

Dear Applicant,

I would like to introduce you to our school and our town.

Dalton is situated on the fringe of the Lake District and at the centre of the very attractive limestone countryside of the Furness peninsula. It has easy access to the M6 and the many cultural opportunities of Barrow, Kendal, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle are all within reach.

The town has a small number of light industries, but is largely a farming and dormitory community dependent upon the industries of Barrow and Ulverston. Fine beaches and the Furness Fells are on the doorstep and the immediate locality has a wealth of attractive countryside, moorland and small villages with a thriving community life.

There is a wide variety of housing, both within the town of Dalton and in the surrounding areas. Dalton has its own leisure centre with swimming pool, gymnasium, squash courts and sauna. Further recreational and cultural opportunities also exist in the area.

Dowdales School is “A school designed for achievement and a Performing Arts College”

Built around a small, but impressive Victorian Mansion, the school is set in 21 acres of attractive hillside grounds and its buildings provide good specialist and general facilities. It began life in 1928 as a small selective school for 200 pupils, housed in extensions to the 1883 house. On re-organisation in 1967, as an 11-16 comprehensive school, it had 570 pupils on roll and growth since then has resulted in a number of building programmes which have produced an attractive set of buildings grouped around the original house.

The name “Dowdales” is part of the long history of Dalton and was originally the name for at least eight fields on the north side of the town, which were part of the Ancient Town Fields of Dalton. Over the centuries the land passed through a variety of ownerships and early in the last century the area was recorded as having a quarry which supplied a considerable amount of building stone for the rapidly growing town.

Dowdales is a 7 form entry, 11-16 mixed community comprehensive school with 1057 pupils. It is very oversubscribed. Dowdales serves a mixed urban/rural catchment area, which includes Dalton in Furness, the coastal area of the Duddon Estuary as far as Grizebeck, the Low Furness farming area around Dalton and extending to the villages of Lindal and Marton in the East. It is a well-established popular neighbourhood school. It has good working links with its eight main contributory primary schools and with local employers, and we enjoy excellent relationships with and support from the parents and the community. Dowdales is designated as a Community School and it is an Adult Education Centre. It is also the lead school in the Dalton Cluster of Extended Schools. The school enjoys a high reputation for excellence throughout the Furness peninsula. On 1st September 2001, Dowdales became a **Specialist School in the Performing Arts** – dance, drama and music. In its Ofsted inspection in November, 1999, inspectors said “**Dowdales is an exceptional school**” and highlighted ten areas where it is exceptionally strong. The registered inspector said all the team would have liked their children to be a pupil here and stated that it is a cracking school with no significant weaknesses – the first time the Registered inspector had been able to say that in over 40 inspections, which he had led!! Its 2005 inspection was equally successful.

The school gained INVESTORS IN PEOPLE status in October 2002, retaining its status in its 2005 reassessment.

Standards are well above average in both key stages. About the pupils, inspectors said “The very caring family ethos sets the scene for excellent relationships across the school. Pupils treat teachers and all other staff with a great deal of respect”. “Pupils are uncommonly caring towards each other”. The school offers a clear, positive message of hope to all.”

All teaching in Year 7 is carried out with mixed-ability form groups. From Year 8 onwards there is some use of setting. Provision for pupils with special needs is made through “in-class” support and there is a programme of enrichment for all pupils with additional courses provided for the most able. Pupils with exceptional ability and maturity are occasionally placed in a year above that of their chronological age. Pupils in all years have a Record of Achievement and pupils’ progress is reported to parents termly. At 16+ pupils transfer either to the Sixth Form College in Barrow, or to Barrow, Kendal and Lancaster and Morecambe Colleges for Further Education. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities at the school, both at lunchtimes and after school, and the lively “Friends of Dowdales School” provide many activities enjoyed by pupils, parents and staff.

Dowdales is organised for pastoral, administrative and social purposes into five year groupings, which are placed in two schools, each with a Head:-

Lower School	Primary Liaison and Years 7, 8 and 9
Upper School	Years 10 and 11

There are also three Assistant Heads of School.

Each year group is divided into 7 forms and pupils usually remain in the same group throughout their 5 years in the school.

The form groups are the administrative and pastoral units, which provide the highly important, secure and stable base for the pupils’ life and work in the school.

Pupils are allocated to their forms on a mixed ability basis at the start of Year 7, using Primary School assessments of ability. Pupils joining the school at other stages are allocated to forms where vacancies occur and allocation to teaching groups will be based on recommendations from the previous secondary school.

There is also a House System for sporting and fund-raising activities.

Full school assemblies occur once a week and year assemblies or other acts of collective worship take place on the remaining days. The school rates highly the value of these meetings because of the part they play in the spiritual, social and moral education of the children.

Standards of pupils dress and behaviour are exceptionally high. All pupils are expected to maintain our high standards and to be concerned at all times for the good of others. It is extremely rare that they fail to do so. Election to the senior pupil body plays an important part in maintaining the school’s high standards. There is a long tradition of excellent relationships in the school.

All members of the staff are encouraged to contribute to meetings and the development of the school. The staff are extremely supportive and it is thanks to their continuing efforts and hard work that the school enjoys its high degree of success.

Staff enjoy working in this exceptional school and I thoroughly enjoy leading it. I look forward to reading your application.

Liz Moffatt
Liz Moffatt
Headteacher