



Downe House

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Downe House play football with OSCAR Foundation team from India

East met west on the playing fields of Downe House when the OSCAR Foundation U17 girls team from the Mumbai slums and rural parts of Jharkhand played football against Downe House on Sunday morning and the OSCAR Foundation were victorious beating the Downe House team 5-1. The Indian girls were staying at Downe House for the weekend as part of their 'Kick Like a Girl UK Schools' three week tour to provide these talented girls aged 14-17 who live very challenging lives in the poorest communities across India with the opportunity to travel to the UK and to take part in a football tour.

The tour has been co-hosted by Downe House with a group of six UK Schools who have also been raising money to help to fund the tour. The initiative is the brainchild of the OSCAR Foundation, a charity based in Mumbai which uses football as a tool to encourage underprivileged girls and boys to go to school. Of the 4,000 children in the OSCAR family, remarkably 1400 are girls. OSCAR has one simple rule, 'No school, No football.'

Whilst staying at Downe House, the girls enjoyed an afternoon of activities including cookery, swimming and a Bollywood dance workshop and time spent in the boarding house making friends and getting to know one another. On Monday morning, the Indian team in full national dress gave a presentation about their lives and aspirations in School Assembly before travelling on to Bradfield College for the next stage of their tour.

Upper Sixth girl, Millie who has coordinated the arrangements with the OSCAR Foundation said, "I just want to thank everyone for their tremendous support in welcoming the OSCAR girls to Downe House and for making it an experience they will hopefully treasure. I have spent the whole weekend with the Indian girls and it has been both fascinating and humbling to hear their stories and to know what this tour has meant to them."

OSCAR founder, Ashok Rathod set up the Foundation aged 18 to serve his own community and runs a football programme to encourage underprivileged girls and boys to go to school regularly and in particular, focuses on the issue of girls' empowerment.

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Ashok said, "A football tour for the girls is not only a major step forward for the OSCAR Foundation but for India too. The 2017 Boys' Tour proved that exposure to UK culture can make an enormously positive impact. The boys have upped their game and they now believe in their dreams. We need to convince the girls that they too deserve a future. With the support of the UK schools we know we can do this."

From an initial 18 small boys in 2010, OSCAR now helps 4,000 young people across India into education and Downe House plan to continue to support the charity over the coming years.

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Note to editors: Downe House is an independent boarding school for girls aged 11-18 located in Cold Ash, Thatcham.

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