

The Independent Schools Magazine



The professional journal for Management & Staff

schoolblazer



Quality
without complexity.

Excellent



★ Trustpilot

UNIFORM + SPORTSWEAR

schoolblazer.info | info@schoolblazer.com | 01832 280011

schoolblazer

In this issue...



Outdoor learning revamp

A woodland adventure course, storytelling chair, mud kitchen and den-building area are among some of the new features that have been unveiled at Dame Allan's Junior School, Tyne and Wear, as part of a major revamp of its Whispering Woods outdoor learning space.

The redeveloped woodland was officially opened by the new Principal of Dame Allan's Schools, Neil Seaton, alongside representatives of the school's parent association, DASPA, which helped raise funds for the project.

The investment in the school's outdoor facilities builds on its established outdoor learning programme, including the adoption of Skogsmulle – a Swedish approach centred on nature and imaginative play – and timetabled sessions for every year group from nursery through to Year 6.

Reception teacher and Forest School leader Gillian Williams, said: "Whispering Woods is so much more than an outdoor classroom. It's a space for adventure where imagination can run wild.

"We want our pupils to take ownership – to explore, create, get muddy, take supported risks, make mistakes, try again and have fun together."

The woodland has been divided into a series of distinct zones designed to encourage physical challenge, creativity and exploration. Among the key additions is Woodland Warriors, a large obstacle course featuring wooden logs and stumps, slacklines and cargo nets, designed to test balance and agility.

In contrast, Natter Nook, offers a quiet, reflective area for reading, writing and creative inspiration.

Whispering Woods also features a Mud Kitchen and a Camp Headquarters – a central meeting place where pupils gather for outdoor learning activities and challenges.

Pictured: Principal Neil Seaton opens the Whispering Woods alongside Head of the Junior School Geoff Laidler and junior school pupils

Cover background

Developing tennis talent

Queenswood School, Hertfordshire, has recently opened a Red Plus Clay Court Facility in association with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). Find out more on page 42.

04 Professional development

How apprenticeships are unlocking talent

05 Curriculum innovation

Shaping the futures of young people

06 From Common Room to Innovation Centre

Converting an underused space into a learning area for all

08 Supporting students through sudden change

Eight ways teachers can help

10 Beyond bedtime

Becoming a Sleep Champion school

12 Building an immersive classroom

Investing in future-focused learning

24 Profile

In conversation with Huw Jones

28 The future of chapel choirs

Encouraging potential choristers to see singing as for everyone

32 School identity

Creating a sense of belonging

Plus

14 Educating children for world that can't be described with certainty

15 AI and the classroom: sector opportunities

18 Focus on immigration compliance changes

21 Pupil wellbeing in a co-ed setting

27 Learning with humility

28 Music, Drama & Dance feature

36 Grief education

40 Responding to online misogyny influences on pupils

42 Sport feature

44 Growing girls' cricket

Contact us; Editorial Advisory Board – page 47

Is your school mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

Abbot's Hill; Bedford School; Bryanston School; Caldicott; Cheltenham Ladies' College; Cokethorpe School; Dame Allan's Junior School; Dean Close Foundation; Fairfield Prep School; Francis Holland Preparatory School; Glenalmond College; Haberdashers' Elstree School; Haberdashers' Monmouth School; Hendon Prep School; Highfield School; Kelvinside Academy; Lord Wandsworth College; Loughborough Grammar School; Malvern College; Merchiston Castle School; Milton Abbey School; Prior's Field School; Queenswood School; RGS Worcester; Shebbear College; Sideot School; Sir William Perkins's School; Solihull School; St Albans School; St Nicholas' School, Hampshire; St Peter's School, York; Tring Park School for the Performing Arts; Truro School; Walthamstow Hall; Westholme School; Woodhouse Grove School; York House School

News items, contributions, comments and suggestions are always welcomed by the editor.

Please email:

editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

How apprenticeships are unlocking talent

The number of staff taking up apprenticeships at the Dean Close Foundation has more than doubled in the last year. Learning & Development Manager at the Foundation, Sam Marshall-Keith shares how they have developed their apprenticeship programme, what they have learned along the way, and discusses why apprenticeships have such an importance place within the independent school sector.



Sam Marshall-Keith

Over the past three years, apprenticeships have become a growing and important part of how we develop people at the Dean Close Foundation. In the last 12 months alone, our programme has grown from 30 apprentices to 67. It is a milestone of which I am incredibly proud, but the numbers tell only part of the story.

Behind those figures are colleagues who have been supported to learn new skills, build confidence and recognise potential they may not previously have seen in themselves. Their progress reflects both their own commitment to development and the Foundation's determination to invest in its people.

Across our schools and nurseries, talented colleagues contribute in teaching, leadership, finance, estates, IT, people, operations and early years. Apprenticeships have helped us nurture that talent from within, create meaningful opportunities for professional growth and strengthen the skills that sustain our wider Foundation community.

For the independent sector, apprenticeships offer a practical response to some familiar challenges: developing specialist skills, building sustainable career pathways and retaining talented people in a competitive employment market. They also allow schools to look beyond traditional recruitment routes and recognise the potential already present across teaching and support functions.

Today, our programme spans leadership and management, teaching, early years, horticulture, cyber security, business administration, operations management, and learning as well

as development. That breadth reflects one of the programme's greatest strengths, apprenticeships are not confined to a particular age, career stage or profession. They can support someone taking their first step into a role just as effectively as an experienced colleague preparing for the next stage of their career.

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that learning never stops. I know this not only as a learning and development professional, but from personal experience. Having recently completed my own CIPD Learning and Development apprenticeship, I understand the challenge of balancing work, study and everyday commitments. At times it was demanding, but it was also transformational, it strengthened my knowledge and skills and, perhaps most importantly, gave me greater confidence in what I could achieve.

The clearest lesson from our growth has been that an apprenticeship programme cannot sit with one person or department. It succeeds when senior leaders visibly champion development and help create a culture in which learning is genuinely valued. That commitment sends a powerful message: professional growth matters and investing in people is a long-term priority rather than a short-term initiative.

Line managers are equally important. Because apprentices learn alongside their day-to-day responsibilities, managers need to provide encouragement, maintain realistic expectations and protect time for learning. Our strongest outcomes have come when managers take a genuine interest in a colleague's development, discuss

progress regularly and celebrate achievements along the way.

For schools starting or expanding an apprenticeship programme, my advice is to begin with your people and your future skills needs. Map the strengths already present across the organisation, identify gaps and consider who may be ready for a new challenge. Often, the talent you need is already within your organisation; the apprenticeship creates the structure, support and confidence for it to flourish.

Make development conversations part of everyday practice through appraisals, one-to-ones and informal check-ins. Many colleagues are eager to learn but have never been asked about their aspirations. Alongside those conversations, invest time in selecting responsive training providers, explain the commitment clearly to prospective apprentices and ensure managers understand the support expected of them. These foundations make sustained success far more likely.

For me, apprenticeships are about so much more than gaining a qualification. They are about creating opportunities and demonstrating belief in people. They are about saying to a colleague: "We believe in you, and we are willing to invest in your future."

The impact reaches far beyond the qualification itself. Apprenticeships can build confidence, strengthen retention, raise morale and make learning part of everyday working life. In the independent school's sector, where the quality of education and care depends on the people who provide it, that matters enormously. Our schools

and nurseries are only as strong as the colleagues who shape them, and investing in their development is one of the most meaningful commitments we can make.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the programme has been seeing colleagues translate learning into practice, bringing fresh ideas to their teams, taking on greater responsibility and sharing their new expertise with others. Those individual steps forward create a ripple effect, strengthening teams and encouraging other colleagues to see development as something open to them too. Looking back, I am proud of the scale our programme has reached, but I am prouder still of the individuals behind that growth. These are colleagues who have stepped beyond their comfort zones, embraced learning and invested in their futures. Their achievements and the difference they make across the Foundation bring our values of love, courage and contribution to life, helping everyone in our community to flourish, and continue to inspire me.

If there is one message I would share with other schools, it is this: look at the talent you already have. Give people the opportunity to learn, develop and grow. You may be surprised by what becomes possible when colleagues feel valued, supported and believed in. I would argue that the most powerful investment an organisation can make is not in buildings, technology or facilities, but in its people.

Curriculum innovation:

What it means to think and learn

What is innovation in today's curriculum and what could that look like over the next few years? Director of Innovation at Haberdashers' Elstree School, Hertfordshire, Clare Jarmy, discusses why creativity and critical thinking are vital and how schools like Habs are reinventing the curriculum to shape the futures of young people, especially in an age of AI where designing an appropriate digital curriculum must take forefront.



Clare Jarmy

What is the curriculum? As most classicists will know, the word derives from a circular running race. Teaching can certainly feel a bit like that, running the same course year after year. The more you run along the same track, the more worn the path becomes. Eventually it starts to look like the easiest route, the obvious one or perhaps the only option that exists.

This is why curriculum innovation is challenging. For most educators, the curriculum is simply a given. Yet it could have been otherwise. When Cambridge made English Literature a degree subject in 1926, many thought it absurd that students should sit and read novels, since that was what you did in your own personal time. The philosopher J.M.E. McTaggart held that the subject would be "not only useless but positively harmful to the university". Today, we count the subject as a core part of our curriculum.

Questions and challenges

Yet bumps and dead ends are constantly appearing along our running course. Machines can now produce in seconds the work we have previously asked students to deliberate and struggle over. AI is reshaping how people find information and is raising questions about how reliable that information is. As a result, the landscape of the job market is also shifting, with the World Economic Forum predicting that 39% of the skills employers need will be different by 2030. Most importantly, it challenges us at the level of our being, prompting us to reconsider what it means to be intelligent, to have a mind, to think and to learn.

Rapid change in machine learning demands equally rapid change in how we build a curriculum for human learning. Giving

evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into AI and EdTech, Professor Alison Clark-Wilson set out the challenge clearly:

"...unless we fundamentally look at the curriculum and the purpose of education more broadly and really think about what we value and how we assess it, we are tinkering rather than taking the bigger piece. It [AI] is undoubtedly changing everything, so we have to really think about what we teach and what we assess..."

AI does not make knowledge matter less

Responsible innovation does not mean throwing everything up in the air. As schools we must stress that AI does not make knowledge matter less. You cannot think critically about something you know nothing about or be creative without material to think with. In the same way, a machine's ability to produce something doesn't mean a young person need not learn how to produce it. We do not ask students to write essays because the world is short of essays. We ask them to write because the process helps them to organise ideas, make connections, test arguments and discover what they think. Learning changes the learner.

At Habs, we have been thinking seriously about what all of this means in practice. Our starting point has been to ask what we would want a young person to be like when they leave us, not only what we want them to understand or which qualifications we want them to hold. As our Executive Principal, Gus Lock, wrote in a recent article: "a serious education should not force a choice between what pupils know, what they can do and who they are becoming."

Narrow assessment leaves some important learning untouched

Our answer is Habits: the 12 dispositions we see as being crucial to academic and wider success and, fundamentally, to flourishing as a human being. Habits is not merely a set of aspirations, though. It is being woven through every experience of learning at our schools, from curriculum to co-curriculum to form time and pastoral care, shaping the entire student experience.

The same thinking shapes our plans for Key Stage 4. GCSEs offer a broad academic foundation and the rigorous discipline of demanding public examinations. We value that and are not moving away from it. But a programme dominated by specified content and a narrow range of assessment leaves some important kinds of learning untouched.

From September 2027, our recommended programme will be nine GCSEs alongside two

Higher Project Qualifications (HPQs) in areas such as ethical entrepreneurship, sustainable development or investigative science, giving students space for extended independent work, depth of study and the chance to follow a real interest. Alongside this, we are also developing an accredited and regulated Level 2 qualification in AI, Data and Computer Science, which other schools could offer as a cutting-edge alternative to GCSE.

Changing track

The curriculum is not inevitable or eternal. It is a set of choices about what we value. AI has made it impossible to avoid examining those choices, but it has not made them for us. As schools, we have to decide what young people should know, what they should be able to do and, most importantly, what kind of people we hope they will become. The alternative is to keep running the same race, while the rest of the world sets off along a different track.

Women's chess

A Year 6 pupil from Fairfield Prep School, Leicestershire, has reached the Women's Final of the UK Open Blitz Championships for the second year in a row.

It follows her success in the qualifier event, held in Nottingham, where she finished as the top-performing girl in the tournament despite facing a very strong field of players, including several chess masters.

During the tournament, Tara defeated both an International Master and a Woman Grandmaster.

Pictured: Tara contemplating her next move



Only the top 16 women across the UK qualify for the Women's Final, with one player progressing from each qualifier event.

Tara is now set to compete in the Women's Final in November, which will be held in Leamington Spa.

