

International Student Experience

BRAMBLETYE

A warm and welcoming environment and bespoke programmes to help international pupils with their English secured this West Sussex school the top award

Brambletye is proud to be a global village. Reputation spreads through word of mouth to families across the world and it currently hosts children from 12 countries. Diversity in the boarding house is celebrated, and from an early age, the children learn to accept and celebrate each other's differences. Children understand and practise tolerance, respect and empathy: they're interested in each other's cultures.

Junior boarders have story night in the dorms, when they choose traditional stories from around the world to be read to. They often like to choose one from their own culture to share with the others. Joe who's from Japan recently chose *The Samurai and the Tea Master*.

Food is a great vehicle to aid cultural appreciation. Boarding suppers are often themed and children are encouraged to recommend food.

Mexican, tapas, Chinese, Moroccan, Thai, American and Vietnamese are favourites. Boarding staff support the children by discussing cultural differences, especially at mealtimes, helping the children with table manners and understanding what the children may be missing, such as warm water to drink. The children also learn to make sushi, pasta and bread.

The boarding team seeks advice from specialists to understand cultural nuances and how parental expectations and attitudes vary from our own.

Sophia joined Brambletye from China with her older brother in year four. She was naturally shy and quiet with limited English, particularly when it came

to writing but it was obvious that she was an able mathematician and artist. The Head of Lower School developed a bespoke and focused phonics programme to work through over the course of the year enabling her to close the gap on her native English-speaking peers.

Sophia's year group was large, but the quiet girl was quickly assimilated and almost immediately found herself being invited out for playdates and sleepovers with local children. With ongoing support from staff and her friends, Sophia was encouraged to be involved in more aspects of school life. She found that she was very good at sport, playing for the A team in netball and being selected for the very fast girls' 100m

relay team. She was cast in school plays and took up the oboe. She learned to ski on a school trip and spent as much time as she could in the art studio. She has developed into a chatty, confident, popular and talented girl and she has now been awarded a Charterhouse art scholarship. Witnessing her return to Brambletye post-Covid, a parent said "it was the warmest reunion I've ever seen."

"We're delighted to have won a prestigious ISOTY award," says Headmaster Will Brooks. "Our staff go the extra mile to create an exceptional boarding experience for pupils from around the world and it's wonderful for their efforts to be recognised." brambletye.co.uk

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Food is just one of the aspects Brambletye uses to embrace its boarders' diverse cultures