

# LITTLE KESWICK SCHOOL

Keswick, Virginia

**Type:** Boys' boarding school

**Grades:** 5–12

**Enrollment:** 34

**Head of School:** Marc J. Columbus, M.Ed., Headmaster

## THE SCHOOL

Little Keswick School (LKS) is a nationally recognized, year-round therapeutic boarding school for 10- to 17-year-old boys with learning, behavioral, and emotional problems. Located on 25 pastoral acres adjacent to the scenic Southwest Mountains, and just 7 miles from Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, the School features high-quality academic and social/emotional programs within a relaxed, homelike atmosphere, providing the warmth, structure, and security a child needs in order to mature.

The School's philosophy of education encompasses both academic and social/emotional growth for each boy. The student's environment is structured so that he can achieve his potential growth through the development of a positive self-concept, with an emphasis on self-respect and respect for others. A positive attitude toward learning is encouraged, along with social skills training. Family involvement is required to ensure that students carry over positive behavior to the home and community.

The residential program at Little Keswick is a relationship-based model. Students build strong relationships not only with their peers but also with their counselors. Through the group experience of living in a dorm, students learn values of mutual respect and cooperation. As students develop a sense of belonging in residential life, they grow in confidence in other areas of the program. As a community, students and staff share chores—everything from sweeping floors, organizing shelves, and straightening up game closets, to taking out the trash. With chores built into the day and evening structures, students learn responsibility, organization, and a sense of community pride. Little Keswick also offers an on-campus jobs program, through which students experience the formal employment process by submitting an application and participating in an interview. Once “hired,” students work with a supervisor to continually evaluate their performance. The student is responsible for completing the job on a regular basis, finding a replacement when necessary, and maintaining contact with his supervisor. Besides kitchen helper, other examples of student jobs are horse helper, support counselor helper, and grounds helper.

The only real antidote for a history of struggles and failures is the experience of sustained success. Careful selection of appropriate challenges and the development of effective strategies provide constant opportunities for new successes. Little Keswick School is committed to structure, nurturance, and encouraging the development of responsible, honorable behavior.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Little Keswick School adheres to a high standard of academics, while maintaining a balance with therapy and social development for each student.

A multidisciplinary approach treats the whole student, emphasizing cognitive, social, emotional, artistic, and athletic attributes to develop each boy's unique sense of self. The School's goal is to bring to light the potential within each student, through the acquisition of academic, social and emotional skill sets, opportunities for positive practice within the LKS environment, and subsequent generalization to the student's home and community.

The full academic program is based on a student's needs. The Individual Service Plan (ISP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP) personalized for each student includes long- and short-term goals for academics, as well as residential and therapeutic areas. Standardized tests (primarily the Woodcock Johnson III), student records, and the present level of performance aid in determining class placement, course selection, and individual objectives in the student's ISP/IEP. The unique wraparound service that Little Keswick School utilizes balances the goals so that continuity for the student between all areas is achieved. A teacher-monitored study hall is scheduled daily to assist students with organizational skills and assigned homework.

Little Keswick School is licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The School is fully accredited by Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities. Each instructor at Little Keswick School is a certified Virginia teacher, with endorsements in the areas of emotional disturbance and/or learning disabilities. With the assistance of a teacher's aide, the teacher provides instruction in all the basic academic areas to a class of 6–8 students. The teacher is the head of the Advisory Team, the group of people who help make decisions for the student's program. The Advisory Team is an essential part of the Little Keswick School program and includes the teacher, the residential counselor, the therapist, and any other persons involved with the student's education or services.

The curriculum follows the Virginia State Standards of Learning. Course offerings include English (language arts/reading), mathematics, science, social studies, history and physical education.

## FACULTY AND ADVISERS

More than 40 staff members work together to create the nurturing community and culture that is Little Keswick School. Staff members model values such as respect, caring, and empathy, instilling and reinforcing these values in students. Residential staff must demonstrate previous experience working with similar student populations and must train in Life Space Crisis Intervention, choice theory, and mediation.

All students are supported by an experienced and well-qualified clinical team. The Director of

Psychological Services, who provides administrative coordination for clinical services and staff training, is joined by the Consulting Child Psychiatrist and Clinical Psychologist in providing consultation to academic and residential staff, as well as individual, group, and family psychotherapies. All clinical staff members hold doctorates in child psychology.

Additional members of the therapeutic team are the occupational therapist, speech therapist and art therapist. Occupational therapy (OT) utilizes a variety of techniques and sensory integration strategies to promote an adequate neurological foundation for the development of essential skills. Speech therapy teaches students how to be effective communicators and learn why specific social language guidelines can improve interpersonal relationships in all aspects of life. Art therapy provides a means by which students may explore feelings, enhance cognitive abilities, and enjoy the pleasure of making art in nonverbal and socially acceptable forms.

## STUDENT BODY AND CONDUCT

Upon enrollment, boys range in age between 10 and 15 and come from all over the United States and many other countries. Students have a variety of learning, emotional, and behavioral challenges and may be supported with medication management. In general, students are average to superior intellectually but come with complex challenges, including learning difficulties, social difficulties, mood disorders, executive functioning problems (including ADHD), cognitive-processing issues, and self-regulation problems.

