

## Having an open mind and the benefits of studying in an international school

Following the recent diplomatic tensions between Russia and the UK, Russian parents may start to wonder whether now is the right time to be sending their sons and daughters to study in the UK. They may worry that an unfriendly atmosphere for Russians has been created abroad. As Head of a small international school in London, I would like to argue that now is **precisely** the right time to study abroad and that the values we promote at The Mount, Mill Hill International make the school a very welcoming place to study, no matter what nationality, religion, cultural background the student is from.

Benefiting from having over twenty nationalities in the school, we use this opportunity to encourage our students to cultivate an open mind by understanding viewpoint diversity. In a world where we are increasingly listening to and viewing information within an 'echo chamber', we are privileged to teach and learn in a school where we can have dialogues with people who are different from us.

We cultivate intellectual humility: we learn to be comfortable with doubt, we accept our limitations and realise that we are often wrong. We therefore actively encourage open dialogue and teach our students the skills with which to debate. By engaging in constructive disagreement, students seek to learn rather than be right.

If we help our students to understand that our beliefs shape how we see the world, it helps them to understand that we are vulnerable to bias, and that we all have a tendency to feel we have the moral monopoly on truth. We start to question our conclusions that anyone who doesn't see things as we do must be ignorant, stupid or evil.

When students leave The Mount, Mill Hill International, they will have come into contact with students with diverse backgrounds, cultures, religions and beliefs. Having had many opportunities, in a safe environment, to understand themselves and each other more deeply, they will have learnt that the best method to combat prejudice and bias and to achieve social progress is with vigorous and open discourse. We are educating future diplomats and policy makers; that they have had the opportunities to listen to other viewpoints from an early age can only be of benefit to us all.

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