From Common Room to Innovation Centre

RGS Worcester has recently completed a project which has seen an underused space in the school converted into a learning space for all. Head of the school and Executive Head of The RGS Worcester Family of Schools, John Pitt, explains how the room has been designed to encourage collaboration, creativity and innovation to help pupils develop the skills and confidence they will need for the fast-changing world beyond school, as well as offer staff a space to come together and share ideas.



John Pitt

The word “innovation” is somewhat overused these days but innovation will be a vital part of education in the future. Schools need to provide new ways of learning in the age of AI, and prepare young people for a different future where collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving and emotional engagement will be crucial.

Talking to former pupils now at university or taking apprenticeships and discussing with my own two children studying for Engineering and Architecture degrees, students increasingly are expected to display a range of skills as part of their courses. There are the traditional academic demands of study, but students also give presentations, work on combined projects with other students and critique one another's work. They increasingly have to show a breadth and depth of skills and are assessed on these, whatever the course they follow. When AI becomes more accepted and mainstream in universities and schools, these methods of assessment are likely only to increase. This seems right since we are being told that such skills are as important and relevant in the modern workplace as having strong academic qualifications.

Fortunately, like many leading independent schools, at RGS Worcester these are skills that students develop almost by osmosis. They seize opportunities both in and outside the classroom which require them to work together, take the lead, problem-solve, present and engage thoughtfully with one another. The co-curricular programme pushes them out of their comfort

zones as they learn resilience and commitment.

But how do we know every pupil is benefiting and developing the necessary skills? At RGS Worcester, we have created a ‘Future You’ programme akin to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, where pupils demonstrate the breadth of their skills by completing an electronic portfolio using a bespoke app designed by one of our teachers. Through this programme, they recognise the skills we have identified as vital and fill any gaps by broadening their co-curricular programme. The outcome is rewarded right across the school at age-appropriate levels. The pupils enjoy compiling evidence of their skills beyond their academic work and qualifications.

While this programme demonstrates skills development alongside academic learning, the question that we then asked was how can we guarantee these skills are being developed in the classroom? And that created the question, does the learning space need to change to encourage such skills? So, we began to research and work with companies and visited universities to think about what might the “classroom of the future” look like?

We have designed and built an Innovation Centre here which is now available to the pupils. Working with the company TaskSpace, we converted an underused space in the school into a multi-purpose “classroom of the future.” So, what makes this project unusual? The space we have chosen used to have pigeonholes and noticeboards, kettles and comfy, worn chairs –

because the room we chose is the Staff Common Room.

The school has been on an incredible journey since 2014 when the RGS Worcester Digital Learning Programme was launched. Since that time, staff and pupils have become digital natives, gaining the benefits of technology in teaching and learning, whilst retaining the positives of traditional teaching. 12 years later, the staff understand the importance of technology, its benefits and its pitfalls. They appreciate that education has to move forward and engage properly with the challenges of our time.

At the same time, a Common Room for teachers which sits empty for large parts of the school day seems old-fashioned, out of touch and a legacy of a past, pre-electronic age. It is no longer needed as a base to share information and the staff have departmental offices where they can keep their work secure. At a time of austerity for independent schools, it is understood by teachers that it is not appropriate to be investing heavily in upgrading a room for relaxation. What if they shared their space with the pupils and converted an outdated facility into a modern learning space for all? From an underused space for teachers-only, comes a modern learning environment accessible to all classes (for teachers to book) during lessons and a fabulous new space available for staff at break, lunchtime and after school when they can come together and share modern and comfortable facilities.

This Innovation Centre is the future and pupils and staff are excited about their new facility. Parents

don't need to worry about the extra cost of this development either. Given the innovative nature of the project and its clear benefits to the pupils, staff and the school, an entrepreneurial alumni engaged with the concept and provided significant funding. The alumni sponsor was renowned for supporting his company's staff and attributes his own success to his school education, so the project fits perfectly. The Innovation Centre is the result of an extraordinary partnership, therefore, between alumni, governors, staff and pupils, creating a learning space which will inspire the whole school community.

So, what does a classroom of the future look like? The school researched this for several years, refining the design while not knowing which space might become available. The key learning was that this is not a place full of interactive screens; on the contrary, the pupils and teachers bring their own technology to the Centre (pupils all bring an iPad to school as part of the Digital Learning Programme and staff have their own iPad and MacBook). Instead, the important elements are space, controlled lighting and temperature. Different zones are created in part through modern furniture options and use of colour. The “outside” meets the “inside” space with plants (with their accompanying benefits) and there is even a modern spin on the local Malvern Hills, included around one of the zones.

The “feel” of the learning space is crucial if pupils are to be encouraged to work collaboratively,



listen and engage with each other, share ideas and feel comfortable to explore. The “classroom” is more like a cross over between a business’s modern open plan office and a high-end coffee shop! Tech is only subtly present – with everything operated from an iPad (heating, aircon, electric blinds, light settings, screens). The space is open plan, light and cool with a range of different working spaces and a presentation space large enough for a whole class to review and provide feedback together. Support for the Innovation Centre is provided within the building with the IT Technical Team based downstairs to ensure the space is kept up to standard and any tech issues are addressed immediately.

For the staff, there is a modern kitchen with refreshment facilities and bi-folding doors so that they can have their own space during lessons, and then takeover the whole facility at set times. As a shared learning space for staff, the Centre can be used for Inset training, break-out groups and get-togethers. What better way for the staff to demonstrate life-long learning to the pupils?

During school holidays we anticipate the Centre will be used as a venue for conferences with its own parking, cloakrooms and catering space. With access to the school’s lawns and gardens, summer conferences could spill outside and feel as though they are in the countryside in the heart of the city.

Converting a Staff Common Room into a learning space for all is certainly unusual. Perhaps not every school can achieve this with their staff; it depends upon the culture of the school and the working relationships and value put on learning and educational technology. However, it is worth asking the questions: is your Staff Common Room doing its job in a modern school? What spaces have you got where you can develop new ways of working to benefit pupils as well as staff?

Finally, a word of advice. If you, too, convert your Staff Common Room, remember that state-of-the-art facilities are all well and good, but don’t forget to include a state-of-the-art... coffee machine.



SEND school opening

A new specialist SEND school is set to open in the grounds of Shebbear College, Devon.

Holme Court Devon, will be based within the Shebbear College site but will operate as a separate school with its own identity, leadership and specialist educational provision.

Holme Court Devon, part of Inspired Learning Group (ILG), has been developed to help meet growing demand for support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the county – Devon County Council’s SEND Sufficiency Strategy reports that the number of children and young people in Devon with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has risen by 117% over the past seven years, compared with an 80% rise nationally. Around 6% of Devon’s school population now has an EHCP, compared with 4.75% nationally.

Holme Court will provide a specialist, therapy-led education for young people from Year 5 to Year 11. The curriculum will be individually tailored and will combine academic learning with vocational, therapeutic and outdoor experiences, helping each young person build confidence,

Pictured: Holme Court Devon



independence and a pathway towards a future that is right for them.

Head of Shebbear College, Chris Jenkins, said: “We are delighted to welcome Holme Court Devon to the Shebbear College site and to support the arrival of this important new provision for children and families in the region. While Shebbear College and Holme Court Devon will remain two distinct schools, each with its own identity, leadership and educational provision, we see real value in having a specialist SEND school within our wider campus community. We very much look forward to developing a positive relationship with the Holme Court team and supporting them as they establish their new school here in Shebbear.”

New Sixth Form Centre

The new Sixth Form Centre at Cheltenham Ladies’ College, Gloucestershire, which received a benefaction to create it, has been named in honour of Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, Queen of Malaysia, who studied at the College for five years in the 1970s.

The gift provided the founding contribution towards a university-style hub for collaborative learning, independent study and Sixth Form life. It will be known as the Zarith Sofiah Centre.

As the base for the Sixth Form Staff Team and the Professional Guidance Centre, the Zarith Sofiah Centre will include a debating chamber, quiet study areas, learning pods for group and independent work, and a café for pupils to relax and connect.

Executive Principal of the college, **Pictured: The Zarith Sofiah Centre**



Eve Jardine-Young, said: “The design marks a shift away from the traditional classroom, towards a blend of formal and informal learning that builds autonomy, collaboration and scholarly confidence as our pupils prepare for higher education and the world of work. We also look forward to welcoming staff, pupils and speakers from across the Cheltenham Education Partnership into the new facilities in the months ahead.”

Supporting pupils through sudden change

With the recent return to school for a new academic year, some pupils have been facing the challenge of adapting to a new school following an unexpected closure. Head of Pastoral at Walthamstow Hall, Kent, Hannah Couch, shares eight practical ways teachers can help pupils navigate major educational transitions and provide a sense of stability during periods of uncertainty.

Sudden change can be particularly difficult for pupils, especially when it affects something as central to their daily lives as their school. While school closures can create significant practical challenges for staff and families, the emotional impact on pupils also needs careful consideration.

1. Acknowledge the uncertainty

When a school closes suddenly, pupils can feel as though their sense of control has been taken away. Schools should acknowledge this uncertainty rather than immediately focusing on settling into a new environment.

Give pupils space to acknowledge what they have lost, whether that's close friendships, familiar teachers, routines or their school community. Avoid expecting pupils to quickly "move on" and create opportunities for them to talk about their experiences and process the change at their own pace.

2. Give pupils clear, age-appropriate information

Clear communication can help reduce some of the uncertainty pupils may be experiencing. Schools should be honest about what is happening, while making sure information is appropriate for the pupil's age and circumstances.

Explain what is happening, be honest about what you know and what you don't know. Avoid leaving pupils to fill in the gaps with speculation or information from social media.

3. Create opportunities for pupils to ask questions

Even when schools have provided clear information, pupils may still have concerns about what happens next. Giving them a safe space to ask questions can help them feel heard and supported.

It's important to create a safe space for pupils to ask questions and seek help. Different pupils will process change differently, so give them opportunities to ask questions either privately or collectively. This also gives staff an opportunity to understand what pupils are most concerned about and identify where additional support may be needed.

4. Maintain familiar routines wherever possible

After experiencing significant disruption, familiar routines can help pupils regain a sense of stability.

Establish clear and consistent routines from the beginning. This will help pupils feel more secure. Ensure pupils know what their day will look like and where they need to be. Where possible, give pupils small opportunities to make choices and have a sense of control. This could involve choosing extracurricular activities, getting involved in school clubs or helping them identify spaces and members of staff they feel comfortable approaching.

5. Prioritise friendships

Changing schools can mean losing daily contact with close friends,

so schools should recognise that pupils may need time to adjust to the loss of their previous social circle.

Pastoral teams and teachers should encourage pupils to maintain appropriate contact with former classmates outside school while also creating opportunities for them to build relationships within their new environment. Buddy systems, group activities, clubs and informal social opportunities can all help new pupils begin to establish connections and feel part of the school community.

6. Identify pupils who may need additional support

Every pupil will respond differently to a significant change, and some may need more support than others.

Staff should look out for pupils who are particularly struggling with the change and make sure appropriate pastoral support is available.

Changes in behaviour, withdrawal from friends or activities, or difficulties settling into new routines may indicate that a pupil needs some additional support. Maintaining regular communication with pupils can help staff identify these concerns early.

7. Support staff as well as pupils

Staff are also navigating uncertainty and change, and their ability to support pupils effectively depends on having



Hannah Couch

clear information and appropriate support themselves.

Making sure members of staff don't feel overwhelmed is important. Encourage teachers and other staff members to talk to each other about this change. Consistent communication between staff can also help ensure pupils receive the same reassurance and information from the adults around them.

8. Encourage pupils to look forward rather than looking back

Once the immediate uncertainty and shock has settled, help pupils understand what may come next.

Make them feel supported as they transition to a new school and environment. Giving them a sense of agency and continuity will help them adjust to these changes. Encourage them to think about the opportunities ahead, while recognising that it is perfectly normal for them to still miss aspects of their previous school.

In conclusion, adjusting to a new school will take time, and every pupil will respond differently. But by creating a welcoming environment, building strong relationships and keeping communication open, pupils will be helped to feel secure and give them the confidence to settle in, form new connections and thrive.



RED KITE

ESTABLISHED 1982

THE INDEPENDENT CHOICE FOR SCHOOL MINIBUSES

PEUGEOT BOXER L4 AUTOMATIC MINIBUS

Premium, fully compliant minibuses for Independent Schools

- Fully Type Approved minibuses meeting all UK safety and compliance standards
- A choice of high-quality 9 - 17 seat vehicles, including accessible options
- 6 speed manual and NEW for 2026, 8 speed fully automatic options
- Flexible funding options with predictable whole-life costs
- New and Approved used minibuses to suit capital or lease budgets
- Nationwide demonstrations and long-term after-sales support
- D1 and B Licence minibuses
- Supporting Schools across the UK since 1982
- Vehicle Telematic Data options

Call today to arrange a quotation or a demonstration

Tel: 01202 827678 redkite-minibuses.com sales@redkite-minibuses.com



VEHICLE
CERTIFICATION
AGENCY
APPROVED PRODUCT

BVRLA
Quality Assured

VOSC
Vehicle Occupant Safety Centre



PEUGEOT
FORD
VAUXHALL

"Helping teenagers thrive during the day begins with what happens the night before".

