Sydenham High School GDST is an independent day school for girls aged 4-18 years. Founded in 1887 by the Girls’ Public Day School Trust, we pride ourselves on enriching young minds in a way that will endure a lifetime. The school’s original Anglo Saxon motto, ‘Nyle ye Drede’, means ‘Fear Nothing’ and underpins all that we do. Sydenham High is selective and diverse, welcoming girls with wide-ranging talents and backgrounds into a close community that is large enough to offer choice and flexibility but compact enough to ensure that no girl is overlooked. As a high achieving school, we strive to ensure that every girl reaches, or exceeds, her potential by offering exceptional learning opportunities which harness individual strengths.

Girls at Sydenham High are not just academically successful; they are ambitious, open-minded and possess the necessary self-belief to outstrip all expectations. They are also well-rounded, happy, down to earth, and much more besides. Above all, our school is simply bursting with warmth, creativity, talent and excellence in all that we do.

Mrs Katharine Woodcock
Headmistress
Ethos and aims

Ethos
Providing a first-class education for girls was the aim of our founders in 1887 and though the outlook and opportunities for girls may have changed, our educational goals remain the same.

Our school motto, Nyle ye Drede, (Fear Nothing) lies at our heart. A Sydenham High education is centred upon the girl, with academic and pastoral excellence going hand in hand. We want our pupils to have a ‘can do’ approach and inner strength so that they are enabled to thrive, succeed and be happy.

We are a school which is small enough to ensure that every pupil is visible so that her education is both aspirational and personalised. We want to empower our girls to face potential challenges with confidence. We want them to be resilient in all that they do so that in an ever-changing world they are able to respond positively to the increasing demands placed on them both at school and in their future lives.

Aims
We want to inspire our pupils to:
- Achieve individual excellence;
- Be inspired and to inspire;
- Be ambitious and outstrip expectations;
- Embrace opportunities;
- Be bold, fearless and resilient;
- Have independence of mind and the courage to take risks;
- Have a strong moral compass and be accepting and respectful of themselves and others.

Sydenham High School is part of the Girls’ Day School Trust, the leading group of independent girls’ schools in the UK.
Aspirational setting

Sydenham High boasts so many excellent facilities, from our Westwood Theatre to our large all-weather pitch and eight-acre sports ground. The Sixth Form Centre offers a generous common room, kitchen-diner and dedicated study room, while the beautiful and historic dining hall has been extended to include a glass orangery café-style space.

Within our excellent educational setting, we aim to inspire every girl to develop her learning, to enjoy all that she does so that we ignite a passion for school to ensure that her days are happy, fulfilling, enlightening and, above all, richly rewarding.
Girls at Sydenham High excel across the full range of subjects and we strive to ensure that every girl is challenged at every level. We aim to engender a love of learning, providing a compelling combination of traditional academic subjects with interesting enrichment opportunities and the flexibility to cater for individual needs.

Our girls develop academic enthusiasm, enquiring and discriminating minds, and a desire for knowledge. They are curious individuals with the capacity to think critically.

Meanwhile, our learning environments are creative, vibrant, inspiring and well-equipped spaces, enabling our staff to deliver dynamic and inspiring lessons, alongside lectures, extension and enrichment activities, conferences, trips and workshops.

Above all, our exciting curriculum and tailored learning ensure that our pupils have the self-confidence to take risks and put themselves forward, fearing nothing, enabling them to be who and what they want to be.
Pastoral care is an essential part of a successful education. We want every girl to feel happy, secure and confident enough to fully benefit from the first-class education offered here.

We pride ourselves on understanding individual girls: by knowing the specific needs of each pupil, we can help personalise her educational journey.

Our pupils are accepting of themselves and of others; with relationships and friendships built upon kindness and respect.

The wellbeing of every pupil is paramount and girls here have the space to be themselves but also to be fearless in pursuit of their dreams and ambitions, creating invaluable connections along the way.

At Sydenham High, every girl is part of a dynamic and inspirational community in which she can enjoy expressing her passion for learning and life.
Socrates once said ‘an unexamined life is not worth living’. Therefore, this fascinating programme, named after the great philosopher, aims to foster that mindset.

