



# Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



## FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SCHOOL

### ACADEMY STATUS

The school has been a stand-alone academy since 2011. The school staff, governors and trustees maintain strong relationships with the Local Authority and with the other schools in the area. Our Chairman of Trustees is the Rt Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The Chairman of Governors is Mr David Carruthers.



### SETTING

Debenham is situated in rural High Suffolk approximately 15 miles from Ipswich and 30 miles from Norwich. It is a very attractive and historic village with a population of about 3000 people. The school itself lies on the western outskirts of the village.

The school has excellent facilities which are maintained to a high standard. The school believes that the environment should reflect the high standards set in the classroom and be an enjoyable and pleasant place to work and learn. The school was opened in 1964 and the main building is from that time. A new block housing five science laboratories and two maths rooms was added in 1980 and was extended in 2002 to include a new maths room and a music suite. In March 2009 the English classroom block with disabled lift and additional offices was completed. In 2017 the school completed a government funded extension which added three further classrooms, a drama studio and three more music practice rooms, as well as reconfiguring student washrooms to an open plan unisex facility. In the last five years the school has also secured funding for new

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**Headteacher:** Mr Simon Martin BSc

**Senior Leadership Team:** Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Mrs T Willmott

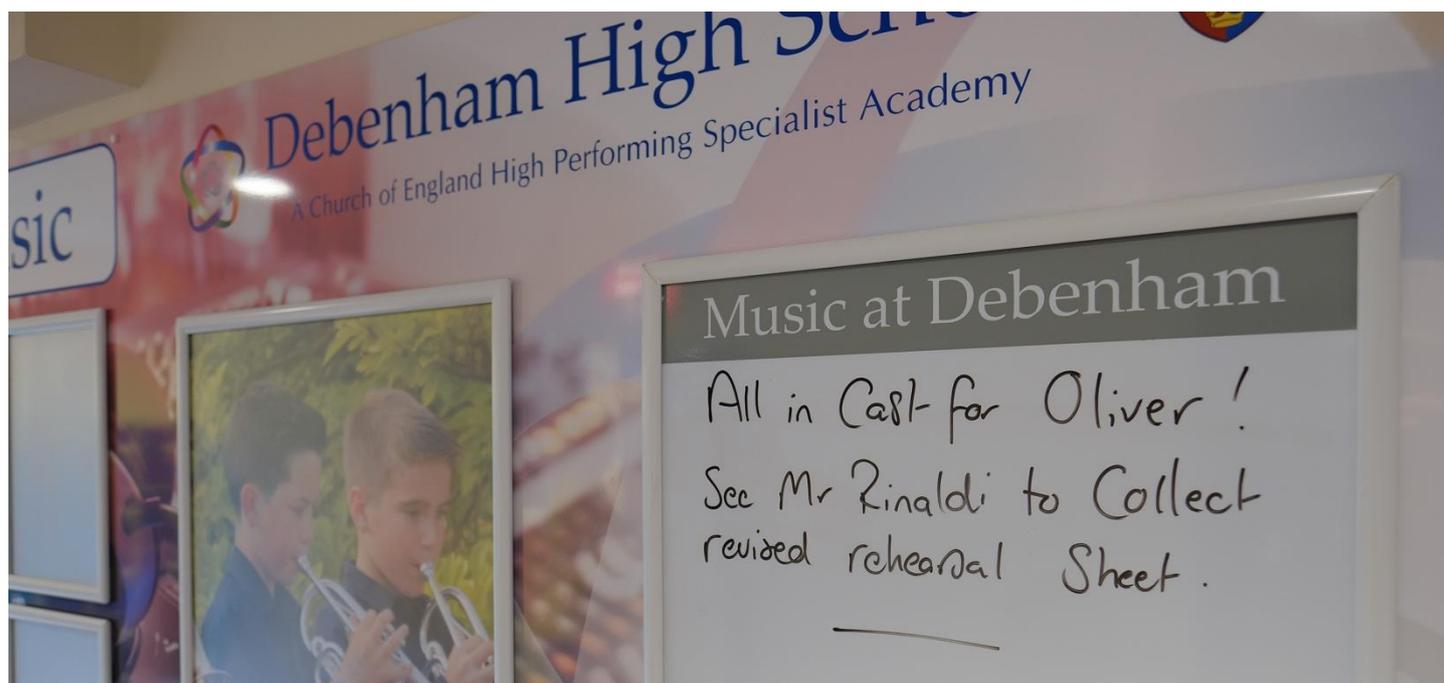
**Chairman of the Academy Trust:** Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich **Chair of Governors:** Mr D Carruthers

windows in all of the older areas of the school, re-roofing of all the original areas of the school (in three stages), a new biomass boiler and entirely new heating system, ICT and Science equipment, an additional external catering pod and new external fencing and card entry system to all classrooms as part of a safeguarding bid.