Beyond bedtime: Becoming a Sleep Champion

Bryanston School, Dorset, has been officially recognised as a Sleep Champion by the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA). It follows a year in which the PSHE and Physiotherapy teams at the school have been working together to establish how pupils actually sleep. Lead Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapist, Mercedes Mills, and Head of PSHE at the school, Katie Richards, share some of the insights from their research and how its being used to shape future education and provision.



Mercedes Mills and Katie Richards

Sleep might be one of the most fundamental ingredients of teenage wellbeing, yet it is also one of the easiest to compromise. Homework, screens, sport, socialising and increasingly independent routines can all impact bedtime later while the school day still begins at the same time.

At Bryanston, a detailed evaluation of pupils' sleep habits has prompted a much broader conversation about how schools can help young people develop healthier routines. The project has combined pupil research, professional expertise and practical changes to school life as part of Bryanston's work towards BSA Sleep Champion status.

The initiative was developed through Bryanston's PSHE programme, where health and wellbeing are already central themes. We wanted to understand what sleep really looked like for pupils and to use the findings to shape future education and provision.

The resulting survey, which was carried out in summer 2026, involved 377 pupils across Years 9 to 13. Its timing was particularly revealing, coming during a period

when senior pupils were also experiencing the pressures of public exams.

What emerged was a wider pattern and not simply a picture of a handful of teenagers staying up too late.

Some 108 pupils reported going to sleep between 11pm and midnight, with others going to bed even later. Of the 377 respondents, 171 said they typically achieved around seven hours' sleep on a school night and a further 90 reported even less, against the eight-to-ten hours identified in the survey work as the physiological requirement for adolescents.

There was also a striking difference between weekday and weekend routines. Around 90% of pupils showed a two-to-four-hour shift in their sleep pattern at weekends, described in the project as "social jet lag." Meanwhile, 81 per cent said they did not regularly feel well rested in the morning.

Technology emerged as another significant theme. More than 89% reported using a screen within an hour of bed, while homework completed late into the evening was also identified as a major obstacle to winding down. 301 of the 377 respondents reported

schoolwork keeping them working late without sufficient downtime afterwards.

Overall, 43% of pupils said they did not believe they were getting enough sleep.

Bryanston's conclusion was that this was a systemic issue requiring a community-wide response which is now translating into practical change.

This term, evening prep for younger pupils finishes at 8.30pm rather than 8.45pm, creating additional time between academic work and bedtime. Bryanston is also working towards more screen-free, wind-down opportunities before bedtime. The existing boarding structure already requires pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 to hand in phones and tablets overnight, but the survey has prompted discussion about extending stronger digital boundaries in boarding houses with the Sixth Form.

The physical sleep environment has been considered too. Bryanston's boarding accommodation already provides blackout curtains, bedside lamps and a rolling mattress-replacement programme across its 690 beds. While installing dimmable lighting throughout every boarding house was not considered financially practical, the school is instead looking at a simple alternative such as turning off main dormitory lights 15 minutes before lights-out and allowing pupils to use bedside lamps as part of a calmer transition towards sleep.

Crucially, pupils themselves have been part of the process. Bryanston's Wellbeing Prefect has been exploring evening café habits, including sugary snacks and

whether healthier, slower-release foods and caffeine-free drinks could feature more prominently. She has taken the conversation to the wider prefect body, creating a peer-to-peer discussion.

One pupil survey response captured the challenge particularly powerfully: "I don't sleep so I have more me time and less school time..." It is a reminder that improving teenage sleep is not simply about setting earlier bedtimes; schools also must understand why young people protect those late-night hours.

Education will therefore sit alongside policy. New sleep education within PSHE is being developed, while an annual Sleep Focus Week is planned for March next year. The school is also looking at further staff education and greater parental awareness, potentially including sessions on sleep, nutrition and screen use.

Sleep expert, Dr Lindsay Browning, who has previously visited Bryanston, also remains part of the thinking, with plans being explored for her to return to work with both pupils and staff.

For Bryanston, becoming a Sleep Champion is about changing a culture. The survey provided the evidence; the more important work is what follows by adapting routines, educating pupils and parents, listening to pupil voice and making good sleep part of the everyday conversation about wellbeing. We will continue to build on our work with regular reviews to ensure we continue to achieve the best for our pupils.

Helping teenagers thrive during the day begins with what happens the night before.



Pupils relaxing in their boarding accommodation

Designed for the Next Generation



Specialist Manufacturer of Educational Furniture

- Survey & consultation service
- Full drawing & space planning service
 - Bespoke design
- Extensive range of finishes
 - CNC Technology
- Installation service & ongoing support
 - 10 year guarantee



Call
+44 1299 828888

Visit

www.witleyjones.com

or Email

enquiries@witleyjones.com

What we've learned from six months inside our immersive classroom

As part of an investment in future-focused learning, an immersive classroom has been built at Hendon Prep School, London. Designed to enable pupils to explore everything from outer space to Ancient Egypt, Head at the school, Matthew Foley, reflects on what the space has brought to pupils, since its introduction.

We built our immersive classroom at Hendon Prep so pupils can step inside what they are learning, rather than just read about it.

New technology has a place in education, but only alongside real hands-on, creative learning, not instead of it, and our immersive room has allowed us to strike that balance perfectly.

The room turns the walls and floor into the subject being taught. A history topic on Ancient Egypt becomes walking through the Pyramids of Giza, and a lesson on the solar system becomes navigating the Milky Way.

Day to day, it's used across the curriculum, from geography and history to science and English, turning a subject or topic into a space where they can stand within and ask questions of.

One thing that's surprised us is how differently it gets used

depending on age. It's a whole-school resource, used regularly by children from pre-school through to Year 6, but not in the same way at every stage.

Our Reception class were the first through the door, trying out fun, interactive games that had them moving, thinking and working together. For our youngest pupils, it fosters play and early collaboration, long before they're ready for a lesson on Ancient Egypt or the solar system.

With older pupils who have been getting to grips with various exciting topics, staff have told us they are more engaged, more curious and better at retaining what they're taught, because they can experience and visualise a subject rather than just read about it. That's the outcome we hoped for, and it's bearing fruit after six months of use.

That range is one of the biggest positives we have experienced. The room has earned its place because it works for a four-year-old and a ten-year-old, but often in completely different ways.

Ample planning time before using a space like this has also been important. The technology is only as effective as the teaching behind it, and it works best when it enhances learning rather than becoming the focus itself. Getting the most out of it takes as much preparation as a normal classroom-based lesson – and we have seen some encouraging results because of our focus on staff training and preparation, making sure teachers feel confident using the space and can weave it naturally into their lessons.

Outside timetabled lessons, the immersive room has become a valuable pastoral resource, used for reflection time, small-group work and as a calm, engaging environment for a pupil who needs it, including those with neurodiverse needs, without it feeling separated or isolated.

To complement the immersive room and ensure we're retaining a focus on hands-on learning while embracing new technology, we're also opening a STEM "FAB Lab" this autumn, with 3D printers, textiles kit and even a mini wind tunnel. One space is where pupils explore an idea, the other is where they build it: robotic vehicles, 3D-printed prototypes, bridges and engineering models, even model wind turbines built as part of work on renewable energy, or testing aerodynamics with the wind tunnel. The aim is to give pupils genuine hands-on experience of designing, making, testing and improving something of their own, building the creativity, resilience and problem-solving skills they'll carry well beyond the classroom.

With AI changing education whether schools plan for it or not, our response has been to make



sure pupils still get proper hands-on experience alongside anything on a screen, at an age when that kind of practical problem-solving is getting harder to come by.

Both spaces sit within a wider £400,000 investment, and being part of Blenheim Schools, which we joined only months before this was announced, is a real part of why it was possible.

What matters is whether a space changes what a lesson can be for every child who walks into it, from our youngest pupils to our Year 6 leavers, and so far the answer from our staff has been yes.

Technology will keep changing what's possible in a classroom, but the schools that benefit most will be the ones that still leave room for pupils to build, create and learn with their hands.

That's the balance the immersive classroom, and soon the FAB Lab, will help us to strike, and it's the one I'd encourage any school with the chance to enhance its learning facilities to aim for.



Pictured: Pupils experiencing what the immersive classroom can offer



EAL data that drives decisions, provision and progress

It seems to me that EAL provision doesn't begin in the classroom, rather it begins with the admissions decision to offer a place. What follows depends on how well that decision was informed. Most schools recognise this. However, from my conversations with colleagues across the sector, it is less clear whether the data backing those decisions is holding up under ever greater scrutiny and tighter timelines.

I hear the same stories again and again of a mish-mash of systems. A CEFR score at entry sits alongside in-house exam papers, perhaps combined with a SAS Reading Age, CAT4 or MidYIS data, with all the incumbent difficulties those bring for multilingual learners. Busy heads of EAL writing their own termly tests, or struggling with the administrative burden of the Bell Framework, as authoritative and respected as it may be. Each piece has a value, but together they rarely form a coherent system – and even if they do, it is a messy one to maintain.

At the same time, expectations have shifted. ISI Inspection teams want more than a single score on entry. They want to understand how EAL provision links to that starting point, how multilingual pupils' language develops over time, and how this connects to overall progress and attainment. As Matt Norbury at King's Ely puts it: "Assessment isn't simply about deciding whether to offer a



Pictured: Shelley Vink (Head of University Partnerships), and Dr Helen Wood (Head of School Partnerships) chat to Password partners at BBSW, March 2026

place. It's about deciding whether the school is genuinely prepared to support a student once they arrive, and having the necessary pathways."

The conversation has therefore moved from wanting a reliable CEFR-aligned test of academic language proficiency – to judge ability to access an English medium curriculum – to a whole-school requirement for something which provides all of the above AND informs teaching and learning.

In response, the team at Password English Language Testing have been focusing on making assessment data usable at whole-school level. Not more data, but

better organised data. Cohort-level CEFR reporting provides a clear overview of an intake. Diagnostic breakdowns highlight gaps in vocabulary, grammar and discourse. Detailed Student Profiles make the implications interpretable beyond the EAL department. Progress tracking shows how language develops over time, not just at a single point.

Schools can move from multiple disconnected data points to something practical that integrates into day-to-day processes, informs EAL led conversations with subject departments, and stands up in front of inspectors.

I will be attending a number of events this November – if any or all of the above resonates, come and find me for a chat!

- **British Boarding Schools Workshop:** 5–7 November, Radisson Blu Edwardian, Heathrow
- **NALDIC Annual Conference 2026:** 14 November, The Royal National Hotel, London
- **AMCIS Admissions Conference 2026:** 19 November, Hatfields, London



Dr Helen Wood

If you are reviewing your admissions process, your EAL provision, or how you evidence progress, get in touch: helen.wood@englishlanguagetesting.co.uk | www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk

Light of curiosity: The future of young people

What does it mean to educate a child for a world no one can describe with certainty? Head of Highfield School, Hampshire, Suzannah Cryer, reflects.

I have been thinking about this question and my answer keeps returning to the same image: our job is to keep a light on for as long as we possibly can, the light of curiosity, of a child's willingness to ask the obvious question, in a world that is often impatient with it.

The temptation is to begin with technology. AI is changing how we work, communicate and make decisions, and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. But before asking what children need to know about it, we should ask what they must never lose: their humanity, and the relationships that give it somewhere to grow. People thrive on relationships,

not on information, and we are fortunate to work in a place where relationships are everywhere – between pupils, between pupils and staff, between a school and the families who trust it. That is what keeps a child's light burning.

Keeping the human connection

There is something extraordinary about watching a four-year-old learn: curious without embarrassment, delighted by what follows, happy to spend 20 minutes investigating a puzzle. I find it difficult to watch that love of learning narrow so early. By 13, many are acutely aware of comparison and judgement; technology, for all its

opportunities, has made it harder to be still, private or simply unfinished.

Children need room to be beginners: to take risks within careful boundaries, form opinions and learn that getting something wrong is not failing. Character and curiosity are fundamental, and neither is taught from a screen. Both are taught in a relationship, by people who notice a child and give them time. An eight-year-old has an eight-year-old brain and need not be hurried towards adulthood; holding on to childhood is part of preparing them well.

