

I believe in Boarding Preparatory Schools

I have been lucky enough to work in boarding preparatory schools in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom for the last 14 years; being fully involved in most areas that make these schools tick and hum. I have also been lucky enough to visit at least 40 boarding preparatory schools in this time. So what makes a boarding preparatory school so successful and different from other schools? I will make an attempt to explain, based on my personal experiences, what I believe are the principles and beliefs that make boarding prep schools such special places.

I believe in the friendships, laughter and adventures pupils have while growing and developing in a boarding environment, especially at prep school. I believe in pupils learning to live and work together in one big family, accepting differences and being tolerant of each other, particularly at the end of a term. I believe in the excitement and keenness of the pupils leading up to a school event, like a 'Battle of the Bands' competition, a sports fixture against another arch rival prep school, the end of year Christmas dinner or the announcement of next year's prefects. I believe in the pastoral care and the relationships developed between pupils and teacher. I believe in the family and community spirit in prep schools.

I believe in a smile and a "good morning", exchanged between pupil and teacher at the start of the day. I believe in the smell of freshly cut grass before 'Athletics Day'. I believe in the picnic hampers and families enjoying watching their sons and daughters compete with determination and pride on their faces. I believe in the cheering and yelling for that boy who is running in the 800 meters and is winning and for the louder cheering and yelling for the boy who is running the 800 meters, who is in last place. I believe in the silver cups and medallions presented at prizegiving by the Head Boy's mum. I believe in the firm handshake and eye contact made with the person presenting the award. I believe in the bow and the rapturous applause by the school when sharing and celebrating the success of the Victor Ledorum. I believe in the smile on everyone's faces. I believe in winning but more importantly I believe in pupils reaching their potential and feeling good about themselves. I believe in pupils complimenting each other on a good shot in tennis or cricket. I believe in pupils getting wet and muddy when playing a winter sport. I believe in lots of swims on a hot summer's day and ice-blocks on a Sunday afternoon.

I believe in the camaraderie amongst the pupils, staff and parents. I believe in pupils having shiny black shoes and shirts tucked in. I believe in all pupils having a go and feeling safe when having a go. I believe in healthy exercise every day. I believe in excellent classroom teaching by teachers who are energised and passionate about their pupils and what they are teaching. I believe in the afternoon teas and after match speeches at the end of a day's cricket. I believe in pupils asking teachers if there is anything they can do to help. I believe in good manners and values. I believe in pupils setting and achieving goals and moving onto their next challenges. I believe in pupils at prep school, stepping out of their comfort zones. I believe in values and independence being developed that only boarding can give a pupil. I believe in doors opening and

opportunities being made available for pupils. I believe in celebrating success and I believe in younger pupils looking up to and admiring older pupils. I believe in older pupils being friends with younger pupils. I believe in pupils understanding and respecting each others' needs. I believe in pupils helping a friend to sick bay if injured in a sports match.

I believe in sunblock and sunhats in summer terms in New Zealand. I believe in singing a hymn in chapel at the start of every day at school. I believe in a school's traditions and looking at photos of pupils on the walls around the school from 100 years ago. I believe in seeing children's artwork, hearing drums and guitars jamming and smelling curry cooking for lunch on a Tuesday morning. I believe in Honos Boards, school records and school magazines. I believe in all pupils having to prepare and present speeches, being part of a debating team and being involved in the school productions. I believe in the nerves pupils feel before walking on stage to perform and the smile and satisfaction on their faces when they walk off stage.

I believe in pupils absorbed with models, books or building huts. I believe in the house systems and the passion and enthusiasm each and every pupil has for their house, whatever the competition. I believe in pupils setting tables for dinner and having jobs and responsibilities. I believe in pillow fights, dorm raiding and the innocent hijinx 11 and 12 year olds get up to. I believe in movies on a Saturday night and a bag of lollies to savor through the movie. I believe in watching the All Blacks with 100 boarders on a Saturday evening or watching an Old Boy compete at the Olympics on television, sharing the success and being so incredibly proud. I believe in space to explore and to be creative, imaginative and adventurous. I believe all pupils will make mistakes and I believe pupils learn from their mistakes. I believe pupils should have rules, expectations and have consequences for poor behaviour. I believe in three cheers when a pupil receives his or her school colours.

I believe in the culture that exists in prep schools, a culture of tremendous pride and family. I believe good prep schools are about opportunities, seeking out pupils' talents, developing these talents and preparing them for their senior schools; this we do in abundance. I believe boarding preparatory schools have a strong future and I believe our pupils do too. I believe ...

By Andrew Osmond,
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