

Questions asked at our Open Evening

Where does Herschel Grammar School get its name?

- Herschel Grammar School is named after Sir William Herschel and he constructed his first large telescope in 1774.

Transition

We hold a host of transition events, including a welcome interview, induction evening, induction day, some primary school visits. Once the pupils join us there will be a number of team building activities.

General

What are your art facilities like?

- Students have 1 lesson a week with projects based on self-portraits, landscapes and the imagination (Year 7). Activities include drawing, painting, collaging, working with clay as well as learning about artists. Currently we have a dedicated Art room, a kiln, use of computers and tablets including apps and programmes such as Photoshop. The department also has bridge cameras for use at GCSE. We're very well equipped with resources such as a variety of paints from watercolours to acrylic and oil paints.

What is the expectation around homework starting from Year 7?

- Pupils in Year 7 are expected to complete about 7 hours each week of Home Learning but this will vary considerably from one child to another.

How many subjects are there altogether?

- Pupils in Year 7 study English, Maths, Science, Art and Design, Computing Technology, Design and Technology, Drama, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Language, Music, Physical Education and Religious Studies. Science lessons are split into Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Do you have cooking classes/clubs?

- Food preparation and nutrition is taught within the Design and Technology curriculum.

I like drama as well as academic subjects – do you do much drama?

- Pupils in Year 7 have one hour of Drama each week.

What is the difference between the lessons we will do in secondary school and primary?

- Our lessons are generally one hour long and taught by subject specialists. Pupils move to specialist rooms for many classes, so Science is taught in laboratories, Music in a well equipped Music Room, Computing Technology in computer suites and Design and Technology in workshops. As pupils become more adept learners a greater emphasis is put on them taking responsibility for their learning.

How many people are there at the school?

- We have just over one thousand pupils across Years 7 to 13.

What is the start time and finish time of the school?

- Pupils are expected to be on the school site by 8.20am for the first bell at 8.25am. The school day ends at 2.50pm. Lunch is held from 1.05pm to 1.40pm. Each lesson is 1 hour long.

Do we work as a class?

- Pupils in Year 7 are taught within their Tutor Group. Pupils are set for Maths, English and Science from Year 8 onwards.

I am a coeliac (gluten free), does your canteen cater for different diets?

- We cater for a number of diets within our canteen. Our catering manager can direct pupils to appropriate food types.

Is Halal food offered in the canteen?

- There are some Halal options within our sandwich/wrap range. Pupils may bring a packed lunch to school.

What drama plays do you do.

- We hold a number of performances at the school. These include drama productions such as Oliver, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and Bugsy Malone. We also have our annual Gym and Dance Show and our Summer Soiree.

Do you have a school map?

- New pupils are given a copy of our school map and there are many signs within the building to help pupils find their way around.

Are dedicated lockers available for students?

- Lockers are available to all pupils.

Do you have boarding for students?

- We do not have boarding facilities for pupils.

If I come to Herschel would I be with my friends in a class?

- We try to accommodate requests but this cannot be guaranteed. This is an opportunity to meet new people so although we can often accommodate a small group of friends within a class we would aim to limit the number of pupils from a particular friendship group.

Could you please show us the class rooms via photos and videos?

- Please watch our school video which is available on our website.

Is there any bullying?

- At times there is bullying reported but pupil surveys show us that that is rare and usually challenged by other pupils. Pupils tell us that they are very satisfied with the way it is dealt with. All pupils have access to an anonymous whisper tool that they can use to report bullying if they witness something.

What is the social media policy for children

- Our acceptable use of ICT policy is on the school website, with other policies. Please see School Information/ Statutory Information/Policies.

Why should I choose Herschel Grammar School?

- It is important that a child feels comfortable and happy with the choice of school and that the school is right for that child. Make Herschel your first choice if you think it is the environment in which your child will learn and thrive best.

Did you use zoom or online lessons during lockdown?

- Lessons were through Microsoft Teams during lockdown but there was no expectation that pupils had to engage in live time. We are mindful of home circumstances that would not always allow for this.

Will you do GCSE in year 10?

- We do not have early entry to GCSE.

How many tests do you do in a year?

- Pupils learning is regularly assessed in a variety of ways. Annual examinations are set in most subjects but additional lower stakes testing takes place throughout the year.

