



EDUCATION CORNER PODCAST WITH HEAD

Mr. Andy Johnson

FROM TRURO SCHOOL, CORNWALL



On the school's website, you describe the ethos of the school as 'compassionate ambition.' Could you explain what this means, and tell us a little bit more about the ethos and values at Truro School?

Our school motto is *Esse Quam Videri*, which means: "To Be Rather Than To Seem To Be." The essence of that is about children, adults and our institution being able to flourish, being able to enjoy becoming the very best of themselves and not feeling like they have to be whatever someone else is telling them to be. I think that comes from our Methodist foundation as a school, that belief that all are welcome and that we should be doing good with what we have and what we can do. The school is really, really blessed in that regard. We've got all sorts of varied talents and commitments through the school and it's not a hierarchy. *I suppose that's the compassionate side of this sense of ambition: having ambition for everyone as an individual, but without viewing certain types of excellence or ambition as being more or less worthy than others.* There's a real value set behind that and that's really important.

For me, endeavour matters at least as much as achievement does, which I think is a very compassionate position to take, as an educationalist. I love the fact that children come here, aged eleven, and that they have this incredible, supported, opportunity-filled journey ahead of them where they can make right and wrong turns in an environment that will always try to believe in them and bring them back to the values that will underpin their successes, both at present and in the future.

What are the main entry points for children and families considering Truro School?

Established in 1880, Truro School is situated in the southwest of England, and offers a distinctive boarding experience, amidst stunning landscapes and extensive coastline. Voted Boarding School of the Year finalist in the 2023 Independent Schools of the Year Award, the school offers an inspiring environment that celebrates academic success alongside personal growth.

Mr. Andy Johnson speaks to us about the bespoke boarding experience at Truro School, the school's unique Cornish setting, mental health support and compassionate values.

We have 11+ and 13+ admission. At those points it's selective based on entrance examinations, school reports and interviews. At 11+, just under half our intake come from our lovely Prep School - which is about three miles across town - and then the rest of our intake come from schools from all over Cornwall, across the county and, indeed, sometimes beyond.

You're one of the few independent schools in Cornwall. What do you feel are the benefits of this location for the school and for your students?

We are the only 3-18 co-educational independent through school in the whole of Cornwall and I think the benefits of that are immense. Truro is a cathedral city, albeit a relatively small city, but it's still a city - all the benefits and amenities of being in a city are here but at the same time, we have the North and South coasts and the moorlands of Bodmin and Penwith within easy reach. It really is an astoundingly beautiful part of the world and that combination of being in an urban area while having those places on your doorstep is, I think, really quite precious.

A big focus of our magazine is equality, diversity and inclusion. How do you implement this at Truro School, and support pupils who may be struggling with things like mental health or neurodiversity, for example?

It's a great focus to have as a magazine, so I applaud you for that. I think this has never been



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more important - EDI work is always needed and it always will be. The key for us is to try and foster that sense of belonging. *We try to use the language of belonging as much as the language of inclusion. I think 'belonging' speaks to people about how they can feel empowered - not just how they can feel involved - and I think that distinction is really, really important in any discussion around EDI and belonging.*

I think the fact that Cornwall - and therefore, our school - is not as culturally diverse as some other parts of the UK, creates all the more responsibility; we have a responsibility to champion diversity and that's not always easy, but it's always important and I've worked in some very, very diverse communities in parts of London and elsewhere - the fact that we don't have that here is an extra responsibility. That's certainly the way I view it. I think the global reference points brought to us by our boarders in this space are very, very important. But EDI, in terms of race and culture, is not just about where you're from, it's about your identity. It's not just about nationalities, it's so much more than that, and that's incredibly important. »



I do think Cornwall, although it might not be as culturally diverse, is actually incredibly economically diverse. When we're talking about EDI, our admission as a school is not just from the independent sector. *Our means-tested bursary awards program is actively trying to broaden the social diversity and economic diversity of the school, which reflects Cornwall, as it should.* We have an active, growing, dedicated and fully supported pupil-led diversity group who are championing LGBTQ+ and all sorts of valued minority voices in the school. This is growing and it's exciting to see the children driving this in the school, supported by us. Of course, true to our Methodist heritage, we speak a lot in the school about everyone feeling welcome and that's integral to that Methodist foundation - we're always looking to learn more.

