

DULWICH COLLEGE ●

Dulwich Common, SE21 7LD

Website *dulwich.org.uk*

Head *Dr Joe Spence, PhD, since 2009; previously head of Oakham School* ***Pupils*** *1,408 boys: 1,272 day; 136 boarding* ***Ages*** *11–18*

Term Fees *Day: £7,657; boarding: £15,983* ***Oxbridge*** *12%*

Admission *School's own exam, interview and previous school's report*

Alumni *Graham Swift, PG*

Wodehouse, poet Michael Ondaatje

PREP Head *Dr Toby Griffiths*

Pupils *213 day boys* ***Ages*** *7–11*

Term Fees *£7,657*

To mark the centenary year of alumnus Ernest Shackleton's death, the school's head will actually take a part-sabbatical and travel to the Antarctic to follow in the great man's footsteps. Little wonder that one student describes Dr Spence as 'inspiring' and 'incredible', continuing: 'If the aim is to tick the boxes, then he colours them in and turns them into what they have the potential to be.' Spence presides over a truly dynamic and diverse school: around 40 per cent of the student body represents London's ethnic-minority communities, and 199 pupils are in receipt of bursaries worth over £4 million. Music is noteworthy: the close-harmony group has performed in Soho's Pizza Express and has even been enlisted by a professional composer. Drama also thrives: a recent moving project at Birmingham Town Hall saw Holocaust survivors' testimony interlaced with Year 7 and 8 pupils showcasing their physical theatre, dance and musical skills; and senior pupils were finalists in the University of Oxford Ancient Drama performance contest. Extracurriculars span Quidditch club to the time-travellers club. 'It's the variety of activities on offer that allows you to tailor your school experience and find your niche,' says one student. 'I certainly appreciate the freedom we are given in running and setting up societies.' All this is supplemented by a programme called Free Learning, which must do something right because roughly 20 pupils head to Oxbridge each year.