



# MEET THE HEAD

Headmaster of Sutton Valence Preparatory School, Richard Johnson on his love of history, children – and upholding the law

**Where did you go to school?**

A native of Northumberland, I was fortunate to attend Gordonstoun School in Scotland. There I developed my love of sailing, hill walking and outdoor pursuits. I went from there to Newcastle University to read Law, but took a gap year in the interim, which was to change the course of my career.

**Why did you go in to teaching?**

I spent my gap year teaching in a prep school in South Africa and it was there that I caught the teaching bug. I absolutely loved every minute of it and came to believe that prep schools offer a very unique learning environment. So as soon as I graduated, I returned to University to do a Post-Graduate teaching certificate – and never looked back.

**What is your favourite subject and why?**

History, without a doubt. It's all about people, what motivates them and why they do the things they do. It teaches us about where we

and a lot of effort goes into ensuring their strengths are recognised and nurtured. We want our children to be happy and fulfilled; to come to school and to leave it with a smile.

**If not teaching, what would you have done?**

Almost certainly law, after work experience in a shipping office, it would probably have been in maritime law. Once you begin to study law, it's not necessarily what you expect and it opens up a wealth of different avenues.

**If money was no object, what would you change or add to the school?**

We do have some excellent facilities and there has been a great deal of investment in the recent past which means the buildings and physical facilities really are first rate. In addition, excellent facilities are available at the senior school such as a full sized indoor swimming pool, the Bannister Athletics Track and the Baughan Theatre, all of which have been

confident and well prepared to meet the challenges of their next school.

**What are your school's future plans?**

The development of our ICT provision is always on-going and we have just extended the wireless network to cover the whole school and have a new bank of laptops for students' use, as well as more interactive whiteboards in all the classrooms. We have a talented and committed staff and excellent resources. However, I am a great believer in healthy and open self-evaluation. We have had two very successful inspections but I want parents, staff – even the children – to be involved in evaluating the school in the future. It is important to ensure that our communication between home and school fosters a shared sense of purpose. If we listen to pupils and parents we can make life at Sutton Valence an even richer experience for all concerned.

“I want parents, staff – even the children – to be involved in evaluating the school in the future”

come from and also so much about life. I find it endlessly fascinating, particularly the Napoleonic period.

**Tell us about your school?**

It has a wonderful sense of community, which you can feel all around, from the moment you enter the site. As well as building strong academic foundations, it offers children so much more - in terms of music, sport, art, drama and their personal development. Each child is very much recognised as an individual

built in the past three years. I would like to see our wonderful facilities and education made available to even more people, through bursarial support, especially in the local area.

**Why would parents chose your school?**

So that they can experience the atmosphere. We have happy and successful children, with fantastic opportunities in all areas. High standards are achieved but in a happy and relaxed way. The whole community has a strong sense of purpose and our pupils leave



GET IN TOUCH

Sutton Valence Preparatory School  
 Church Road, Chart Sutton  
 Nr Maidstone ME17 3RF  
 Tel: 01622 842117  
 enquiries@svprep.svs.org.uk  
 www.svs.org.uk