What about Year 9 options?

- Pupils make their GCSE choices towards the end of Year 9. Pupils take GCSE's in English Literature and English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, and a Modern Foreign Language. In addition, pupils must choose from History or Geography (or can choose both). They select additional subjects from Business Studies, Religious Studies, Computer Science, Design and Technology, Art, Music, Drama, Media or Physical Education GCSE.

What if you forget any items in different classrooms, are you able to go back to get it bearing in mind the virus rules.

- We encourage pupils to take responsibility for their belongings and pupils are expected to go back to rooms to pick up missing items. In the current climate they must ensure that they are going to rooms when other year groups are not moving.

What are the options available for parents to get involved with their children's learning.

- Course overviews for each year group are published annually on our website. We hold two subject evenings each year for each year group where progress is discussed with parents and pupils. We publish enrichment activities on our website.

What countries can you go to in year 7?

- In Year 7 we offer a residential trip in the UK in conjunction with the Beechcraft company.

Is there a prayer room?

- Before the introduction of the need for social distancing and separation between year groups there was a prayer facility on Fridays.

Are the year group mixed or separate?

- Pupils are taught in mixed tutor groups.

How do you track the happiness of pupils at HGS?

- Pupils are asked to participate in wellbeing surveys.

What level of discipline is followed at school?

- Our behaviour policy is underpinned by the need for respect, self respect, respect for others, respect for learning and respect for the environment. Pupils are taught to take responsibility for their behaviour and to make right choices. Our behaviour policy on our website outlines the use of sanctions when necessary.

Do you have SEN in the school, and do children with special needs get extra help?

- Please see our local offer of provision on the website.

What is the student to teacher ratio?

- In Year 7 pupils are generally taught in classes of 30 with the exception of Design and Technology where classes are smaller.

Do you offer computing for GCSE and 'A' Level?

- Computing Technology is taught in Years 7 – 9 and we offer Computer Science at both GCSE and A'level.

How do you manage/support the cultural integration among students?

- When pupils start at Herschel they are involved in a number of team building and group activities to support integration.

Sixth Form

- The majority of pupils in Years 7 – 11 continue into the Sixth form. Admission to the Sixth form is on GCSE results and there is no catchment area.

Music

What kind of music facilities do you have

- We have a music room with 4 practice rooms which are used for individual and group lessons.

What Music extra curricular activities are there?

- After school activities include choir and orchestra.

What options do you have for learning musical instruments?

- A range of options are offered through Berkshire Maestros.

MFL

What are the language options between years 7-9?

- At Herschel Grammar School we teach French and Spanish. Unless a pupil is a native speaker of one of these languages they are assigned to a language so that we can balance numbers in each class.
- Pupils continue with that language to GCSE level.
- If a pupil wishes to take an additional language for GCSE, because they speak this at home or have additional tuition, then this can usually be arranged.

Extra Curricular Activities

- In the current climate with Covid 19 restrictions our extra curriculum offer is significantly reduced. However, we hope to reintroduce these opportunities as soon as we are able.
- Generally, we are able to offer a wide variety of extra curricular activities and clubs – Football, netball, hockey, cricket, tennis, basketball, badminton, rounders, athletics, gymnastics, dance, choir, orchestra, music lessons, Mock Trial, Citizenship Club, literary detectives, chess club, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), Engineering club, Minecraft and coding club. A large number of pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

What sports teams do you have

- We have many sports teams including – football (boys and girls), cricket (boys and girls), netball, hockey and rounders.

Do you do dance/basketball?

- Pupils will study dance and basketball during their PE lessons.

How much PE is in the curriculum?

- Pupils in Year 7 have an average of 2 hours of taught PE each week.

Do you have swimming classes?

- We do not hold swimming classes.

What type of sports do you do on sports day?

- Our sports day comprises of athletics. We usually hold our annual Sports Day at Thames Valley Athletics Centre so that a wide range of activities can be offered eg Shot putt, javelin, high jump, long jump, as well as running.

Do you provide any breakfast club?

- No, we do not offer a breakfast club but pupils are currently allowed on the school site from 7.45am each morning.

