



AYSGARTH
SCHOOL

An exciting new chapter
for Aysgarth School



Dear Friends,

As I write this message, I am transported back to my Chairman's Speech earlier this year. During that address, I expressed immense satisfaction at the appointment of Jonathon Anderson as Headmaster, being absolutely convinced that we had made the correct choice. It is with the same unwavering certainty that the Board of Governors has decided to extend the provision of a distinguished Aysgarth education to girls. This expands our co-educational reach beyond the Pre-Prep, where we have been welcoming boys and girls for more than 30 years.

This pivotal decision has been prompted by the evolving societal landscape and our steadfast commitment to meet the needs of modern family life. In light of the increasing prevalence of co-educational institutions, it is evident that more families are actively seeking educational environments that can comprehensively serve the educational requirements of both their daughters and sons.

I take immense pride in all that our community has achieved together and look forward with great enthusiasm to our promising future.

Nimble Thompson LLB, D.Laws (Hons),
MCI Arb, FID (Hons)

Chairman of Governors

Taking our Legacy Forward

We take great pride in our school's success and know that to maintain our leading position, we must adapt to remain relevant in an ever-changing world. We believe in the harmonious coexistence of tradition and progress. By extending our educational offering to girls beyond Pre-Prep, we are building upon our legacy to ensure Aysgarth remains an enduring beacon of excellence.

Recently, we conducted a comprehensive parent survey to better understand our community's needs. The findings were enlightening and instrumental in shaping our educational approach. Notably, parents expressed a shared hope for extending our provision to benefit their daughters beyond Pre-Prep.

In response to our survey, our Governors and leadership team thoughtfully considered the opportunities presented. It became clear that transitioning to a more integrated co-educational model up to Year 8 would foster a harmonious and enriched learning environment, aligning closely with the evolving needs and expectations of our parent community.

By extending our co-educational experience from the Pre-Prep into the Prep school, Aysgarth will provide an environment where girls and boys can develop harmoniously alongside one another. This expansion will enable us to further enrich our pupils' well-being, build upon our pastoral excellence, and provide superb academic and extracurricular offerings to successfully prepare our pupils for their future beyond Aysgarth's school gates.



Going co-ed: Your questions, answered

What makes Aysgarth the school of choice?

Aysgarth has a well-established reputation for academic excellence and an exemplary track record of providing an unmatched commitment to holistic education through the huge number of extracurricular activities and opportunities we provide.

Our award-winning pastoral care and culture of respect and kindness encourages each child to explore their interests and talents, whether in our impressive school facilities or outside in our beautiful grounds.

We have close relationships with the country's leading senior schools and have an excellent record of pupils gaining entry to their first school choice and of thriving when they arrive there.

All children joining Aysgarth find a welcoming community where they can confidently discover their passions, build strong friendships, and develop the values and character to set them up for life.

Who made the decision for Aysgarth to become co-educational?

This decision was made by the Governors of Aysgarth School after long and detailed discussions over several years.

Our Governing Body is a formidable group of individuals, drawn from a rich reservoir of experience and skills. Its membership includes current and former parents; OAs (Old Aysgarthians); business and management experts; legal minds; strategic visionaries; headmasters; and esteemed associates. Recently we have been joined by Anne Naylor, a former Housemistress at Rugby School for several years, and Chris Porter, a successful entrepreneur and dedicated parent. The Governors are equipped with an unparalleled wealth of knowledge, expertise, and leadership to orchestrate and navigate substantial changes with unwavering confidence and strategic precision.

The running of the school is truly in safe hands.

Why has this decision been made?

Aysgarth is always prudent when considering its strategic development. Our goal is to maintain our standing as one of the finest preparatory schools in the country. We want to make it even better, so we can remain the best. To ensure that an Aysgarth education can be offered for generations to come, we need to grow and move with the times.

We are acknowledging the importance of preparing the younger generation for a society characterised by gender equality, respect and cooperation. It is our duty as educators to prepare our pupils for the world beyond Aysgarth, and as we have offered co-education at the school for 30 years in the Pre-Prep, welcoming girls to the Prep School is a natural development.

What are the benefits of moving to co-education?

Our parents, both past and present, hold in high regard the enduring sense of family unity and the positive atmosphere we have at Aysgarth. Life at Aysgarth is full of busy, talented children and becoming co-educational allows us to nurture friendships, cultivate mutual understanding, and share the magical benefits of our sons and daughters working together.

THE BENEFITS OF CO-EDUCATION

Real-world preparation

Gender equality

Diverse perspectives

Healthy competition

Increased social development skills

Overcoming fears of the opposite sex

Mutual respect and understanding

Improved academic performance

Broader friendships

Opportunities for all

Is the staff experienced in co-educational teaching?

Mr and Mrs Anderson have worked together in four co-educational prep schools, and the majority of our talented staff have taught in co-educational settings. We are also happy we have an equal number of male and female staff.