Indeed, a key outcome for the Socrates Programme is to instil a way of thinking that will stay with our pupils beyond the programme, encouraging them to challenge the ideas around them and reflect on what really fascinates them.

The Socrates Programme offers an exciting array of lectures and workshops promoting a wonderfully wide variety of topics, including the environment, the arts and technology.

Above all, this innovative programme nurtures talent and offers deeper academic enrichment alongside intellectual stretch and challenge.
With a wide range of clubs on offer, there really is something for everyone here. A great emphasis is placed on participating in activities beyond the classroom and our exceptional co-curricular opportunities introduce girls to many new experiences and enrich their overall education.

Everyone’s achievements are celebrated, and there is a culture of excellence within our co-curricular pursuits. There are also many competitive inter-house and GDST inter-school events which add another interesting layer of opportunity and engagement in the wider life of the school.

Aspire

In years 7 and 8 we offer an enrichment programme, Aspire, which is part of the curriculum. This is an exciting opportunity for girls to engage in a wide range of co-curricular activities to broaden their experience base and to build on their skill sets.

Clubs and activities

We are proud of our wide range of clubs. There are many activities and societies to choose from and each club helps develop personal and thinking skills and offers the opportunity to work in teams and meet new people.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

Sydenham High is a directly licensed centre for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Students from year 9 upwards can take part in the scheme to achieve their Bronze, Silver and eventually Gold Duke of Edinburgh awards through volunteering, expeditions, and physical activity.

Co-curricular & enrichment
These Girls Can!

We encourage all our girls to participate in the sports of their choice, either competitively or just for fun. It fosters a long-term positive attitude towards health, fitness and physical recreation.

Our excellent facilities enable us to offer a wide range of sports and activities, from hockey, netball, swimming, gymnastics and athletics to rugby, football, trampolining, fencing, cricket and rowing. In fact, we row on the Thames at Putney and are fully accredited with British Rowing.

Sport
The performing arts at Sydenham High are vibrant and exciting, offering invaluable opportunities for girls to get involved in memorable activities and events in Drama, Music and Dance.

Drama
Drama flourishes in the co-curricular provision that characterizes every week in the life of the school. Our productions are challenging, both in their content and theatrical form, and our exceptionally high performance and staging standards.

Music
Music at Sydenham High is inclusive and exceptional. We aim to provide a platform for all our musicians to shine and develop their musical talents and potential.

Dance
Dance is also extremely popular, including our annual Unity through Diversity dance show and the numerous different dance groups for girls to join.
Sydenham High girls are part of a school community networked through the Girls’ Day School Trust (GDST), as well as being a part of a wider global community. The trips and visits we offer reflect this. Every department organises stimulating excursions and events that make connections between different subjects to bring areas of study alive, as well as creating inspiring and memorable educational experiences.

We give our pupils opportunities to travel and to broaden their horizons by exploring new cultures. Not to mention making full use of the excellent opportunities that London and our surrounding areas provide for exhibitions, productions, and days out.

Community outreach and volunteering are also an integral part of school life here and the girls welcome the opportunity to give back in whatever way they can, from volunteering in the local community to fundraising for our sister school in Nepal.
I believe that the Sixth Form experience is the best that education has to offer. This is the time when students gain crucial life skills; learning to balance independence and responsibility alongside prioritising effectively to meet deadlines and expectations.

Strong pastoral support is paramount as we want all our students to achieve their personal best. Academic standards are high and smaller class sizes mean that every student has the opportunity to excel academically, supported by her teachers every step of the way.

This is a challenging, yet hugely rewarding and exciting time when students are encouraged to take on leadership responsibilities, challenge themselves and broaden their horizons through interesting and enriching co-curricular opportunities.

Relaxing and working in our purpose-designed Sixth Form Centre, with its modern common room, kitchen-diner and dedicated study rooms, our students enjoy the time and space to arrange personal study and socialise with their peers in a happy, collaborative and aspirational environment.