Questions regarding School Transport

- We currently offer our dedicated school transport from Langley, West London and Reading. A list of our current bus stops is available on our website under Admissions 2021 (please scroll to the bottom of the page). If your child is allocated a place at Herschel Grammar School you will receive information regarding bus stops and prices.

Admissions

It is really difficult completing the CAF before we have 11+ results. Can we change the CAF once we have the result?

- Slough Borough Council have informed us that parents/carers need to complete their common application form by 31 October and then they will allow changes up until 10 December 2020 (other Boroughs may vary).

What is a CAF?

- The Common Application Form, or CAF, is obtained directly from your home Local Authority. On the CAF you must state ALL the state schools you wish to apply for including grammar schools both in and outside of your own local authority area. These are completed on-line and are available from your home borough's website. Your preferences should be placed on the CAF in your order of preference. If you are selecting grammar schools you MUST therefore place them at the top of your list in your preferred order.

What is the eligibility mark for Herschel?

- The eligibility score for the Slough Consortium of Grammar Schools (which includes Herschel) is 111 or above.

If a child achieves 111, will they be able to get a place at the school?

- A score of 111 or greater means that a pupil is eligible to be considered for a Slough grammar school place. However, due to over-subscription, a mark of 111 or more does not guarantee a place in a Slough grammar school.

What are the requirements to get into Herschel Grammar School?

- Children are required to sit the Slough Consortium 11+ examination.

Having missed the deadline for 11+ tests, and only registered interest for late testing, how do you advise completing the CAF form?

- If you have registered for late testing you will still need to complete your common application form by 31 October.

Is it too late to register for the admission exam in October?

- We are unable to accommodate any further registrations for the examination in October. Parents will need to request a late test by emailing admissions@st-bernards.slough.sch.uk with their child's name, date of birth and primary school. Information regarding registering will be sent at a later date.

Can you remind me what a Non-Selective School is?

- Non-selective schools do not select via an entrance examination.

How many places are available for Year 7? How many children per class?

- We have 150 places for September 2021 entry into Year 7. Each tutor group will have 30 pupils in Year 7 2021. We have 5 tutor groups within Year 7.

If your child is not eligible at the 11+ examination – is there an option to sit the 12+/13+ to secure a space?

- Our admissions policy stipulates that a child will not be permitted to re-sit an entrance examination for Herschel Grammar School whilst in Years 7-11 and will not be considered for entry into the school.

If my child scores a little below 111 and is within 4 miles radius of the school, will she still be considered for admission?

- We are unable to offer places to pupils with a score of 110 or below.

Are we able to explore the school before the exam?

- We are unable to offer any tours at this time. Please watch our school video which is available on our website.

Do you have a sibling criteria on your admissions policy?

- No, we do not have a sibling criteria on our admissions policy.

Questions regarding catchment

- At Herschel Grammar School our admissions policy gives priority to children living within 4 miles of the school and then the remaining places are allocated to children living outside of this area on rank order of score. As a guide, we anticipate that around 50% of our places will go to pupils within this area and the remaining places will be allocated to pupils on rank score for those living outside of the catchment area. Please ensure you read our full admissions policy which is available on our website.

Questions regarding cut off

- For the September 2020 entry we were able offer all timely applications within the 4 mile radius and the remaining places on rank score to 111. For September 2019, we were able to offer all applications with the 4 mile radius and the rank score cut off was 117 and in 2018 again we were able to offer all applications with the 4 mile radius and the rank score cut off was 115. As you can see the cut off can change dramatically and we only use this data as a guide.

How to check the 4 mile radius

- On line, enter the school postcode and your home postcode into any straight-line distance calculator.

Do we stand higher chances of getting a space in Herschel if we put it higher on the priority list on CAF?

- No. You must place schools in your genuine order of preference. This is the case for all schools.

Will children be tested in their own schools?

- Pupils do not sit the examination at their primary school. Registered pupils will be invited to sit the examination in one of the four grammar schools in Slough.

Which examination do you use?

- The examination is produced by CEM, the Centre for Examination and Monitoring.

2022 Entry

My child is now in Year 5. When is the deadline to apply/register to the Slough Consortium.

- Information regarding the September 2022 entry will begin to appear on our website from 1 March 2021. No dates have been finalised at this time.

September 2020 – All information is correct at the time of publication but is subject to change thereafter.