The buildings are set in an attractive nine-acre site with beautiful views over gently undulating countryside.

The buildings themselves are very well kept and most classrooms and corridors are carpeted. There are three computer rooms and there are four banks of laptop computers for use, which can connect to the school network from any part of the school. All rooms have interactive whiteboards. A large, attractive, well-used library is situated on the first floor. Before and after school as well as at break and lunch times the library is also used as a safe place to be for some of our more vulnerable students.

The school grounds include a large MUGA (multi-use games area) with floodlighting, two multi-weather tennis/netball courts and several games pitches. Indoors sports facilities are accessed at the adjacent Leisure Centre, which the school has priority use of during the school day. This facility is community owned and run. This contains a fully equipped sports hall, squash courts, dance studio, fitness room and a social area. Staff are able to use the facilities for free, including the multi-gym, after school.



## STAFF AND STUDENTS

There are 46 full-time and part-time members of teaching staff and 54 member of support staff. There is a relatively low rate of staff turnover, which provides much stability to the school. In addition to the teaching staff, we have a committed and accomplished support staff team. The school endeavours to appoint and lead staff in all school operations, rather than use external companies, ensuring the high quality and delivery of all aspects of the school; this includes the staff catering and cleaning teams. All staff work together as a team, each appreciating the roles of others.

The school is the lead school of the Mid-Suffolk Teaching School Alliance. As such it leads Continuous Professional Development, Initial Teacher Training and School to School Support in the local area. Through this it engages with schools at all phases locally and nationally, other teaching School Alliances and national

organisations to promote the effective development of all school staff. The school is committed to the professional and personal development of all staff.

The Published Admission Number for each year group is 125. Following consistent oversubscription and pressure to take more students there are 135 students in each year group, organised into five teaching groups. There are currently 674 students on roll



Whilst not all perfect all the time, our students are lovely, and we pride ourselves on their positive behaviour, attitude and demeanour. Exclusions are rare and permanent exclusion exceptional. We have always felt that through proactive approaches to attitudes and behaviour, as well as the consistent application of our policy for the Positive Management of Student Behaviour, we minimise occurrences of poor behaviour. Where they do take place, we swiftly put in place appropriate mechanisms of support that help students to develop.

The school takes a clear, active approach to the health and well-being of both staff and students. There is a demonstrably caring ethos that underpins work across the whole school. The pastoral team have worked closely with a clinical psychologist to develop a greater understanding of what we can do to be healthy, mentally and emotionally. This work is built into our pastoral programme and involves delivery to staff, students, parents and carers.

## **EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The most recent OFSTED inspection was in 2008. Maintenance and improvement upon the standards since this time have meant that the school has not been inspected since. The school is not complacent about this and has remained open to external verification from a range of sources to ensure that the school continues to set the highest possible standards of educational provision. Visitors from the Regional School Commission, the Local Authority, Teaching School Council, the Research School and many other schools and Multi-Academy Trusts endorse that whilst the school has not been subject to an OSFTED inspection in recent years, this is a genuinely outstanding school. As a school of noted outstanding performance we regularly host visitors who wish to view our practice.

The school is inspected as a Church School under the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Methodist and Anglican Schools). This most recent inspection in 2017 was deemed Outstanding.

The school is part of the SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) and over the last three years has consistently received awards for attainment and progress measures which place the school in the top 10% of schools nationally. We are very proud of our examination results. These are available on our website and in the information pack for applicants.



## SCHOOL ORGANISATION

The school's catchment area is geographically very large, and in addition a high proportion of students come from outside the catchment as a result of parental choice. As a co-educational comprehensive school we take students of all abilities, providing additional help for those who need it.

### The Senior Leadership Team

Mr Simon Martin BSc Headteacher  
Miss Susan McBurney MA (Oxon), MEd Assistant Headteacher  
Mrs Louise Ramsay BA, MEd Assistant Headteacher  
Mrs Tracy Willmott ACMA/CGMA, Business Manager



**The Pastoral system** is based on form tutors. We also have an Assistant Head with responsibility for Pastoral Care. There are five Heads of Year; Year 7 being a fixed position with responsibility for Primary School Liaison and Induction, Heads of Year 8-11 move with their students along their journey through the school. This team is supported by a Pastoral Support Assistant.

Whole staff meetings are held regularly, as are Academic and Pastoral Board meetings. Communication is frequent, varied in form and pertinent. This ensures that all staff are informed and engaged and that issues are discussed and swiftly actioned.

Assemblies happen daily. All students have two assemblies a week, one led by their Head of Year and one in Upper or Lower School led by the Senior Leadership Team or visiting speakers, including local church leaders. The school has a whole school assembly once a term which brings the whole school community together.