Working with AI

AI is not going away, and banning it is not a long-term strategy: young people are usually steps ahead of the adults prohibiting it. The question is whether they learn to use it with judgement, asking: Is this true? Where did it come from? What is missing? What do I think? That last question matters most.

AI can answer quickly and organise information. It cannot decide what matters to us or notice when a quiet pupil needs drawing out. That is a human's work, done in relationship, not in a system – which is exactly why keeping the light of curiosity on matters more, not less, as these tools grow more capable.

A pupil might use AI to explore starting points, then fact-check it, challenge its assumptions and present an argument they genuinely understand. The test is whether the child retains ownership of their thinking. Technology must remain a tool, not the teacher or the source of every answer; concentration, conversation and boredom are how human beings develop, and they happen alongside another person.



Suzannah Cryer

Education needs to catch up

The future of work asks different questions. Employers need people who think critically, communicate clearly and work well with others. A degree or an exam result may open a door, but it is not the person who walks through it. This is the thinking behind Raising the Future, the conference we recently hosted, and our white paper, Education for a Changing Society, submitted to the Department for Education to argue for curriculum change that reflects an AI-driven economy.

Assessment must evolve.

Examinations do not tell us whether a child can sustain an idea or recover when an answer fails. Our Independent Project Qualification asks Year 8 pupils to choose a subject, research it, struggle with it and present what they have learned – it shows what an exam paper cannot: a child thinking for themselves. We should broaden how we judge schools. Attainment matters, but so do wellbeing and the continuing light of curiosity.

The future will require young people who can pivot: change direction, start again, find the route they planned is not the route they take. So let us give them the qualities to meet it: resilience without hardness, ambition without anxiety, independence without isolation.

Above all, let us keep them human, and let us keep the light on for as long as we possibly can. In a school, that light is never kept alight by a system or a screen, it is kept alight by people, in relationship with one another. We are lucky to work somewhere that is true. That feels like a future worth educating for.

MOTIVATIONAL, ASPIRATIONAL, ENCOURAGING

HONOUR BOARDS
YOUR CHOICE, ANY SIZE, SHAPE, STYLE, FRAMING OR COLOUR!

Wells Cathedral School
OF EDINBURGH'S GOLD AWARD HOLDERS

King's Magna Middle School
QUEEN ETHERIA

Head's Prize
JAMIN THOMAS

THE HOUSE CHAMPIONS
POINTS RECENT EVENTS

LOVEKYN
WATERLOO CRICKET

Steyning Grammar School
Boarding

Head Boy
2002-2004: Kieran Mould
2005-2007: Matthew Northcott
2008-2010: James Ashworth
2011-2013: George Pollock
2014-2016: Amelia Alcock
2017-2019: David G. Smith
2020-2022: Simon Stubbins
2023-2025: Raymond Hynes
2026-2028: Nathan Thomas

Head Girl
Emmanuel Adenomon
Vickie Ho
Natalie Mearns
Jessica Newell
Jess Leach-Stuart
Lara Wilson
Charlotte Schindler
Anna Donnan

DEPUTY HEAD GIRL & HEAD BOY
2002-2004: Kelly Miller
2005-2007: Sara Clayton
2008-2010: Helen Wilson
2011-2013: Michelle Chubb
2014-2016: Isabel King
2017-2019: Victoria Brown

DEPUTY HEAD GIRL & HEAD BOY
2002-2004: Sarah Wilson
2005-2007: Sarah Wilson
2008-2010: Sarah Wilson
2011-2013: Sarah Wilson
2014-2016: Sarah Wilson
2017-2019: Sarah Wilson
2020-2022: Sarah Wilson
2023-2025: Sarah Wilson
2026-2028: Sarah Wilson

HOLYPORT COLLEGE
Opened by Her Majesty The Queen

SHERBORNE QA
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Goldtree Bespoke,
9 Huffwood Manor Trading Estate,
Partridge Green, West Sussex, RH13 8AU

For further info and your questions answered:
Tel: 0345 260 2350 or 01403 711553
Email: info@goldtreebespoke.co.uk

QUALITY & BESPOKE SERVICE

www.goldtreebespoke.co.uk

AI and the classroom: Independent education's strategic opportunity

Educationalist, Andrew McEwen, explores some of the opportunities AI can offer within the independent education sector.



A sector under pressure – and a rare opportunity

Independent schools face a difficult convergence of pressures. Demographic contraction means fewer children entering education, while higher fees and VAT have sharpened affordability concerns. As pupil numbers fall, the state sector may also gain more resources per pupil. Yet this challenge creates a potentially transformative opportunity: not simply to add AI to the existing model, but to rethink how education is delivered. For independent schools, the key question is not whether AI can replace teachers, but whether it can free them to do more of what exceptional teachers do best.

From one lesson to 24 individual learning journeys

In a mathematics classroom of 24 pupils, even a talented teacher cannot simultaneously create 24 genuinely individual learning experiences. An intelligent digital tutor could. One pupil might consolidate fractions while another moves beyond the syllabus; others may need visual explanation or repeated retrieval practice. Technology can continually test understanding, adjust challenge and identify misconceptions. The teacher becomes more valuable, using real-time information to focus on explanation, judgement, inspiration and relationships while technology handles repetition and personalisation.

The independent school advantage: Speed, agility and the freedom to learn

The productivity case is already tangible. An Education Endowment Foundation trial involving 259 teachers found that those using ChatGPT for lesson and resource preparation spent approximately 31% less preparation time, without an observed deterioration in resource quality. But the larger opportunity is to redesign tomorrow's school. Independent schools have institutional agility: they can trial technologies, measure results, abandon failures and expand

successes without waiting for system-wide implementation. Controlled programmes should compare conventional and AI-supported teaching across attainment, workload, engagement and genuine understanding.

The essential guardrail: Avoiding cognitive offloading

The central risk is cognitive offloading. The Education Endowment Foundation is investigating whether excessive AI use could encourage pupils to outsource reasoning, recall, planning and drafting. The strongest model is therefore unlikely to be an AI school. It is more likely to be a human-rich, AI-enabled school, where technology strengthens rather than substitutes for thought and relationships.

A radically different school day

A future timetable could look very different. Perhaps 20–30% of academic time involves supervised adaptive learning and individual tutoring; 40–50% remains teacher-led through seminars, laboratories, discussion, writing and problem-solving; and the remainder increasingly emphasises experiences machines cannot satisfactorily replicate: sport, music, drama, art, teamwork, leadership, outdoor education and pastoral relationships. These percentages are scenarios, not forecasts, but they illustrate a strategic possibility: as academic instruction becomes cheaper and more personalised, authentic human interaction may become more valuable.

Moving the value proposition upwards

This is both a threat and an opportunity. If an independent school's proposition remains simply smaller classes and better academic instruction, high fees may become harder to justify when AI-enhanced state classrooms can also offer individualised learning. Independent schools therefore need to move their value proposition upwards. Parents would increasingly be investing in an environment that helps young people become exceptional adults through mentorship,

community, pastoral care, character, sport, creativity, networks, opportunity and whole-child development.

Using technology to create more human contact

AI could help deliver that proposition. Instead of automatically reducing teaching staff when productivity rises, schools could redeploy teacher time. Hours released from routine preparation, marking and administration could become tutorials, mentoring, small-group teaching, clubs, coaching and richer personal feedback. The paradox is that the school using AI most successfully may ultimately become more human, not less.

Redesigning the economics of the school

For financially pressured schools, this also matters economically. A school designed for 600 pupils may become unsustainable at 500 if staffing and infrastructure remain largely unchanged. AI-supported delivery offers an opportunity to rethink costs while protecting educational quality. Yet technology will not itself differentiate independent schools: state schools will have access to the same tools and may also benefit from falling pupil numbers and improved teacher productivity. The differentiator will be how intelligently and selectively each school puts technology to work.

Continuity through intelligent reinvention

The objective should be neither to preserve the classroom of 2026 at ever-increasing cost nor to automate education indiscriminately. Independent education has historically justified its premium partly through scarcity: smaller classes, greater resources and more individual attention. AI may erode some of that scarcity, but it also creates the chance to reinvent schools around what technology cannot replace. Doing so will require collaboration, investment and commitment. The schools that endure will use AI with intelligence and purpose while becoming unmistakably more human.

Andrew McEwen MA, FRSA, has been Director and Chairman of IES (International Education Systems Limited) responsible for the development of schools in new markets, and Trustee and Director of three independent schools in the UK and two in South Africa, and is a member of BELMAS (British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society). He has also served on the Board of ISA (the International Schools Association) and the Advisory Board for the MA programme in International Education at NHLStenden University in the Netherlands. For nearly 20 years he has worked as a partner with National School Transfer where he helps buyers and sellers achieve their goals in the schools acquisition market.

LOOKING TO BUY OR SELL A SCHOOL OR NURSERY



National School Transfer

For a Professional – Confidential Service



www.nationalschooltransfer.com Email: info@nationalschooltransfer.com Tel: +44 (0)1980 621251



Allergy awareness firmly on the agenda in schools

Rachel Sipaul, Senior Dietitian at apetito

Safe food provision continues to be a top priority for schools, with an estimated 20% of severe allergic reactions occurring in school settings¹. Following the introduction of Benedicts Law in September, this year is particularly significant as the first mandatory allergy safety framework is embedded for all schools in England².

This milestone reflects growing recognition of the importance of food allergy safety and the need to improve allergy awareness, prevention measures and emergency responses among pupils, parents and staff in the sector. It also emphasises the need for a whole-school approach, recognising that keeping children safe is a shared responsibility.

From ensuring comprehensive training for all staff and maintaining spare adrenaline devices for any child or adult on-site experiencing anaphylaxis to providing Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) for all pupils with allergies, schools, parents, carers,

pupils and staff all have a role to play in increasing allergy awareness. These measures help to ensure children with allergies and their parents feel safe and confident.

Why a whole-school approach matters

Managing food allergy risk is not the sole responsibility of the child with an allergy. Allergen exposure can occur throughout the school day, from packed lunches and celebrations to in-classroom activities, such as baking or crafts, and after-school clubs or sporting events. Furthermore, approximately a third (32%) of allergic pupils reported being bullied for their allergy, reinforcing the need for schools to foster a whole-school approach to allergy awareness that supports both physical safety and emotional wellbeing.

Many existing processes designed to help schools effectively manage allergic pupils and prevent reactions remain the same under Benedict's Law. These

include maintaining up-to-date records, including photo ID where appropriate, and having IHPs and Allergy Action Plans for each allergic child to ensure all staff understand their specific needs.

As well as identifying children at risk, it's crucial that schools build strong relationships and clear lines of communication with parents and carers. Sharing information about potential triggers, allergy symptoms and emergency procedures helps create a consistent approach between home and school. This collaborative approach is especially important for supporting pupils who may struggle to communicate their needs independently, as well as to ensure staff and catering teams are included in relevant discussions, especially during transition periods or staffing changes.

Reducing allergy risk through catering

As well as understanding and identifying the 14 major

allergens, schools should have robust processes in place to ensure they're confident checking ingredients and ingredient changes, as well as complying with labelling requirements, such as Natasha's Law (2021). Regular training should be available for catering teams to ensure protocols are followed and that teams feel confident managing food allergy risk.

While school kitchens increasingly face financial and staffing pressures, effectively managing food allergy risk is paramount. From managing food deliveries into the kitchen and safely storing, preparing, cooking and serving food to children, providing a safe school food provision requires robust processes, clear communication and a commitment to reducing allergy risk at every stage. By embedding these practices into catering planning, schools can help reduce risk while ensuring pupils with allergies can enjoy what's on the menu with confidence.

To discover more about apetito's range of safe, dietitian-approved school meals, please visit: <https://apetito.link/ISM>

References:

- 1 Model Policy for Allergy at School (2024). Anaphylaxis UK, Allergy UK, BSACI. [Model-Poli...2.1-090124 | PDF]
- 2 Department for Education. Stronger protections for children with allergies in school; 2026. [Allergen g...l caterers | PDF]

apetito



Trusted by Schools, Loved by Pupils

Expertise you can trust:

Chef prepared, dietitian
approved, laboratory tested

Designed for every child's need:

From everyday favourites.
to specialist allergy and
dietary requirements

**A catering partnership
you and your pupils
can rely on.**

Find out more:



apetito

What independent schools need to know about immigration compliance thresholds

Independent Schools that hold a UKVI Sponsor Licence are facing tightening immigration compliance in 2026. Immigration specialists Jonathan Hill and Anastasia Vasiljeva, offer some advice on what the planned changes are, the impact they could have on a school's ability to recruit international students and what steps can be taken now to prepare.

Independent schools holding a Child Student and/or Student sponsor licence continue to face tightening compliance obligations following significant safeguarding reforms. The introduction of a revised Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA) framework and a new Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rating system has raised the stakes for sponsor licence holders, placing greater emphasis on robust governance, student monitoring and recruitment processes.

