCSE students).



Palace Group Projects and Presentations

A chance to be heard

Palace Group students are supported to complete termly Palace Group Projects which are independent research projects on topics of their choice.

The process provides rich opportunities for Palace Group students to develop their research and presentation skills which are highly prized by universities and employers.

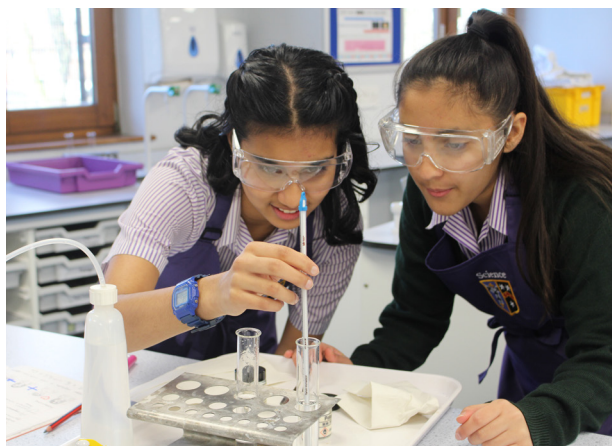
Recent Palace Group projects have included:

- The importance of understanding Yaa Gyasi's Homegoing
- The Big Bang and a timeline of the universe
- The Experience Machine and a world with no pain
- Henri Poincare: a polymath.

Palace Group students are invited to share their research at our Palace Group Presentation Events in front of an audience of staff and students.

These seminar-style events give students the chance to learn from their peers and discover new areas of interest whilst developing their public speaking skills.

In Years 9 and 10 students have the opportunity to develop these skills further by completing a Level 2 HPQ (Higher Project Qualification) which is a nationally recognised GCSE level research qualification.



Academic Enrichment

A chance to take your passion further

Our full programme of academic enrichment is targeted towards the interests and abilities of Palace Group students.

The termly 'Palace Group Post' highlights opportunities for students' to develop their individual areas of interest, and each department creates a challenging curriculum which reaches beyond the examination specifications to engage and inspire.



Recent opportunities have included:

- BAFTA Young Game Designers competition
- CREST award
- ESU Debating Competition
- Faraday STEM challenge
- Interschool Classics Quiz
- "Joutes Oratoires" French Debating Competition
- Music Composition Competitions
- Peterhouse College Cambridge Christopher Marlowe Competition
- Poetry Writing Competitions
- Radio 2 500 Words
- RGS Young Geographer of the Year
- Science Challenges and Olympiads
- UKMT Mathematics Individual and Team Challenges.



Extra-Curricular

Opportunity to specialise and try new things

There are more than 120 clubs and societies on offer at Old Palace, where students can pursue their existing interests or try something new.

With a diverse and extensive extra-curricular programme, every day brings opportunities to meet like-minded students. Students are supported to make the most of their time at Old Palace, encouraged to pursue their passions and develop new areas of interest.

Here is a small sample of the extra-curricular activities available:

- Acting Skills Club
- Advanced Flute Choir
- Afro Caribbean Society
- Biology Society
- Carnegie Book Award Shadowing
- 'Challenging Maths' Club
- Chamber Music
- Chemistry Society
- Chess Club
- Classics Club
- Creative Writing Club
- Current Affairs
- Dance Company
- Debating Society
- Economics Society
- Engineering Club
- Geography Society
- History Society
- Improv Club
- Law Society
- Linguistics Club
- MedSoc
- MFL Film Club
- Philosophy Club
- Physics Society
- Piano Trio
- Playwriting Club
- Polyphonic Choir
- Practical Problem-Solving Club
- Psychology Club
- Senior Orchestra
- String Quartets
- Sudoku+ Club
- The Palace Players
- Trio Sonata Group



University Preparation

Personalised guidance every step of the way

In the upper school thoughts inevitably turn to students' individual aspirations in relation to higher education; Palace Group students are supported carefully through this process.

We provide tailored and specialist support for students applying to Oxford and Cambridge, as well as courses at other competitive universities. This includes personalised support and additional academic enrichment opportunities. Students receive one-to-one mentoring and advice regarding the application process including developing their UCAS personal statements, and preparation for the entrance exams and subject interviews.

From Year 10 students are guided through developing their super-curricular profile including enrichment opportunities, wider reading and work experience. Every student is supported to ensure that their applications to university are well developed and

that they are able to speak confidently and knowledgeably about their areas of personal interest.

Students are able to study up to 4 subjects at A-level, and our curriculum is designed each year around the students' choice of subjects.

Students also have the opportunity to gain the level 3 EPQ (Extended Project Qualification), an independent research project under the supervision of a member of staff, preparing them for university-level study.

Students considering applications for Law, Engineering, Medicine and related fields receive timetabled preparation lessons, as well as courses in critical thinking and current affairs as part of our enrichment programme.

Examples of support include:

- Subject specific mentoring from Year 10
- Personalised extension work and reading lists
- Visits to Oxford and Cambridge University open days
- Newnham, Peterhouse and Corpus College essay competitions
- University admission tests (BMAT, HAT, LNAT, CAT etc.) preparation classes
- University Mathematics preparation classes
- Higher Education and Careers lessons for students in Years 12 and 13.
- Interview guidance and multiple mock interviews with experienced staff



**Academic stretch
and challenge**





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Pre School to Sixth Form

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Follow us on:



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The Palace Group

part of the
**john
whitgift
foundation**