## **CURRICULUM**

In January 2017 we initiated a curriculum review which consulted all staff on the shape of our curriculum for the future. This included a full and open discussion of the structure, philosophy and outcome of the curriculum. From this initial consultation we changed the structure and balance of learning in KS3 and 4. This included introducing a second language and targeted literacy at KS3 and increased time for core subjects in KS4.

Following submission in Autumn 2019 for the SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education we have been successful in achieving an SSAT Award for Principled Curriculum Design. It was recognised in this review that our curriculum has moral purpose and is thoroughly embedded.

The Debenham High School curriculum aims to enable our students to become:

- Successful and curious learners
- Confident and resilient individuals
- Responsible and healthy citizens

Students study a three-year Key Stage 3. All students study a broad base of English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Computing, French (some students also study Spanish), Design Technology, PE, Art, Drama, Music and PSHE.

Each subject has a five-year programme of study which ensures that learning starts the moment that students reach High School. The development of these programmes of study has been a key aspect of our CPD in 2018-2020. The programmes of study ensure consistency, equality of provision and creativity in our delivery of teaching and learning in the classroom. Meaningful assessment is an integral part of these programmes. Learning across the five years ensures that students achieve the best possible academic outcomes as well giving them a rich and broad entitlement to the best that is thought and said across a full range of subjects.

There is a variety of student groupings including mixed ability teaching, setting and streaming according to the needs of the subjects.

Students select their options within Year 9, starting their GCSE programme of study at the start of Year 10. Core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and RE start the GCSE programme at an appropriate point of readiness within Year 9. Students select three options across a full and rich range of subjects. We have a personalised approach to this and are determined to offer a wide curriculum which is tailored to the needs of all our students, despite the smaller comparative size of our school.

The school operates a 6, 50-minute, period day and a weekly timetable.

Extra-curricular engagement is expected of all students at Debenham High School. This is closely monitored in Year 7 and 8 to ensure that students participate fully in the wider life of the school. These extra-curricular opportunities allow students to extend their knowledge and understanding and to improve their skills in a range of artistic, creative and sporting challenges. These experiences support students' development socially and emotionally.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, within this, the promotion of fundamental British values, are at the heart of the school's work. The development of these skills is captured in the 5-year Programme of Study: Personal Development, which encompasses curriculum, tutor and whole school activities.

Provision for students with SEND is well documented in the School Information Report. The school employs a high proportion of Teaching Assistants along with Graduate Interns who support the learning needs of students in the mainstream setting. There are also a range of interventions and bespoke provision to meet the needs of students on an individual basis.

The school has an enviable track record of success for all examination outcomes but is particularly proud of the attainment and progress and holistic of Pupil Premium students. Teachers are very aware of the barriers that children face on an individual basis and know that they need to do more to help those young people achieve their best. At the heart of this is the importance of knowing individuals and caring about their development in the context of their world.

## **SCHOOL AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

The school is divided into five Houses: Owens, Austen, Nelson, Curie and Da Vinci. These are used for a number of competitive activities in sport and a fortnightly House Quiz.

In the lunch hours and after school there is a wide range of clubs. This includes many sports, music ensembles, drama, alongside a variety of other activities - Darts, Lego, Just Dance, Art, Textiles, Photoshop, Archaeology, Programming, Space (a time and place to just be) and much more. Staff are invited and encouraged to organise out-of-school activities. Numerous educational trips, residential visits and activity days are organised. Duke of Edinburgh is a popular part of the extra-curricular school offer. This is considered a considerable strength of the curriculum offer and contributes to the rich educational diet but also the development of positive relationships between peers and between staff and students. Staff take residential trips abroad, including World Challenge. In the last two years we have had trips to Namibia, Amsterdam, Berlin, The Azores, The west coast of America, Ypres, the Dolomites and Le Touquet.

The school is always seeking ways to broaden students' horizons. Regular calendar themes are: Careers Week, Diversity Week, Big Draw Week and Prayer Space. As part of this we have numerous visitors that we invite into the school; these are conscious decisions to ensure that our students develop a view of the world beyond Debenham High School that is not narrow.

The school has achieved the Platinum Award for our work with Young Carers. This group of students meet regularly in school, supported by our Pastoral Support Assistant and an external link worker. The school has recently made connections with Stonewall and a link worker has started working alongside students who wish to engage support for students of all gender identity or sexual orientation.



Student leadership is an important facet of student development. There are roles for students with a range of responsibilities and for students of different ages. These include: Peer Mentors, Prefects, Head Boy Girl and Deputies, Language Leaders, Art Ambassadors, Student Year Leaders, Form Representatives, Eco Ambassadors, and School Council Leaders.

Student Year Leaders and their deputies lead the school in three Charity Weeks across the school year. Students select charities to support and plan activities throughout the week that raise awareness and monies for their chosen causes.

Our half-termly newsletter, "Aspire", celebrates student achievements and recognises activities that take place across the school. Students take home paper copies to share with family and back-issues of all newsletters are available on our website.