



MEET THE HEAD

JO WEBBERN Dunannie, Bedales Pre-Prep

We catch up with Jo Webbern,
head of Dunannie, in Petersfield

How long have you been at Bedales Pre-Prep, Dunannie?

I joined in the summer term of 2010. It was a school that I had known for many years and I quietly harboured the idea of one day becoming the head. The first things that struck me about the school were the transparency, creativity and the mutual respect for one another.

What is the school's ethos?

JH Badley, the founder of Bedales, believed that children should be educated through 'Head, Hand and Heart', so from an early age children are encouraged to develop an inquisitive and enquiring mind, in an environment that fosters their imagination and creative abilities. We want pupils to acquire transferable skills for the future, and for them to learn through 'doing' in an enriching and challenging curriculum.

What is the history of Bedales?

Bedales was founded in 1893 in order to be a humane alternative to late Victorian Schools. The school's motto: 'Work of Each for Weal of All' was much in evidence

in the early days, and underpins our approach today. The school became co-educational in 1899 when it moved from a rented house in Haywards Heath (after which the school is named) to its current location in Steep, Hampshire. The Prep School (Dunhurst) was opened in 1905. The Pre-Prep (Dunannie) started in October 1953 in a handsome Georgian house across the road from the present site. Its first head, Miss Sophie Tatchell, was Froebel-trained and her philosophy lives on today. The school has changed considerably since it was built, with a new library and extended classrooms. Located in the South Downs National Park, the three schools' estate comprises 120 acres of farmland, woods, orchards, playing fields and a lake.

How do you help ensure every student achieves their full potential?

Our pupil ratios are excellent, allowing us to ensure the full development of each child. Parents are warmly welcomed at school, so we are able to develop strong relationships that form the basis for the emotional, physical and academic development of each child.

What feedback have you received from both parents and students?

The children also play a part in how the school is run. Our oldest children ensure that playtimes are happy for everyone with their 'helping hands' approach. Groups of children come and talk to me about occasional concerns, but mostly initiatives and ideas. Our

parent-completed surveys are positive and encouraging but the most useful feedback is that of the daily dialogue we have with our parents.

What have you gained from working at Bedales Pre-Prep?

It's been the happiest and most fulfilling five years of my teaching career. To be surrounded by dedicated, inspirational teachers is a privilege, and together with our parents we work hard to fulfil each child's potential. Dunannie is a school where my beliefs in how best a young child should learn are demonstrated, and where the foundations of a child's education are built. 

bedales.org.uk/pre-prep

