

A welcome from Mrs Gilpin Jones

Head of Lower School

If you are reading this, I suspect you are already thinking about joining Downe House, which is splendid news. So please read on!

I am Mrs Gilpin-Jones, the Assistant Head (Lower School). The Lower School is an incredibly special place and the first opportunity you have to join Downe House. It is quite common at this stage that some of you may have a few worries or concerns about becoming a boarder – worry no more. We have an experienced and caring community ready to look after you, who have a great sense of fun and fairness.

The Lower School team and I have many years of experience in welcoming new girls and their families into the Downe House community. In the dictionary, the word community is ‘a group of people living in the same place and having common goals and interests’. Our community shares certain attitudes and interests in common. Above all, our community is kind and caring and everyone involved in looking after you thinks and believes this as we all live our day-to-day lives in the Lower School. We are very aware that this will probably be your first time away from home and, although we are well used to welcoming new girls every year, we understand that this is the first time for you.

Your Housemistress, your tutor, and all your teachers communicate and share information about you daily; we all know if you are having a good day, a bad day, or anything else in between! No matter what time of day or night you may have a worry, or just need a bit of reassurance, there is someone there that knows you well and what you need.

Tutors play a major role in this special, individualised care, where everyone involved in your life at Downe House wants the best for you. We will allocate you an academic tutor when you start at Downe House, who will meet with you formally once a week to make sure you are thriving academically and provide support when needed. Your Tutor is also there in between these times to pick up on any academic worries which may pop up during the week. They can help you with prep that is difficult, find lost books, and even lost lacrosse sticks. They are your ally and will champion your cause at every opportunity!

Even though you are at the beginning of your Downe House journey, we have high expectations for you from the outset. There are many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility, inside and outside your boarding house. Leadership and public speaking are important skills that we encourage from day one. Girls speak in public regularly in Lower School Assemblies, delivering current affairs presentations, match reports, charity initiatives, to name but a few, and in Prospective Parents' mornings and giving presentations to our Governing body.

Each term I appoint a Head and Deputy Head of Lower School, who work closely with me and our Sixth Form Lower School Seniors. You would be a driving force in shaping new initiatives within the Lower School via the Lower School Council and in the School's wider issues as part of the Whole School Council.

Last but certainly not least, you would have the amazing opportunity to spend a term in the LIV (Year 8) in our beautiful Chateau Sauveterre in the South of France. This is arguably the most magical experience which will stay with you forever!

I hope I have given you a flavour of this very special place, which is very close to my heart. However, nothing beats the real thing, so please come and see us when you can.

I look forward to meeting you soon.

Judith Gilpin Jones

Mrs Gilpin Jones
Assistant Head (Lower School)