For independent schools, particularly those with small international cohorts, even minor fluctuations in visa outcomes or enrolment figures can significantly impact compliance performance.

Tightened BCA thresholds

The BCA is the mechanism through which UKVI assesses whether sponsors meet their core compliance obligations.

From 1 June 2026, sponsors are required to maintain:

- Visa refusal rate below 5%
- Enrolment rate of at least 95%
- Course completion rate of at least 85%

The course completion threshold is due to increase to 90% from 1 June 2027.

These revised metrics significantly reduce the margin for error. For example, a school issuing 40 Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) annually could reach the refusal threshold after only two visa refusals within a 12-month assessment period. While UKVI retains discretion when assessing sponsors with lower CAS volumes, sponsors are still expected to demonstrate strong compliance across all metrics.

The new RAG system

Alongside the revised BCA framework, UKVI has introduced a publicly visible Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rating system designed to

strengthen oversight and provide clearer performance monitoring.

In broad terms:

- **Green:** sponsor is comfortably meeting compliance requirements
- **Amber:** sponsor is approaching one or more compliance thresholds and may be subject to increased engagement, monitoring and CAS limitations
- **Red:** sponsor has failed one or more compliance measures constituting a serious breach of sponsorship duties (exceptions apply). This triggers intervention, restrictions and remedial action

The introduction of a visible performance rating adds a reputational dimension to compliance. For independent schools competing in international markets, perceived compliance concerns may influence parent and student confidence, making proactive compliance management increasingly important.

Increased scrutiny and enforcement

The enhanced compliance regime is supported by a more interventionist approach from UKVI.

Schools experiencing compliance concerns may face:

- Action plans
- Increased monitoring and audits
- Restrictions on CAS allocations
- Suspension or revocation of their sponsor licence in serious cases

As a result, schools should no longer view compliance solely as an immigration function. It requires coordination across admissions, pastoral, academic and compliance teams.

Impact on independent schools

The revised framework is likely to influence how schools recruit, assess and support international pupils.

The reduction of the refusal threshold from 10% to 5% places greater importance on pre-CAS assessments and applicant due diligence. Schools may need to undertake more detailed reviews of financial evidence, academic suitability and wider immigration risk factors before offering sponsorship.

In practice, smaller independent schools are likely to feel these changes most acutely. A single visa refusal or unexpected withdrawal can materially affect compliance metrics where annual CAS volumes are relatively low.

Schools may therefore adopt increasingly risk-based recruitment strategies, placing greater emphasis on data analysis, applicant screening and agent oversight.

Practical steps schools can take now:

- **Scrutinise CAS decisions carefully**

Schools should review their pre CAS procedures to ensure they have properly assessed applicants and are likely to enrol and complete their studies successfully.

- **Enhance record keeping and monitoring**

Accurate record-keeping remains fundamental to sponsor compliance. Regular internal file reviews, robust attendance monitoring and ongoing staff training can help minimise compliance risks.

- **Conduct mock audits**

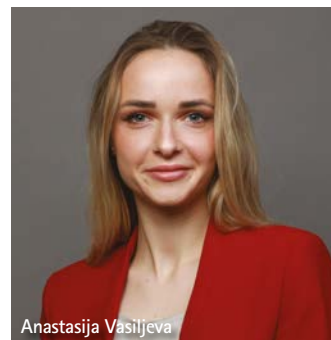
Periodic mock compliance audits can identify gaps before a UKVI inspection. Schools should test document retention procedures and ensure they can produce required records promptly.

- **Review recruitment risks**

Analysing historical refusal trends and recruitment data can help schools identify risk areas and adjust recruitment strategies accordingly. While much of



Jonathan Hill



Anastasia Vasiljeva

the sector discussion focuses on refusal rates, some schools may find course completion rates more difficult to manage in practice, particularly where pupils defer, change plans or decide to leave the school at short notice.

- **Strengthen agent oversight**

Schools working with education agents should ensure appropriate due diligence, monitoring and documentation are in place. Demonstrating effective oversight remains an important aspect of sponsor compliance.

- **Maintain clear communication**

Where compliance concerns arise, clear and timely communication with families can help maintain confidence and protect the school's reputation.

The revised BCA framework marks a significant shift in the regulation of student sponsors. With tighter compliance thresholds, enhanced monitoring and the introduction of the RAG rating system, managing sponsor licences is becoming increasingly complex.

Schools that take steps now to review their sponsorship processes and strengthen internal monitoring are likely to be in a far stronger position when future compliance assessments fall due.

Exeat Together Puzzle Trilogy Edition

Investments, Reimagined

You solve puzzles everyday for other people. Now it is time for you.

So, grab a pen, some curiosity and a quiet moment.
This is your time to solve, reflect and act.

4 words. 1 phrase. Your meaning.

Your moves- Up, Down or Across.

Target: 3 letters (2), 6 letters (1), 12 letters (1)

N	O	E	A	N
	W	M		T
		T		S
V	E	S	T	U
N	E	R	U	F
I		Y	O	U

What is the phrase? What are your thoughts for the next step?

What if you go one layer deeper?

The lived experience of your organisation is either moving you towards or away from sustainability. With record numbers of independent school closures, it is time to look at investing differently. Not the new music suite, astro turf or boarding house with ensembles. It is time to look at human investments in your community to support the moments that matter for everyone.

Your World. Your Future. Two Moments.

It is time to explore everyday day words. Still got that pen?

Pick three words to describe the lived experience of your organisation for these groups right now, and what you want to say.

NOW

Area	1	2	3
Young People			
Staff			
Leadership			
Parents			

WANT TO SAY

Area	1	2	3
Young People			
Staff			
Leadership			
Parents			

What is it like living within these worlds?

What actions are the bridge to build what you need?

Become an active investor – in YOU!

An investment a day helps you build your future your way. Here are your magnificent seven. Choose one phrase a day and take a small action that resonates. Remember rest is also an action to help you move forwards. Try it for a month, and see what happens.

FOR YOU

1

2

WITH YOU

BY YOU

3

4

TO YOU

SEE YOU

5

6

FREE CHOICE

TO NEXT YOU

7

Sometimes solving a puzzle creates more questions than answers. What does that new word mean? Your world is a collection of perspectives and building tomorrow starts today. Going one layer deeper means understanding the signals of your organisation with curiosity and kindness. If you want support to find your answers, let's take an Exeat Together to help shape what comes next. Visit: www.exeat-together.works



Future of Education

Haberdashers' Monmouth School has held their inaugural Future Education Symposium. The event brought together voices from education, business and government to explore how schools can equip young people with the curiosity, resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in an AI-driven world.

The expert panel included former Rolls-Royce CEO, Sir Warren East, former President of Trinity College Oxford, Dame Hilary Boulding, Welsh Government curriculum leader, Yvonne Roberts-Ablett, E-ACT CEO, Tom Campbell, former Haileybury Master, Martin Collier, former St Paul's Girls' School High Mistress, Sarah Fletcher, and Haberdashers' Monmouth School Headmaster, Melvyn Roffe.

The discussion ranged from AI, changing career pathways and university admissions to teacher recruitment, literacy, curiosity and the future skills employers are

seeking.

A recurring theme was that while technology continues to transform the workplace, human qualities remain more important than ever. Speaking from an employer's perspective, Sir Warren East argued that schools should focus not only on knowledge and qualifications but on developing initiative, curiosity, resilience and collaboration. He emphasised that employers are looking for "human beings, not machines."

The panel also questioned whether increasingly content-heavy curricula are equipping young people for a rapidly changing world. Sarah Fletcher highlighted concerns that education can become overly focused on assessment and "teaching to the test," leaving too little room for creativity, collaboration and independent thinking.

Student questions also formed an important part of the symposium.

Pictured: The Future Education Symposium Photo credit: Haberdashers' Monmouth School



When Year 12 student Katie asked what advice the panel would give young people about the future, panellists urged optimism. Tom Campbell suggested that adults often project anxieties onto younger generations, while Sir Warren East encouraged students to focus on the opportunities a changing world will create.

The discussion also explored how schools can foster curiosity and a love of learning. Melvyn Roffe argued that young people are naturally curious and that

education must create space for exploration and creativity rather than simply "boxing knowledge."

Questions from students and parents covered topics including degree apprenticeships, the future of universities, leadership opportunities, community engagement and how schools can better prepare pupils for careers that do not yet exist. Panellists agreed that adaptability, confidence and the ability to keep learning will be essential attributes for future success.

MIS & finance systems built with schools in mind

Advertorial Feature

For over 40 years, WCBS has been developing technology specifically for the education sector. Our story began with a billing solution created for Wells Cathedral School. More than four decades later, WCBS supports a much wider landscape of schools, but the principle remains the same: understand what each school needs and help them find the technology that best fits.

Today, HUBmis can sit at the centre of a school's technology ecosystem, connecting with specialist solutions across SEN,

safeguarding and other key third-party services. This approach gives schools the flexibility to bring together the technology

that works for their individual requirements.

Finance remains at the heart of our heritage. passFINANCE continues to provide comprehensive financial management for schools, while passBILLING offers the adaptability needed to support complex school fee billing alongside other key finance processes.

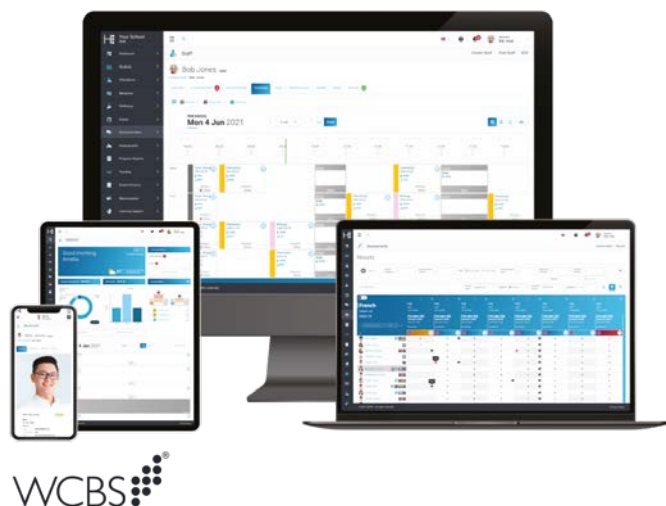
And we're continuing to evolve.

HUBIncome represents the next generation of WCBS finance technology. Built from the ground up for the cloud, HUBIncome will offer intuitive

dashboards, instant reporting and the ability to integrate with a variety of third-party solutions – providing schools with a modern approach to managing income.

Technology has changed enormously over the last 40 years. Our approach hasn't: listen to schools, understand their challenges and help them find the solution that best fits their school.

If you'd like to discuss your school's requirements, speak to the WCBS team for a free, no-obligation conversation about how we can support you and your school.



Driving pupil wellbeing in a co-education setting

Deputy Head Pastoral & Wellbeing at Cokethorpe School, Oxfordshire, Amy Prior, outlines the approach to children's mental health they have developed as a co-educational school and how it's been grounded in science and focused on giving pupils the tools they need to face challenges.

As concerns over children's mental health rise across the UK, it is more imperative than ever to give young people the tools and understanding they need to navigate adolescence.

With young people, it's about helping them understand what's happening in their brains. Once they understand that anxiety and uncertainty are natural responses, it becomes far less overwhelming.

My specialist training in adolescent mindfulness through the University of Oxford's Mindfulness in Schools Project, combined with my experiences over the years working with young people in various settings, has helped inform several of the successful initiatives we have introduced at Cokethorpe.

We deliver sessions tailored to early secondary pupils, combining neuroscience with practical strategies to help pupils manage emotions in a constructive way.

It's not simply about taking a gentler approach. It's grounded

in science and focused on giving pupils the tools they need to face challenges.

This foundation is particularly important in a co-educational environment, where the experiences of boys and girls often differ. Research, including insights from Jonathan Haidt's 'The Anxious Generation', shows that girls are particularly vulnerable to social pressures and online comparison, while boys may, for example, retreat into gaming or online worlds, reducing real-life social connection.

The sessions we run encourage open discussion, self-reflection and help build self-awareness. Rather than solving problems for them, we guide pupils to resolve issues themselves. That's where real growth happens. We also recognise that every pupil is different, so the support and strategies we use are also tailored to their individual needs, experiences and circumstances.

This balance between support and independence underpins our wider ethos.

We start with more support in the early years, then step back as pupils develop confidence, preparing them for life beyond school.

Pupil voice is central to this, with pupils encouraged to speak openly about concerns. Systems are in place to ensure support is accessible when needed.

The school also places strong emphasis on culture, with regular discussions around behaviour, respect and inclusion.

Managing pupils' use of technology has long been an important part of our approach to wellbeing, particularly as a growing body of research highlights the negative impact social media can have on young people.