In addition, two members of the Senior Management Team have worked at a single-sex school while it made the change to co-education, which will provide us with invaluable experience. Most importantly, we must remember that providing an environment of positive pupil well-being, pastoral excellence, and a broad range of academic and extracurricular offerings is not gender-specific.

What will be the impact of this change?

We have always believed in the power of our community and family atmosphere, and this will remain fundamentally unchanged at Aysgarth. Our aims and ethos will continue to recognise each pupil as an individual requiring challenge, support, and nurture.

Aysgarth has established an excellent reputation for academic endeavour through a varied curriculum and timetable that promote effort and development in a collaborative and ambitious environment. These will remain. We always strive to offer an enriching educational experience to all our children, and our curriculum, co-curricular programmes, and pastoral excellence are designed to be inclusive and to cater to the interests and needs of all children, regardless of gender.

We will make the necessary adjustments to facilities such as restrooms, changing rooms, and dormitories to ensure that spaces for girls match those for boys. Reorganising the facilities and planned improvements to our school's environment will positively impact and benefit everyone.

Will my son's experience and opportunities at Aysgarth change?

Opportunity and variety will undoubtedly increase. The review of facilities – which aims to intensify our focus on STEM – and our further expansion in co-curricular activities will enhance boys' experience. We believe that by becoming co-educational, all pupils will be better prepared for a life where equality and high expectations for all lies ahead.

How will the school ensure equality of treatment and opportunity for all our pupils?

The school is dedicated to providing equal treatment and opportunities to all pupils, regardless of gender, in all aspects of school life. No two pupils are alike and we already pride ourselves on caring for the individual.

“The school looks at my children as individuals and I feel their experiences are each uniquely tailored to maximise their requirements and enjoyment”

From Aysgarth Parent Survey, 2023

Will girls be able to board?

We believe in the value of a boarding community to develop every aspect of a child's potential. We will welcome girls to board with us as soon as they wish.



Will the school curriculum change to include girls' needs and interests?

Each academic department is already continually reviewed to ensure that they promote awareness, diversity and balance. Furthermore, we have created a Working Group consisting of parents, governors and staff, to manage and assist with any additional considerations. All of our pupils will still work towards scholarships or Common Entrance examinations in Form 5.

“Subject specialists instil their expertise and passion for their subjects from Year 5 onwards, with many of these staff valuing the opportunity to teach within our Pre-Prep, too. Positive attitudes to learning as well as to challenges are constantly modelled by our high-quality staff. Their commitment, support, and encouragement allow our pupils to thrive with in a caring yet demanding learning environment that extends beyond the classroom.”

Dr Canning, Deputy Head Academic

Which extracurricular activities will be available for girls, and how will they be integrated into existing programmes?

Girls will be able to enjoy our wide range of extracurricular activities immediately, and we are researching new opportunities to extend this provision further for the benefit of all our pupils.



Will there be sports for girls?

Our pupils can take part in a wide range of sports already, all of which will be offered to girls, and netball will be offered from September 2024.

Our Pre-Prep girls and boys, aged 3 to 7, already represent Aysgarth against other schools and the girls joining the Prep school will be able to enjoy the same sports training and sporting enthusiasm that already exist in the school.

Will girls be able to sing in the senior choir?

We look forward to welcoming girls in the choir and our drama productions! The Working Group (see page 9) will ensure pupils continue to engage in the performing arts.

What will the girls' uniform look like?

The uniform will align with our school's existing uniform guidelines. In the upcoming Spring Term, parents will have the opportunity to choose from a range of options, including any gender-specific items, which can be ordered and delivered before the start of the next academic year.

Will pupils be mentored or receive peer support for the transition to Prep?

The existing mentorship, peer-support programmes, and experience opportunities will be implemented to help all the new pupils when they arrive in September 2024 so that they can integrate seamlessly into the school.

Will girls be offered leadership roles within the Prep school?

All of our pupils will have the same opportunities to assume the numerous leadership roles available in our wide variety of school activities and organisations.

Will staff receive any training to prepare for going co-educational, particularly for pastoral care?

We are immensely proud of our excellent pastoral care and the abilities of our team. Aysgarth's unwavering commitment to STEER's innovative toolkit has earned us the prestigious title of STEER Champion School. This recognition underscores our dedication to supporting all children.

STEER's methodology prioritises children's needs in and out of the classroom, emphasising prediction and prevention. We are recognised as a modern leader in educational and pastoral practices, and our new Prep pupils will seamlessly integrate into our excellent individualised pastoral plan, supported further by Teenagers Translated.

“Pastoral care is central to everything we do at Aysgarth. Every staff member is dedicated to the well-being of our children. We continually teach our pupils how important it is to openly discuss their emotions. Our toolkit plays a crucial role in identifying and equipping the pupils with the necessary skills to articulate their feelings. We are exceedingly proud that some of our methods are seen as best practices and have been adopted by other schools.”

Paul Barlow, Deputy Head Pastoral



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