Boys accepted usually carry a combination of the following or related diagnoses: attention deficit disorder or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, specified learning disabilities, anxiety disorders, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, Asperger's syndrome, bipolar disorder, Tourette's syndrome, oppositional defiant disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder. The school does not accept severely emotionally disturbed children who have been in conflict with the law, have a drug abuse history, or who have sustained patterns of physical aggression. Boys at Little Keswick tend to be gentler and less sophisticated or worldly.

Typical enrollment is for two to three years.

## ACADEMIC FACILITIES

Self-contained classrooms with few transitions allow students with attention and behavioral learning problems to experience greater success. The Academic Center, with its five spacious classrooms, supports effective direct teaching, individual practice, and the individualized programming our students require. New science and speech communication labs complement the traditional instruction and up-to-date technology capabilities in the classroom.

## BOARDING AND GENERAL FACILITIES

Little Keswick School students reside in one of four living areas based on age, social/physical maturation, and long-term goals. The Madison and Jefferson dormitories house 8–9 students in private and semi-private bedrooms, balanced to optimize self-regulation and therapeutic interactions. Throughout the building, interior spaces have been designed to control visual and auditory stimulation, facilitate individual and social development, encourage organizational skills, and support the growth of personal responsibility and pride in one's living environment. The Barn dormitory houses 12 students, and the Yellow House independent-living program houses 6 students.

## ATHLETICS

With an emphasis on health and fitness, Little Keswick ensures students of all ability levels participate in athletic activities daily. Group games include soccer, lacrosse, basketball, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, flag football, tag, and cooperative-learning games. Through these activities, students practice skills such as sportsmanship, leadership, and communication in a noncompetitive manner. In addition, Little Keswick fields a soccer team and a basketball team in which all students participate. Students have practice throughout the year to develop the athletic skills needed to participate in games against local schools.

## EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities for the Little Keswick community to come together several times a year. On Halloween, staff members and students choose a theme and dress creatively in their best costumes. At least twice a year, the staff and students participate in athletic events such as basketball and softball games; a 3-mile running/walking event takes place every spring. Other examples include a Super Bowl party, a chili cook-off, and a yearly Spirit Week/Carnival. Each event exemplifies the excitement and sense of community found at Little Keswick.

## DAILY LIFE

Afternoon activities offered include arts and crafts, wood shop, equestrian program, and enrichment classes such as sportsmanship, photography, and journalism. Twice a week, during Clubs and Quest,

students are able to choose their activity. These activities could include board games, cooking, rockets and models, fishing, Frisbee golf, newsletter, Jeopardy and trivia, canoeing, campsite building, Boy Scouts, and orienteering. During these times, students socialize with peers from different dorms. While participating in the activities, students practice social skills and form valuable friendships.

## WEEKEND LIFE

Packed full of structured activities, weekends offer students a chance to participate in community-wide activities such as soccer and basketball games, and Friday Night at the Movies, a student favorite. Individual dorms plan activities based on interests such as fishing, reading, drawing, sports, climbing wall, biking, or canoeing. Other activities may include apple picking, attending University of Virginia sporting events, fishing, indoor swimming, hiking in Shenandoah National Park, and visiting local attractions such as Luray Caverns, an IMAX Theater, and points of historical interest in Williamsburg and Jamestown. An arts program offers boys the unique opportunity of participating in some of the cultural venues of arts and theater in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Each quarter, a special trip—such as a day in Washington, D.C., Kings Dominion, or canoeing down the James River—is planned to test upper-level students' high-level social skills and celebrate their success. Every year, the students who are transitioning from Little Keswick attend an overnight camping trip at Virginia Beach; students reflect on their achieved goals and celebrate their Little Keswick School friendships.

## COSTS AND FINANCIAL AID

In 2009–10, the total cost for each student was \$96,744. This included special education tuition, room and board, residential services, and forty-one individual, twenty family, and thirty-nine group therapy sessions. Optional services, which have an additional charge, include art therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and services of the child psychiatrist. Parents are billed for incidentals (i.e., spending money for air travel) and fees for unaccompanied minors.

Little Keswick accepts funding from parents or school districts. Enrollment contracts, specifying

financial responsibility, must be signed and in place prior to a student's admission into the program. If parents enroll their child while seeking public funding, the parents remain responsible for full payment of all required monies until written approval and funding are received from the school district.

## ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

At least one parent or guardian must be genuinely involved and interested in each student's welfare. This person must be willing to participate in regular family therapy either in person or by telephone, implement home behavior management programs, and take the student home for each scheduled vacation. Continuous communication between home and school is essential.

The completed application form must be submitted to the Admissions Director along with current psychological testing, WISC III or WISC IV; personality testing, if available; current school reports, including transcript and grades; current ISP/IEP, if appropriate; and speech and language and occupational therapy reports, if appropriate. Following a review of the applicant's records, the Admissions Director contacts the parent or guardian regarding the decision to schedule a 24-hour visit.

## APPLICATION TIMETABLE

A \$350 nonrefundable application fee is charged for applicants scheduled for an overnight, on-campus visit; an admission decision is generally determined within one to two weeks afterwards. Enrollment date is based upon availability. All boys must attend the five-week summer session. A one-time \$2000 deposit is required for each enrolling student, regardless of funding source. When the student leaves Little Keswick and when all other tuition and fees are paid in full, the deposit is returned to the payer.

## ADMISSIONS CORRESPONDENCE

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