At Cokethorpe, we restrict or remove mobile phones during the school day, depending on the



Amy Prior

age group and work closely with families to encourage healthy smartphone habits at home. We want pupils to understand the impact that constant online access can have on their wellbeing and feel confident making positive choices about how and when they use technology.

By honing our pastoral care with a clear understanding of adolescent development, we are offering a structured approach to children's mental health in a co-educational setting.

Our goal is simple. We want pupils to leave not just with qualifications but as grounded, confident, self-aware and well-rounded individuals, equipped and ready for adult life.

WCBS
Your school is unique.
Your technology
should understand that.

For over 40 years, WCBS has worked alongside independent schools to provide technology built around the way schools actually work.



HUB
MIS

MIS & School Management
Flexible, cloud-based school management built for independent schools.

pass
FINANCE

Finance & Accounting
Comprehensive, integrated finance for the independent school sector.

COMING SOON

HUB
income

Next-generation cloud income
Student fees, billing and income management for today and tomorrow.



New for 2026
Power BI Dashboards

Clear, actionable insight from your school data.



API available for key third-party integrations

Connect with the tools that matter to your school.

Let's talk about your school.

Contact sales@wcbs.co.uk for a free discussion on how WCBS can help your school.

www.wcbs.co.uk

Scan to visit WCBS



Sir William Perkins's School (SWPS), Surrey, has welcomed its first cohort of boys and girls, becoming co-educational for the first time in more than a century. The arrival of students in Years 7 and 12 marks the start of a phased transition to full co-education by 2030.

The Pioneer cohort, named to reflect its role in shaping the next chapter of the school's 300-year history, is the first generation of students to join SWPS as part of its co-educational future.

Head Debbie Picton said: "We are delighted to welcome our Pioneer cohort and begin this exciting new chapter. These students will play a unique role in the life of the school. While our commitment to

academic excellence, outstanding pastoral care and championing every individual remains unchanged, they join us at a time of innovation and growth."

As part of its ongoing strategic vision, SWPS, has committed to delivering a world ready programme. This will provide students with access to expanded industry partnerships, entrepreneurship and sustainability projects, enhanced careers education, the development of a school-wide skills framework and increased opportunities for students to engage with digital technologies and AI.

The move to co-education was announced in 2024 following growing demand from local families. Boys now make up more than a quarter of the new Year 7 intake.

The school was founded in 1725 by merchant Sir William Perkins to educate local boys, with girls admitted just 11 years later. Following its later development as one of the country's first girls' grammar schools, SWPS is now returning to its co-educational roots.



Pictured: Welcoming the Pioneer cohort to SWPS



Abbot's Hill, Hertfordshire, has welcomed the first boys into its senior school this September. The school officially announced its intention to extend co-educational provision into its senior school one year ago with boys now being admitted from Year 7. The move follows the introduction of boys into the prep school in September 2025.

Head at Abbot's Hill School, Sharon Schanschieff, commented: "It has been wonderful to welcome the first boys into our senior school this September and the enthusiasm from staff, parents and pupils around the transition is palpable. The way that the boys have settled into our prep school over the last year also further reinforces our belief that this is the right step for our school. The

decision to move towards a co-educational setting also provides many future benefits in terms of stability, values, warmth and the individuality that makes going to school at Abbot's Hill so special."

The school has already made adjustments to its facilities to ensure that both toilets and changing rooms for all genders are available. By gently increasing the population of the school, Abbot's Hill will continue to invest further in its onsite facilities.

"It is an honour to be leading Abbot's Hill at this stage of its progression and I'm confident that these important changes will not only enrich our community but will also secure the school's ongoing success in the years to come," added Ms Schanschieff.

Pictured: Boys welcomed to Abbot's Hill School

St Albans School, Hertfordshire has reached a landmark moment in its 1,000-year history, welcoming its first girls into Year 7 – just over three decades since girls first joined the school's Sixth Form.

Twenty girls joined the new First Form cohort this September, making up almost a quarter of the intake and marking a significant milestone in the school's transition to full co-education.

Their arrival comes 35 years after girls first joined the Sixth Form at the school. That moment was captured in a newspaper photograph under the headline 'A break with tradition!', showing then

Headmaster Simon Wilkinson shaking hands with one of the new Sixth Form pupils, Anna Philpott.

Headmaster Joe Silvester said: "This is an incredibly important moment in the life of St Albans School. For more than a thousand years, the school has continually evolved while remaining true to its values of academic excellence, curiosity and service. Welcoming our first girls into First Form and creating a co-ed cohort is the next chapter in that story."

Extensive preparations were made for the girls' arrival, including a new girls' common room, and a new Lower School Hub. Head of Lower School, Mrs



Nicolette Liston, is based at the centre of the Hub, providing a readily accessible point of support for all of the new First Form pupils as they settle into school life.

The school's sports provision has also been expanded, with

an extensive programme of sport for girls including netball, hockey, cricket, football, athletics, tennis and cross country, alongside regular fixtures planned for the year ahead. The existing dance studio within the Sports Centre has also been refurbished.

Pictured: Anna Philpott, who joined St Albans School's Sixth Form in 1991, meets some of the school's first girls to join Year 7

Fifth merger of 2026

Mill Hill Education Group has announced that St Nicholas' School, Hampshire, will join the Group, bringing its total number of schools to 17 and marking its fifth merger in 2026.

St Nicholas' School is an independent day school for girls aged 3 to 16 and boys aged 3 to 7.

The merger follows a long period of planning by the school's governors and trustees and the decision to pursue a charitable merger was central to the process, ensuring that the school's charitable purpose remains at the heart of its future.



Pictured: St Nicholas' School

Chairman of Governors, Mr Chris Netherton, said: "The school governors, who are also trustees of the parent charity, met with several parties to establish the best fit for St Nicholas' School. The trustees wanted to keep the charitable purpose at the heart of the school, and this was why a charitable merger was our preferred approach."

Headmistress of St Nicholas' School, Dr Olwen Wright, commented: "Joining Mill Hill Education Group is about building on our strengths and creating even more opportunities for our pupils and staff. It also allows St Nicholas' to embrace the future as part of a wider educational family, benefiting from enhanced collaboration and shared expertise whilst continuing to celebrate the traditions, ethos and identity that make the school so special. Together, we look forward to an exciting future defined by growth, innovation and success."

Year 2 announcement

For the first time in its 122-year history, Caldicott, Buckinghamshire, will be opening its doors to a brand-new 6+ entry year group, with the introduction of Pre-Prep II from September 2027.

The move marks a new chapter in the school's development, allowing boys to begin their Caldicott journey a year earlier while preserving the all-boys preparatory education for which Caldicott is known.

The decision follows extensive consultation with both current and prospective parents, whose feedback demonstrated strong support for extending Caldicott's offering to younger boys.

This Year 2 class will be led by experienced teachers and enriched by the school's facilities, grounds and pastoral care. Boys will benefit from an additional year within the Caldicott community, developing confidence, curiosity and a love of learning before making the natural

Pictured: Caldicott pupils



transition into 1st Form (Year 3) and the wider Prep School.

Headmaster, Jeremy Banks, said: "We are enormously excited to welcome boys into Pre-Prep II from September 2027. This development reflects the changing needs of families while remaining true to all that makes Caldicott special. It gives boys the opportunity to benefit from a Caldicott education from an earlier age, while preserving the important sense of progression that comes with moving into 1st Form and the wider Prep School."



STRETCH TENTS FOR SCHOOLS, COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Leading UK supplier of stretch tents for educational establishments.

HIRE, SALES, INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE
OUR STRETCH TENTS HAVE EVERY EDUCATIONAL EVENT OR NEED COVERED IN STYLE



CALL US TODAY ON **01920 830 256** FOR FRIENDLY ADVICE OR TO BOOK YOUR SITE VISIT

01920 830 256 | info@alternative-stretch.co.uk | www.alternative-stretch-tents.co.uk



Profile

In conversation with Huw Jones

Born:
Nairobi, Kenya

Married:
Yes

Children:
Yes – two boys (7 and 5)

Schools and Universities attended:
Twyn Primary School; St Martin's School, Caerphilly; Royal Holloway, University of London; University of Cambridge

First Job:
Kitchen porter

First job in independent education:
Teacher of Geography

Appointed to the current job:
July 2025

Favourite piece of music:
Take Five – Dave Brubeck

Favourite food:
Sunday roast

Favourite drink:
Coffee

Favourite holiday destination:
Pembrokeshire

Favourite leisure pastime:
Fly fishing

Favourite TV or radio programme/series:
The Wire

Suggested epitaph:
Still learning...

Q You played hockey for Wales at two Commonwealth Games. How does that competitive streak work for you in running a school?

A I am competitive, certainly, but I think my understanding of competition has changed quite significantly over the years. Elite sport teaches you very quickly that wanting to win is not enough. What matters is what you do repeatedly when nobody is watching – your preparation, your habits, how you respond to setbacks and whether you can keep performing when things are difficult.

That translates very naturally into school leadership. I have high expectations and I want Merchiston to be excellent, but I am probably more interested in progress than comparison. Are we better than we were yesterday? Are we helping each young person become the best version of themselves? Are we prepared to look critically at what we do and improve it?

That thinking also shapes our sports academies, where pupils with particular interest in sports can train at a high level alongside their studies.

Sport also taught me that you rarely achieve anything worthwhile alone. The strongest teams have trust, clarity and a willingness to work for one another. Schools are no different.

Q When studying for your Master's degree in Education your research focused on how schools can nurture resilience in young people. You say this has shaped your educational philosophy and approach to leadership. How so?

A My research showed that, if we want to nurture resilience, we have to think about two things simultaneously: the environment we place young people in, and the capacities we intentionally develop within them to metabolise that environment.

I use the word metabolise quite deliberately. Young people will encounter challenge, disappointment, uncertainty and failure, both at school and throughout their lives. Our job isn't to remove all of that, nor is it simply

to expose them to difficulty and assume resilience will somehow emerge.

We need to create environments that provide appropriate levels of challenge within strong, caring relationships, while deliberately helping young people develop the tools to navigate those experiences – self-awareness, emotional regulation, perspective, agency, the ability to seek support and the confidence to try again.

This is reflected in our undertow at Merchiston of "Care, Challenge and Contribute." Care and challenge aren't competing ideas; at their best, they work together.

That connects directly to our ambition to prepare them for the tests of life, not simply a life full of tests.

Q While Merchiston offers a co-ed nursery and junior school, the senior school is the only all-boys boarding and day senior school left in Scotland. With many single-sex schools across the nation now going fully co-ed, do you believe you can maintain this status for long? Has the independent sector lost something precious in this trend?

A The important thing is not to argue that one model is inherently better than another. Different schools serve different young people and communities, and there are excellent co-educational and single-sex schools.

For us, the question is whether our model continues to have a clear educational purpose and whether families continue to value it. I believe it does.

We have a co-educational Forest Nursery and Junior School followed by a boys' Senior School. Within the Senior School, we can be intentional about understanding boys – how they learn, how they develop relationships, how we build emotional literacy and how we help them develop a healthy, confident sense of themselves as young men. At the same time, it is important that their experience is not insular, which is why partnerships, social opportunities and connections beyond Merchiston matter.

Huw Jones is Headmaster at Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh. He was previously Deputy Head at Warminster School, Wiltshire.



As the sector changes, what would be unfortunate is not the growth of co-education, but the loss of genuine choice. There should be room for distinctive educational models where there is a compelling rationale for them and families want them.

Q Boys and young men are bombarded with notions of toxic masculinity on social media which can distort their view of what is reasonable, acceptable behaviour. Merchiston promotes positive masculinity and emotional literacy; how do you measure the success of your programmes?

A I would challenge the premise slightly. Young men encounter an enormous range of messages online, some of which can be harmful, but simply telling boys what not to think is unlikely to be effective.

We don't see positive masculinity as a programme that can be measured by one simple metric. It should become visible in the culture and, most importantly, in the way boys behave.

We look at pupil wellbeing and pastoral data, listen to pupil, parent and staff feedback, and pay attention to what we see in everyday relationships. Are boys able to talk about how they feel and ask for help? Can they disagree respectfully, question what they encounter online and recognise perspectives different from their own? And when they get something wrong, can they take responsibility, repair relationships and learn from it?

Positive masculinity isn't about producing one particular type of young man. We want boys who can be strong and vulnerable, confident and humble, independent and connected to others, and who have the judgement to know what the moment requires.

Q You believe that the rise of AI begs the question of whether education is still testing the right things. What's your answer?

A I think AI makes a question that was already important much harder to ignore.