Throughout their time in the Sixth Form, our students become academically successful and prepared for university, as well as ready for life beyond education so that they prosper and achieve their future ambitions.

Ms Rebecca Parrish
Director of Sixth Form

Entering year 12 is the start of the most important phase of your daughter’s educational journey - an essential bridge to university life and beyond.
Our Sixth Form prides itself on its academic success. Our girls aim high and achieve excellent results. The wide range of subject choices, taught by dedicated subject specialists, ensures that we support personal interests as well as potential career paths.

Academic excellence is delivered through personalised learning and expert teaching. Seminar-style lessons and independent learning not only help prepare our students for university, but also create motivated learners who can think for themselves and be inquisitive.

Alongside their three or four A Level choices, most sixth formers also undertake the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). This qualification gives students the opportunity to explore specific subject areas which they are passionate about and enriches academic understanding by developing key skills through research.

Sydenham High is a centre of excellence for the EPQ within the Girls’ Day School Trust.
Sixth Form life at Sydenham High is uniquely packed with exciting activities and new experiences: from leadership and community service opportunities to rowing, rock climbing, photography, the Young Enterprise Scheme, and more.

Life in the Sixth Form is busy, varied and rewarding. Alongside the main focus of A Level study, there is also a rich selection of co-curricular activities available.

Professional Skills Programme

The Professional Skills Programme is a bespoke aspect of Sixth Form life which places great emphasis on the development of ‘soft skills’, alongside academic achievement. Our sixth formers have the opportunity to put their skills into practice through interactions and insights into differing professional environments.

Above all, our sixth formers leave us as motivated, successful and well-rounded individuals with enquiring and independent minds who are confident and ambitious about their future at university and beyond.
We want all our girls to feel empowered to apply to the world’s most prestigious universities and we have a strong tradition in preparing students for UK and overseas universities, as well as for specialist Drama and Art Foundation courses.

Our outstanding university preparation programme is an integral part of Sixth Form life and provides invaluable, personalised guidance on university choices, as well as UCAS and Further Education applications. Rigorous preparation for Cambridge and Oxford, as well as Medicine, Veterinary Science and other highly competitive degree courses, ensures strong and competitive applications.

The GDST also provides invaluable support by organising various preparation events, including an Oxbridge conference. Students can also apply for a number of GDST scholarships and prizes targeted at sixth formers across the Trust.
Aysha Waheed
Class of 2013
Currently studying medicine at King’s College, London
“I am really grateful for the support and encouragement I received from the Science Department at Sydenham High in helping me get into medical school. The school allowed me to discover and develop different skill sets that enabled me to go on to study Law at Cambridge to start my own fashion business. I was quite academic, but that did not define me as I was able to be creative, a leader, a dancer, and a team player. Every year brought new challenges and the supportive environment of the school ensured I never felt daunted. Instead, I felt empowered. I knew that if I acted with resilience and determination I could achieve whatever I wanted. These are the values I have taken into my business and they have helped me make it the success it is today.”

Jacynth Bassett
Class of 2010
Founder of online fashion business The Bias-Cut.com
“I attended Sydenham High from age 4 to 18 and I am a Sydenham girl through and through. The school allowed me to participate in dissections and hear a variety of inspirational talks, which I might not otherwise have experienced.”

Claire Bennett
Class of 2003
Senior Athlete Manager, Dame Kelly Holmes Trust; ex: GB fencer
“There is no doubt in my mind that attending Sydenham High made me the person I am today, and saw me achieve things I never imagined possible. I started fencing at just 10 years old at the Junior School and from the age of 13 I was part of the Great Britain fencing team. It was at Sydenham High that I learned to ‘fear nothing’ and go for something that I believed in. I developed a strong work ethic, as well as important life skills. I also made friends for life and I will never forget the positive impact the teachers had on me. I simply would not be doing what I am doing now without having acquired the skills, attributes and values that I learned at Sydenham High.”

Moreover, our class discussions continually stretched and challenged my thinking and being part of Science Club and the Biomedical Society allowed me to participate in dissections and hear a variety of inspirational talks, which I might not otherwise have experienced.”

Alumnae