

‘At Downe House we celebrate the individual; we believe in the beauty of diverse minds, where neurodiversity is not just embraced but championed as a source of strength, innovation and limitless potential which enriches our community with unique perspectives and boundless possibilities.’

-Mrs Genevieve Ford, Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Comprehensive framework that supports neurodiversity

Ensuring academic and pastoral staff are equipped to teach and support neurodiverse students

At Downe House, we are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusivity, and inspired by the pioneering efforts of companies like Microsoft and Adobe, we have delved deeper into Neurodiverse education, and what that might mean for our pupils and our teaching and pastoral staff.

As a school dedicated to supporting both students and staff, Downe House places a paramount emphasis on creating an environment where individuals feel empowered to disclose their needs. We not only encourage this but also uphold the utmost privacy, valuing the ongoing comfort and respect of every individual throughout their tenure at the School. Leveraging the expertise of our staff and a commitment to staying abreast of current developments, we take pride in actively engaging with and assisting those who may require support. For our pupils, we have introduced a robust set of policies that ensure the learning experience is tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each individual student, mirroring our commitment to Disability Confident practices.

The Downe House Equality Policy stands as a comprehensive document addressing various neurodivergent conditions, including Autism, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Tic disorders, and ADHD. The aim is to raise awareness and foster wellbeing, recognising the unique strengths that neurodivergent individuals bring to the table. As the broader professional landscape increasingly acknowledges the value of neurodivergent skills, we recognise the pivotal role we play in nurturing these abilities during a student’s educational journey, focusing not just on imparting knowledge but on teaching effective learning strategies.

To contribute to the discourse surrounding neurodiversity, our expert staff actively participate in various discussion panels, collaborating with organisations such as the Safeguarding and Child Protection Association. Notably, Mrs Charlotte Jones, our Director of Pupil Progress, showcased her extensive knowledge by serving as an expert speaker on the topic of ‘Safeguarding children with SEND additional needs’ at a recent Annual Safeguarding Conference of the BSA (Boarding Schools’ Association) and SACPA (Safeguarding and Child Protection Association), further highlighting the school’s commitment to expertise and advocacy in this crucial area.

Mrs Jones maintains, “There is no one ‘right’ way of thinking, learning, and behaving and in our school, and differences are embraced and supported. We ensure all neurodiverse pupils with Specific Learning Differences such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD, and often other co-occurring challenges, are supported as an integral part of school life. We also have an accomplished and successful EAL department supporting multilingual learners and those for whom English is not their first language.”