Parsons Green Prep School

Private Schools speaks to **Tim Cannell**, the new Headmaster of Parsons Green Prep, in Fulham, London, to find out what his future ambitions are for the school.



Q: CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND YOUR EDUCATION BACKGROUND?

As a child I had a really enjoyable time at school but in many ways I didn't reach my potential academically. It wasn't until later in life that I realised that I could achieve academically and undertook a master's degree with the Open University. My teaching career has spanned over three decades and has included working in the maintained sector, international education and for the past 25 years within prep schools. I have held a range of roles from Housemaster to Director of Studies and for the past twelve years as Headmaster. Along the way I have taught a variety of subjects, introduced personal development programmes and coached a variety of sports.

Q: WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO BRING TO PARSONS GREEN PREP?

These experiences have clearly shaped me and will enable me to bring to Parsons Green Prep a breadth of knowledge and understanding of what makes for an excellent school and an education that opens up the world to our children. I have learned that change is constant – it is the pace of change that varies and that schools must continue to evolve and can't afford to sit on their laurels. There are many great aspects of life at PGP and I see it as my mission to build on the many strengths of the school and develop those areas that need strengthening further.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE AMBITIONS FOR THE SCHOOL?

If ultimately I am to take on the mantle of Head for a longer period, my ambition for PGP is to equip our children for living in an increasing complex world, to be able to work with technology that is yet to exist and no doubt a world that that has ever increasing social pressures which will impact significantly on their wellbeing. I want PGP to equip our children for these experiences by being a school that enables children to grow, not just physically and academically but emotionally too, in resilience, self-belief and confidence. This is because having a positive view of themselves will be paramount to them succeeding in this rapidly changing world.

Q: LAST YEAR THE SCHOOL WON THE ISA AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING STEM PROVISION. WHY IS STEM EDUCATION SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?

The world around us is changing more rapidly than ever before. By the time our reception children reach 21 the advancements in technology will be beyond our current comprehension. Preparing children for the world they are entering is a vital part of education. STEM is about children understanding the links across these areas and applying skills learned in one area to solve problems in another. It is about equipping them with the skills to be leaders of the future. The continued focus on STEM at PGP is paramount if we are to open up the world to all children, regardless of gender, and to ensure that these areas are accessible for all. STEM remains a key component of the curriculum and we will be considering further enhancements to the programme over the coming months.

Q: EVERY PUPIL IN KEY STAGE 2 HAS ACCESS TO THEIR OWN TABLET - HOW DOES THIS BENEFIT THEIR EDUCATION?

Having access to a tablet is an important part of a child's education as it allows pupils to access information, record findings in a variety of media and share work in both a more manageable way and in real time. The tablet needs to be seen as not just a console for games but a tool for continued learning in the modern world. As teachers we don't need to say let's find that out later, when perhaps the moment of learning has gone – the tablet allows the children to find out now when the information is at its most relevant. However, tablets are only one tool in an armoury of tools that a teacher should use to enhance a child's learning experience.

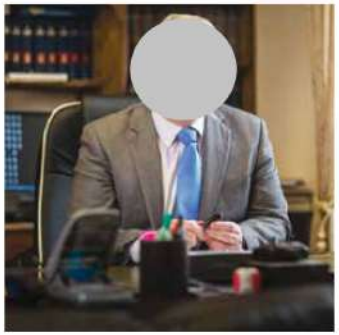
Q: WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL'S CORE AIMS AND VALUES? AND DO YOU AGREE WITH THEM?



One of the key aspects of the school that drew me to PGP is a simple statement that sums up the aims of the school. The statement was made by the Principal, Lucinda Waring: 'how a child learns is as important as what a child learns.' What is there not to agree with? At PGP, we aspire to develop able young people who will want to make a positive contribution and improve the world they join as well as engage in lifelong learning. An admirable aim and therefore my mission and challenge as a Head is to ensure that this is reflected in the ethos, teaching and learning throughout the school. Thus offering all PGP pupils an excellent education, inspiring them to achieve their best within a rich, happy, safe and fulfilling school experience upon which will be built their future success.

Q: WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM OTHER LONDON-BASED PREP SCHOOLS?

Parsons Green Prep school is not just another high-pressured London school. Yes, results matter, in terms of preparing children for the right school so that each child can flourish when they move on aged 11. However, PGP is non-selective. We value children as individuals and aim to create a learning environment that encourages children to develop a love for learning set within a warm and caring space that allows children to develop the soft skills of, flexibility, resilience, and self-confidence. This will enable the children to lead successful and well balanced lives in the future.



Q: WHY SHOULD PARENTS CHOOSE PARSONS GREEN PREP FOR THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION?

Parents should choose the right school for their child – there are many good schools out there and no school fits all. PGP will benefit those parents that want their children to enjoy their childhood, have a learning experience that is centered around the individual and understand that education is more than just about academic success. It does not matter how academically successful a child is if they do not have the confidence and the positive self view to share their thoughts with others. I believe PGP with its ideals, values and determination will make each child the best they can be, enabling them to go out into the world, stand on their own two feet and be both happy and successful.