

A local school of exceptional quality

Saffron Walden County High School



Lower School Prospectus



Welcome

At SWCHS, we believe that every child deserves to go to an excellent school. It should be a school that understands them, allows them to flourish and be happy, and helps them to achieve in order to make the best possible academic progress whatever their ability or circumstances. It can do this by providing them with inspiring teaching, a secure and caring environment, expert advice and guidance, and rich and motivating enrichment opportunities.

Our objective is to develop the skills, talents and values of every individual so that they can achieve impressive levels of personal success and go on to make a positive contribution to society. All the evidence demonstrates that SWCHS is such a learning environment and can confidently call itself a local school of exceptional quality.

Our top priority is to ensure that every single student makes the greatest possible progress in their learning and fulfills their academic potential. We expect and encourage every child to aim high and strive for excellence.

We know that students attain highly when they consistently experience teaching which is stimulating, challenging and enthusiastic. We pride ourselves on an approach to teaching and learning that is both creative and innovative and is combined with high expectations around student conduct.

We are a big school – on the outside. Our size allows us to offer an exceptional range of opportunities for your child's benefit. But we are small – on the inside. We do not lose sight of the individual and we work hard to be a school that understands them and allows them to flourish and to be happy. Our skilled and professional staff are dedicated to supporting your child in all that they do so that they can achieve their best.

Innovation & Challenge

The school has been at the forefront of innovative curriculum design over a number of years. As a result, we have developed a broad and balanced curriculum, with personalised pathways, that gives every student the challenge and the opportunity to achieve their personal best. We understand that every student is different, and we draw on our knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses to provide them with high quality information, advice and guidance to inform their curriculum choices at GCSE and A-Level.

The quality of teaching and learning at the school is outstanding. Our highly qualified teachers seek to ensure that every child is stretched and challenged and that lessons are stimulating and engaging. Our ethos encourages learners to be resilient, independent and reflective, with the skills to learn in the many different contexts they will experience in adult life.

We believe in the importance of there being a strong and constructive partnership between home and school. It is vital that parents remain closely involved in their son or daughter's academic progress. For this to work, we recognise the importance of the school providing regular and clear information on a student's progress, as well as there being good channels of communication between school and home.





Exciting and Engaging

Examinations are not the only measure of educational success. That is why we place so much emphasis on providing extra-curricular opportunities. Participation in these activities enables our students to develop a wider range of interests and also to acquire essential personal skills which will be of great benefit to them in their future careers. All the evidence shows that employers and universities value the extra dimension which such activities promote.

There is something for everyone at County High, from the Drama clubs, Duke of Edinburgh Award to Chess Club. Many students learn musical instruments, we have numerous orchestras, bands, choirs and ensembles. Regular concerts in Saffron Hall provide opportunities to showcase musical talents before an audience. The quality of our drama productions is well documented: all students have opportunities to take part in studio or large-scale productions – an immense range of modern theatre is presented....small wonder that we were amongst the first winners of the Arts Council's Artsmark Gold Award.

Involvement in sport is highly valued at SWCHS.

The PE department has a strong commitment to providing both competitive and recreational opportunities in all major sports. Anybody who is keen and wishes to improve their standard is welcome to attend the many sports clubs. Our Sports Centre provides a rich environment to develop sporting skills. As with the Arts, excellence of our provision has been recognised by the Sportsmark Gold Award

Caring & Supportive

Each student is placed in a tutor group when they join County High, with a Form Tutor who comes to know them well as individuals during their time together. Under the leadership of an experienced Year Achievement Coordinator, each student's academic progress and wellbeing is carefully monitored.

The Form Tutor develops a close insight into the student's social and academic development as the student moves up through the school. During tutorials, the Form Tutor and the student review progress in different subjects and identify targets for improvement. This has proved very successful in supporting student progress. Form Tutors help identify obstacles to progress and suggest ways to overcome them. Later on, if examinations and extra-curricular commitments create workload pressures, tutorials can help students plan their time effectively.

Emphasis is placed on civilised standards of behaviour towards others. The main themes are courtesy towards others and pride in ourselves and our school. For example, we expect uniform to be worn properly, litter to be picked up, and students to address members of staff and each other with courtesy. These fundamental values underpin our community and ensure that all children can develop to their full potential in an environment that is caring, respectful and supportive.





Dynamic and Successful

A large majority of our students stay on for post-16 education and are joined by students from other local schools. The Sixth Form at County High offers an exciting and varied curriculum as well as stimulating activities out of the classroom. We seek to ensure that every student achieves their full potential, in whatever field that might be. We firmly believe that the Sixth Form is a stepping stone to higher education or employment and as such we encourage students to develop the skills needed to be successful in a more independent environment.

We offer a diverse range of A-Level courses and our innovative timetabling enables most students to choose their subject combinations freely. We are justifiably proud of the academic progress our students make, with most of them achieving better results than would be predicted from their GCSEs. Students are supported in this by teaching and learning that is stimulating and of a consistently high quality, and by the academic and pastoral support of a team of experienced personal tutors.

Our students are actively involved in the wider community and in supporting regional and national charities through a diverse programme of fundraising activities. The opportunities for international travel are also considerable with annual trips to the USA, France, Germany and Spain.

Closer to home, we have a thriving Duke of Edinburgh cohort involved in UK-based expeditions. The depth of talent amongst our students is truly impressive and Drama, Art, Music and Sport all flourish, both at a competitive and social level.

An example of this is our Music Academy, which is open to all students in the Sixth Form who play an instrument, including singing to at least a grade 6 level. This exciting programme is unique to the Sixth Form at County High and gives students access to Masterclasses with world class performers, provides training and opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills, and supports them to meet visiting artists, as well as providing them with excellent performance opportunities.



Ethos & Expectation

To help make an informed choice of school, parents will wish to know something of our beliefs and expectations.

Governors and staff believe that academic achievement to the highest level to which each individual can aspire is what most parents will value. This will enable the majority of children to aspire to university entrance standards, including those of the most prestigious universities. Staff will seek to challenge all students regardless of their ability and provide them with opportunities to fulfill their potential and achieve their personal best.

In consequence, the school emphasises the prime importance of teaching and learning. Our staff place great value on academic work and are continually seeking to improve classroom practice.

We are also clear that this central purpose is most likely to be achieved within a framework of clear values such as discipline, respect and acceptance of school procedures.

You may wish to read the relevant policies on the school's website, which include our Behaviour, Drugs and Exclusions policies.

In a large school it is necessary for all students, parents and staff to share an understanding that all students will:

- Work hard to achieve their full academic potential
- Respond to the many opportunities present both in and beyond the classroom
- Respect fellow students and staff
- Behave well in and out of class, following the community code
- Take care of property belonging to others and to the school
- Attend regularly, except when ill
- Complete homework and coursework by set deadlines
- Comply with instructions from staff
- When at fault, accept correction without argument
- Wear uniform as intended
- Talk with parents and teachers about any concerns in school
- Seek to make excellent progress
- Accept the fundamental values of our country

Parents who share these values will find their children get the most out of Saffron Walden County High School. Those with different priorities may wish to consider alternatives for their children's secondary education.

Further information about admissions, curriculum, examinations, SEND provision, safeguarding and our Sixth Form are all available from our website www.swchs.net