If a machine can produce a competent essay, solve a problem or synthesise information in seconds, we have to ask what exactly we are trying to assess. That doesn't mean knowledge becomes less important, I would argue almost the opposite. You need knowledge to ask intelligent questions, recognise nonsense and exercise judgement about what AI produces.

But education must go beyond the reproduction of information. We need to develop curiosity, critical thinking, communication, creativity, judgement and the ability to apply knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.

There is an interesting paradox here. As technology becomes more powerful, some deeply human capacities may become more, not less, valuable – relationships, empathy, discernment, originality and the ability to think deeply.

So I don't think the answer is to abandon traditional assessment. But we should be asking whether our assessment system sufficiently rewards the things young people will actually need in the world they are entering.

Q A Scottish boarding education is finding increasing appeal internationally. What have you found most strikes a chord with prospective pupils and their parents from abroad?

A There is something powerful about the combination Scotland can offer: academic ambition alongside extraordinary access to sport, culture, the outdoors and a strong sense of place.

At Merchiston, families are often struck by our setting. We have 100 acres of parkland while being in Edinburgh, one of the world's great cultural and university cities. That combination is unusual.

Families also want to know their son will have strong options when he leaves.

Alongside UK universities, we support boys who want to apply to universities in the US, including those aiming to combine study with sport.

But what ultimately resonates most is belonging. International parents are entrusting us with something extraordinarily precious. They want excellent academic opportunities, but they also want to know: Will my child be known? Will somebody notice if they are having a difficult day? Will they find their people?

We can offer remarkable breadth while remaining a community in which individuals are known, and our small class sizes mean every pupil receives the attention and support they need to thrive.

Q A quarter of Merchiston pupils come from over 18 different countries, while you also cater for day and boarding pupils from the home nations. How have you been able to create a unified community?

A By recognising that belonging does not require everyone to be the same. A strong community should allow people to bring different cultures, experiences and perspectives while still having a clear sense of what holds everyone together.

Boarding also creates opportunities for relationships to develop in a very particular way. Pupils learn, eat, play sport, perform together and live alongside one another. The pupil from Edinburgh and the pupil who has travelled thousands of miles to be here can find themselves sharing a dorm, a rehearsal, a team or a problem to solve.

That diversity is one of the great educational opportunities of the school. The challenge is not simply to have 18 nationalities represented, it is to make sure those different perspectives actually encounter one another.

Continued >

Profile

In conversation with Huw Jones (continued)

Q You have said that your hope is for every pupil to leave school carrying a "rucksack" of practical tools and strategies they can draw upon at different moments in their lives – to navigate challenges, embrace opportunities and support those around them. If you could pack just one thing into that rucksack, what would it be?

A Compassionate curiosity. By that I mean developing the instinct to approach ourselves, other people and the world around us with curiosity before judgement.

When you encounter a setback, rather than immediately thinking I can't do this, ask, What can I learn from this? When somebody is struggling or behaves in a way you don't understand, ask, What might be going on for them? And when you encounter an idea or perspective different from your own, have the confidence to ask, What might I be missing?

It is a remarkably versatile tool. It can help you navigate difficulty, remain open to new opportunities and understand and support the people around you.

Curiosity keeps us learning, compassion keeps that learning human.

If a young person leaves Merchiston with that instinct, I think we have put something in their rucksack that they can draw upon throughout their life.

Q What drew you to a career in education originally? Has it worked out as you expected?

A Sport was probably part of the route in, but very quickly I became fascinated by the much bigger question of what helps young people grow.

And no, I don't think it has worked out quite as I expected, which is probably one of the reasons I still love it.

Schools are extraordinarily human places. On any given day you can move from discussing curriculum or strategy to watching a pupil perform something they didn't think they could do, supporting a family through a difficult moment, standing on a touchline or having a conversation with a young person that reminds you what the whole enterprise is actually about.

That variety is enormously energising. The privilege of education is that you get to play a small part in people's stories at a formative

point in their lives. You rarely know at the time which interaction or opportunity will matter to them years later. I find that both humbling and motivating.

Q What do you like to do to relax in your spare time?

A Exercise is still a really important part of my life. I enjoy strength training and keeping active, although these days the recovery tends to require rather more attention than it did during my hockey career!

I also value fairly simple things like time with family, getting outdoors, reading and having the opportunity to switch off properly. Fly fishing is probably one of the best ways I have found of doing that – it demands enough concentration to take your mind away from everything else, while giving you the chance to be outside somewhere beautiful.

One of the challenges of being a Head is that school life can be all-consuming if you allow it to be, so I increasingly appreciate those moments that create a little distance and perspective.

Festival of Peace

Ahead of World Quaker Day which took place on Sunday 4 October, Sidcot School, Somerset, welcomed over 700 visitors, including local state schools, to its recent Festival of Peace.

Held biannually, the free community event showcased a programme of activities, workshops and performances reflecting the school's Quaker ethos and commitment to bringing people together through shared experiences. Visitors of all ages enjoyed an evening filled with

music, art and hands-on activities, including DJ sets from DJ Elley Phunk, welding workshops, screen printing, student musical and dramatic performances, and much more.

One of the evening's attractions was the presence of Arcadia Reach's Bug Stage, a mobile performance venue that had recently returned from supporting The Prodigy on their latest tour. The Bug Stage was brought to Sidcot by school alumnus and Arcadia co-founder, Pip Rush Jansen.



Pictured: DJ Set at Sidcot Festival

Elsewhere across the festival site, visitors explored a large-scale wooden climbing structure designed and built by pupils from Sidcot Junior School and Year 7 students in partnership with Woodland Tribe, a not-for-profit organisation that champions child-led adventure play and hands-on construction using real tools.

The festival also coincided with the installation of the Sidcot's Planets Project in the School's Peace Fields – an installation of sculptural planets created through a collaboration between students from Sidcot School and Weston College, alongside

the Sidcot Art Department and Arcadia Reach CIC. Crafted from recycled and repurposed metal, the artwork highlighted themes of sustainability, creativity and transformation that ran throughout the evening's programme.

The Festival of Peace forms part of Sidcot School's long-standing commitment to Quaker principles, providing opportunities for students and the wider community to engage with ideas of peace, equality, sustainability and social responsibility through creativity, collaboration and shared experience.



Pictured: Metal Welding at Peace Festival

Learning with humility

Deputy Head Academic, at Francis Holland Preparatory School, London, Andrew Hart discusses how by teaching children to listen, reflect and improve helps children understand that not knowing is not a failure and realise that learning is an ongoing process.

At surface level, humility is not a quality we tend to associate with academic ambition. And yet it is one of the most powerful forces in a child's learning. At Francis Holland Preparatory School, we believe that the willingness to listen carefully, to reconsider and to improve is not a sign of weakness but of genuine intellectual courage. It is, in many ways, the hallmark of a truly educated mind.

The STEAM classroom offers a particularly vivid illustration of this. Science, at its heart, is a discipline built not on certainty but on the willingness to be wrong. Every hypothesis is an invitation to be disproved. Every experiment is a conversation with the unknown. As Head of Science, I have made it a deliberate practice to model uncertainty aloud in lessons: to say, plainly and without embarrassment: "I am not certain; let us find out together." The response from children is always the same. They lean in. They engage more freely. They begin to understand that not knowing is not

a failure but a starting point, and that the most important question a scientist can ask is the one that challenges what they thought they already understood.

This is not a principle confined to science. The history of human knowledge is a history of revision. Darwin refined his thinking over decades before committing it to the page. Fleming discovered penicillin precisely because he paid attention to what he did not expect. The willingness to look again, to reconsider, and to remain open is what separates knowledge that endures from certainty that collapses.

In English, and specifically writing, we see the same quality at work in ways that are deeply moving. When a pupil shares a piece of writing with a peer, receives a thoughtful response, and then returns to the page to redraft, something important has happened. They have trusted another person with their thinking. They have accepted that their first attempt was not their

final word. They have discovered, perhaps for the first time, that someone else's reading of their work can reveal something they could not see from the inside. This is collaborative learning at its most honest, and it requires both the courage to share and the humility to listen.

Research in this area is compelling and increasingly specific. A landmark study of over five hundred middle school students found that classrooms that emphasise effort and growth, and that normalise mistakes, are significantly more likely to encourage the development of intellectual humility in young people¹. Separately, researchers have found that when teachers themselves model intellectual humility, admitting uncertainty and remaining open to being wrong, pupils show greater interest in their learning and a stronger sense of belonging within the classroom².

Further, intellectual humility in children is associated with a range



Andrew Hart

of positive outcomes including intellectual curiosity, tenacity, open-mindedness and mastery behaviours, leading a growing number of educational researchers to regard it as among the most important virtues a school can cultivate³.

At FHP, humility opens the door that achievement alone cannot. It asks something real of us. It asks us to hold our own certainties lightly, to make space for the thinking of others, and to understand that every piece of work, every idea and every understanding we have is a draft that can be improved. That is not a diminishing thought. It is a liberating one.

To teach a child humility is to give them one of the greatest academic gifts available: the understanding that learning is never finished, and that there is always, always more to discover.

References:

- 1 Porter, T. et al. (2022). Classroom environment predicts changes in expressed intellectual humility. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 70, 102081.
- 2 Muradoglu, M. et al. (2024). Teachers' intellectual humility benefits adolescents' interest and learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*.
- 3 Porter, T. et al. (2021). Intellectual humility predicts mastery behaviours when learning. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 87, 101989.

Cross sector partnership

Lord Wandsworth College (LWC), Hampshire and Long Sutton Church of England Primary School have announced a new alliance that will bring the two neighbouring schools and their communities even closer together.

As of this month (October), the association will see the schools share resources, expertise and opportunities in a new initiative between the independent and state sectors.

Each year, Long Sutton Primary School pupils will benefit from a minimum of 100 hours of access

to specialist facilities within Lord Wandsworth College's campus. This will include the use of science laboratories, art and design studios, theatres and sports spaces. They will also enjoy access to specialist sports coaching delivered by LWC's coaching team, alongside an annual multi-sport festival hosted at the college.

LWC students will also play an active role through an extension of the Peer Mentoring Programme, supporting younger pupils from the primary school, whilst developing their own

leadership, coaching and mentoring skills.

The partnership has been designed to create meaningful opportunities for children and staff across both schools, whilst strengthening relationships within the local community. There will be a focus on enrichment and professional learning, with each school retaining its own governance, leadership, identity and statutory responsibilities.*

Staff across both schools will also work together through curriculum coaching, shared professional



development and joint pastoral initiatives.

Over time, the partnership aims to demonstrate how schools in different sectors can work together in ways that deliver excellence, opportunity and a joy in learning.

Pictured: Co-Heads of Long Sutton CofE Primary School, Kathryn Maidment and Selena Cameron, with Head of LWC, Adam Williams Photo credit: Lord Wandsworth College

*There is also no intention from the parties to create a legal partnership for the purposes of the Partnership Act 1890.

Sing to the Lord a new song: The future of school Chapel Choirs

Head of Chapel Music at Solihull School, West Midlands, Callum Alger, explores the opportunities that joining a school chapel choir can bring to pupils and offers some thoughts as to how potential choristers of all faiths can be encouraged to see singing as for everyone.

In an age of rapid change, there is something remarkable about stepping into a Chapel and hearing young people sharing their voices in music that has been performed for centuries. Chapel Choirs today face an important challenge: how do we encourage more young voices to join our ranks?

Being part of a Chapel Choir is a fantastic opportunity for any young person. Not only does it develop vocal technique, musicianship, listening skills and musical literacy, it is also a chance to enhance the personal qualities and transferable skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Through regular rehearsals and performances, children learn the importance of discipline, commitment and dedication. They also discover the need for perseverance and sustained effort, whilst developing resilience and adapting to challenges. Choir rehearsals expand concentration and memory, as singers are required to remain focused, learn significant amounts of music apace and work collaboratively towards the shared goal of a refined musical output.

One of the greatest strengths of a Chapel Choir is its sense of belonging. All students are welcome, regardless of faith, background or previous experience. Choristers become part of a community, enabling friendships to form across different year groups. Older pupils become role models and mentors for younger singers, creating

opportunities for leadership and responsibility. For many children, choir becomes a place where they feel valued and recognised, whilst adding their own voice to a rich tradition.

In a world where school life can understandably be dominated by measurable outcomes, such as exams and grades, music offers children the chance to discover who they are and what they are capable of achieving.

Chapel Choir members enjoy a wide range of memorable experiences. At Solihull School, pupils regularly perform at significant occasions, from the beauty of the candlelit Nine Lessons and Carols services to the poignance of the civic Remembrance services. They also have opportunities to travel and sing in inspiring venues. Recent highlights have included a choir tour to Italy, and a visit to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. These experiences enable pupils to create lasting memories, whilst building the confidence to perform in a variety of settings and embrace new challenges.