You mentioned mental health as well. I think a lot of that is often inextricably connected to EDI. We run an advice, counselling, help and empathy program. We have a large number of Sixth Formers who choose to train up for that and a majority of our staff have undertaken Mental Health First Aid training. The school's pastoral system is really strong and partners very closely with families, parents and the children. That matters for the boarders too, maybe sometimes even more so, as they are physically distant from their families. It's so important - going back to that sense of belonging - that the children here feel that they are in a place where they belong and can get support.

I have to mention Bumble as well: we have a school dog, who is absolutely essential to our wellbeing team. He's also a bit of a minor celebrity; Bumble is a symbol, in some respects, I won't overplay that, but he's very important to the community.



This edition of the magazine is focusing on boarding. I know that you've said that your school community has 8% boarders, but could you describe the boarding experience at Truro School and the benefits of this for the boarding community?

At Truro School, we offer comprehensive boarding provision, full boarding, as well as weekly boarding and flexi-boarding options to accommodate various pupil needs and schedules. As you say, in school we have over 800 students from Years 7 to 13 and we've got a boarding community of around 70. With that scale, our boarding experience here is extremely bespoke. The boarding communities we have - both the boys' and girls' boarding houses - forge really strong home-from-home bonds across year groups, not just within year groups, and we're really proud of that. That comes from our very bespoke arrangement which is not industrial in scale. Our boarders are local, national and international, and the international boarders come from a huge variety of countries worldwide - again, there's real diversity there: we're not focused on a particular part of the globe, it genuinely is representative of many, many different continents, which brings a wonderful sense of globalism into the school and into Cornwall.

Like any strong boarding school - and there are many - we operate a very busy evening and weekend program both on- and off-site. Of course,

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we have that advantage of accessing everything about Cornwall. *I suppose what makes our offer so exciting and really quite special, beyond all those generic strengths, is that Cornish connection, that bespoke offering in Cornwall.* For our local boarders, many of their families choose to live in Cornwall, in its beauty, but work away. That's a lifestyle choice, and it's one that we want to support and cater for.

The children in the boarding houses socialise, cook together, share social spaces, study and enjoy all the activities around the school, supported by a very, very experienced and caring staff body. I think the opportunities offered by Cornwall in this context are really quite spectacular and, if I'm being very, very honest, I also think they're pretty good value as well.

Partnerships: I know it's a big thing, certainly with the London-based schools, but I'm sure that you, too, have partnerships with local schools that benefit the experience of your pupils?

Yes, absolutely. For us at Truro School, I think our partnership work is very exciting. It's also actually quite humbling at points, too. I see our school as part of many wider communities in Cornwall because we're so unique in that landscape - we have to be, it's absolutely essential. *What's great about good partnerships is that everybody's equal. Everybody's seeking to work together to benefit everybody. There's no hierarchy there and that's what is at the*

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heart of exciting partnerships. Educationally, yes, there's lots we do with local schools, like conferences, training, resource sharing, staff masterclasses and so on. However, I think it goes beyond this. I sit on a quite innovative committee called the Cornwall Education Partnership, which brings together educational leaders from across the whole county, from the Multi-Academy Trust, from the local authority, from the state sector, and we think we're the only county in the country that's doing anything like this at the moment. I represent the independent sector on this committee and, directly or indirectly, that group represents every child in the whole of our county who are of compulsory-school-age in education. We talk about education in Cornwall, we talk about the wider landscape, and that's exactly what all of us around that table want to focus on. This school has to play a part in that.

What are your plans or hopes for the future?

I hope that we continue this pursuit of excellence in its broadest possible sense, that has to be what a great educational institution is trying to do. We want to be offering - and I think we are offering - a genuinely very dynamic and empowering educational journey, and that's something we're very proud of. Not to be too fixated on destinations and outcomes, but I think the importance of that educational journey for the children comes from the journey being right and empowering. That's absolutely our focus, along with continuing to forge and build those community links.

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We would like to thank Mr. Andy Johnson, Head at Truro School, for giving up his time to speak to us.

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