Research increasingly highlights the positive impact of singing on wellbeing, helping to reduce stress and anxiety, whilst encouraging young people to step away from the digital world and into the present moment. Former England cricket captain, Alastair Cook, and singer-songwriter, Ed Sheeran, grew up as choristers. Both have highlighted the impact this had on their lives and illustrate that the skills learnt as a chorister

can lead pupils in a multitude of directions. Singing is an activity for life; one that can offer friendship, community and enjoyment.

Despite all the benefits that come from being part of a Chapel Choir, recruiting members can sometimes be difficult. Choir leaders must identify and address the barriers preventing young people from joining their choirs.

One of the most common challenges facing Chapel Choirs is the perception of the commitment. Many children and parents understandably look at a schedule and see the regular rehearsals and services as a significant demand on an already busy week. For pupils who are balancing academic studies with many other co-curricular activities, the choir can be seen as too great a time commitment. However, those who do commit often find that the rewards outweigh the time invested. Schools should therefore remind children and parents of the many benefits the choir provides, so that the perspective changes from “what do I give” to “what do I gain.”

Another challenge is visibility. Unlike sports teams, which are often visible during fixtures and training, a choir's work takes place behind closed doors. The process of rehearsing is very rarely seen, with only the final performance viewed by the public. As a result, many children do not realise what a Chapel Choir is, what it does, or whether it



Callum Alger

is something they may wish to join. Schools therefore need to find creative ways to showcase their choirs, perhaps through regular performances, the use of social media and the advocacy of current members.

Arguably the most significant challenge is confidence. Children often enjoy singing when they are young but become increasingly self-conscious as they get older. They might not join a choir due to fear of being judged by peers, or concerns about their singing ability. This challenge can be overcome by normalising singing in schools. When singing is consistently incorporated into school life through assemblies and classroom music lessons, it becomes second nature, and children can sing with greater confidence.

The future of school Chapel Choirs involves shifting to a mindset where young people recognise that singing is for everyone. By addressing perceptions around commitment, increasing visibility and creating a culture for singing, schools can enable more children to have the confidence to take their first steps in discovering the wonderful opportunities and benefits that come with being a member of a Chapel Choir.

Performance floors for dance education



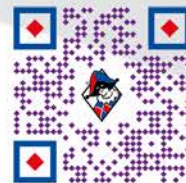
Years of research has gone into perfecting every Harlequin floor, which is why Harlequin is the choice of the world's most prestigious dance and performing arts companies, theatres, venues and schools.

With an extensive range of sprung floors, vinyl floors, dance mirrors, ballet barres and dance studio equipment, Harlequin can provide everything a good performance space requires.

education@harlequinfloors.com +44 (0) 1892 514 888



HARLEQUIN
www.harlequinfloors.com



New music centre

A new music and performance centre has opened at Truro School, Cornwall.

Named The Ode, the new facility brings together more than 1,700m² of new and refurbished space, including a multi-use performance hall, large rehearsal space, atrium, performance room, recording studio and specialist rock room.

The development represents a major long-term investment in music, performance and creative education at the school, while also creating new opportunities for community performances, partnerships and events.

Truro School already works closely with a range of local organisations, including Cornwall Music Service Trust (CMST) and Roseland Music Society. It has strong links with Truro Cathedral and its chorister

programme. The Ode will provide new opportunities to develop these relationships and create further connections between the school and the wider Cornish community.

The new facility incorporates retractable seating, high-quality acoustic treatment, specialist data provision and carefully designed technical facilities, creating a flexible environment for teaching, rehearsals, ensembles, recording and large-scale performances.

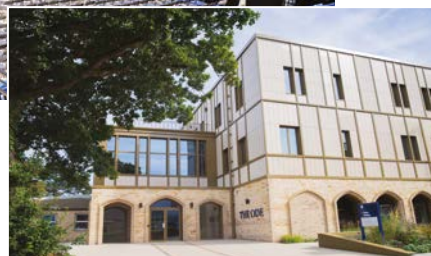
The building formally opened this month (October).

Truro School Head, Mr Andy Johnson, said: "This is about much more than a new building. It is about creating the environment and opportunity for young people to explore their creativity, discover what they are capable of, whether that is performing, playing,



composing, producing or simply finding a lifelong love of music and creativity.

"The Ode will also enable us to improve other parts of our site to benefit our children. The old Music Centre is being converted over the course of this academic year to recognise and serve individual pupil ambitions and needs, including a new home for our medical centre, SEND department, Careers and Enrichment provision."



The project also provided opportunities for pupils to engage with the development process, with a Student Build Committee. The committee allowed students to contribute to and learn from a major construction project taking place within their school.

Pictured: The Ode Music Centre at Truro School

Advertorial Feature

The show that ends with a qualification from a leading drama school

Mountview Exams is an awarding body built around the way drama departments already work.

For many drama teachers, graded exams mean restrictive repertoire lists, extra rehearsal time and an exam room with the potential to scare even the most confident of students. Mountview Exams (MX) does things differently.

There is no set repertoire. Performers choose their own songs, monologues and choreography – or devise their own – and are encouraged to approach their choices with an imaginative

mindset. "There isn't a 'right' or a 'wrong' way of delivering a song, monologue or dance routine," says Senior Exam Consultant Marina Caldarone. "There is only a true way."

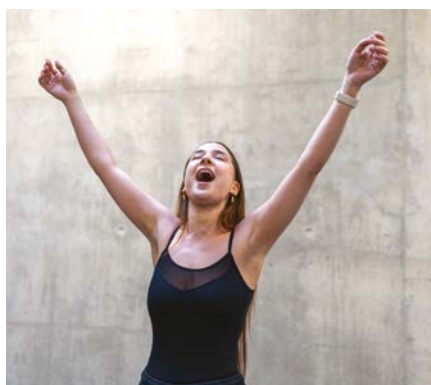
This focus on creativity is striking a chord across the industry. Rachel Calvert (Centre Stage Theatre Academy) describes MX as "far more inclusive and creatively empowering than what we have encountered with other boards"

while Emily Gray (BYMT Artistic Director) describes how "refreshing it is to have a syllabus that reflects the contemporary state of musical theatre."

The exam experience is warm rather than intimidating. Examiners are Mountview-trained, exams can take place at your school and students perform to an audience of their peers. As one student puts it: "That was the most chilled exam I've ever done!"

MX also offers a range of formats – solo, group and individual assessment within a group – so exams fit around performers, not the other way round.

The good starting point is the Full Production option – where an MX examiner might attend your existing school musical, watching from the audience. There's minimal extra work for staff, and successful students leave with a qualification



alongside their curtain call.

For pupils and parents, there's tangible added value: a qualification mapped to the national framework from Entry Level to Grade 8, carrying the Mountview name. The MX certificates even feature the signature of Dame Judi Dench, Mountview's President – an inarguably distinctive addition to CVs, personal statements and portfolios!



To find out how MX could work for your school, visit: mountviewexams.com

National Performing Arts finalist



Westholme School, Lancashire, has been named one of six schools in the country to make the final of the Independent School of the Year Awards for Performing Arts in 2026.

The school was commended for their performing arts provision before being named as a finalist, and is the only school north of Birmingham to make the final in this category.

Principal of Westholme School, Paul Taylor, said: "To be selected

Pictured: Performance of Mary Poppins

as a finalist from schools across the country – and to be the only northern school to reach the final – is a tribute to the talent and dedication of our students, and to the exceptional staff who encourage and support them every single day."

The winners of all categories, along with the overall Independent School of the Year 2026, will be announced at an awards ceremony in October at The Law Society in London.



Stage Stars!

The entertainment documentary series, Stage Stars, which follows the lives of young performers at Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, Hertfordshire, has made a return to screens.

Produced by Drummer Television for the BBC, Stage Stars offers viewers an insight into the balance between boarding school life and a career in the spotlight.

The first series, which launched in October 2025, showcased moments such as dancer Jacob setting off to Switzerland and winning an international ballet competition and a young performer who had

Pictured: Strictly's Nikita with students

to give up her contract in Starlight Express after breaking her arm.

This time the series will introduce viewers to the new class of Series 2 which includes a young boy who lands his dream role on the West End Stage, and another who's dreams come true when Strictly professional Nikita comes to visit. The series also catches up with some familiar faces continuing their journeys in the challenging world of performing arts.

Series 2 premiered on CBBC and BBC iPlayer on 5 October 2026, and viewers can catch up with the first series on BBC iPlayer.

MX MOUNTVIEW EXAMS

We Do Things Differently

Mountview Exams celebrate imagination and individuality – a flexible way to develop musical theatre skills with fun and meaningful qualifications.

Turn your school production into a recognised qualification

Minimal extra workload for you, we work around your schedule

No set repertoire list – let your students perform pieces they love

Solo and group options, for all ages and abilities

mountviewexams.com

Scan to explore Mountview Exams



School identity: Creating a sense of belonging

Nurturing a strong school identity can help shape children's confidence and own identity, build a spirit of community as well as ensure that children feel as though they are valued, heard and recognised. Headmaster at York House School, Hertfordshire, Jon Gray, discusses how as well as uniforms, houses, history and heritage, school values are a vital component for identity and creating a sense of belonging.

Being a part of something larger than oneself is vital to a child's long term school experience. School is more than simply a place to learn; it is also a community where a child will develop new friendships and build confidence while gaining a sense of who they really are. Children usually start life with a strong sense of self, nurtured through their family and home life. Creating a sense of belonging at school can often be the next step in the process of a child feeling valued, heard and recognised, which can have a powerful influence on their wellbeing, engagement and readiness to learn.

At prep age, this is often centred around their form teacher and peers giving them the building blocks to deal with opportunities and challenges, set against a robust background of belonging. A strong sense of school identity can also give children a shared sense of purpose, encouraging them to form connections with the people around them. Whether that means being around other likeminded children with shared interests at an after-school club, or simply engaging in a group activity with a shared goal, feeling that sense of belonging can be one of the best

things in the world. On the flipside, a society that you feel excluded from can have the reverse effect.

Shared values

School values are vital for building both personal and collaborative identity in young children. From the language and values that underpin a school's ethos, to its traditions, heritage and everyday experiences, a strong school identity tells children that they matter and that they have a place in their community. Whether the school achieves this by having a central focus to a class charter, school values, or pupil aims, it is crucial and beneficial to establish the "why" so that everyone understands the purpose. Even from quite a young age, encouraging children to sign up to a set of shared values, ideally positively expressed, can be highly empowering. In time, such values can also include some of the negative things or beliefs they might be against, or might even include a rival, to unite them in opposition and encourage that tribal instinct and spirit of camaraderie.

Wearing the same school uniform and sports kit or eating the same snacks and lunches also encourages

shared identity amongst children, while reducing the emphasis on material differences that can be distracting or could lead to a child feeling excluded. For younger children in particular, putting on a school uniform each morning can provide a clear sense that they are part of a particular community where they are known, cared for and have a place.

In a similar way, a school house system gives children a sense of pride and purpose as members of the wider school, while helping to take them beyond the horizontal groupings of form and year group that often prevail in school life. This allows them to build new friendships, develop their team working skills and contribute to something beyond themselves. This could be through house competitions, sporting events, assemblies or community activities where they can represent their house and experience a sense of achievement as part of a team. The house system also promotes meaningful and guided activity, which can foster aspiration up through the year groups and likewise for pastoral care travelling downwards.

Sense of obligation

Celebrating history and heritage is also an important part of school identity. For example, this can be quite grounding when our pupils are reminded that they sit in assembly 116 years on from our foundation and the first pupils sitting in the same space. This kind of historical reflection encourages a positive sense of obligation and responsibility towards our elder community and also towards our youngest pupils – the ascenders and descenders that give hierarchy and humility to our buoyant ego.

Building a spirit of community is something that York House is hugely passionate about – the idea of "leaving people and places



better than you found them" is also something that children are encouraged to consider wherever possible. Lots of schools will support charities, both locally and globally. Combined efforts to benefit those that are less fortunate can have a strong unifying effect. Projects such as tree planting or aiming for an activity that leaves a legacy, such as creating a time capsule for your school, can benefit future generations of society and can lift us beyond the now. Combined performance, for example, musical, sporting and drama all help to build that cohesion. Our onsite smallholding with over 50 different animals offers a further pupil team with a shared and caring purpose.

Retaining identity

In summary, nurturing a strong school identity has perhaps never been more important for our children. In a world where many numbers of independent prep schools are merging in a bid to secure their futures, one has to question whether retaining independence as a standalone prep school enhances the strength of that all-important identity. Arguably, becoming part of a larger corporate organisation could cut an individual school's culture into rags especially if higher level messaging comes from a community that doesn't know, or has never met your child. Parents choose to leave their children in the hands of professionals who care, and it is often the case that families have little love for economies of scale or corporate-style headquarters. School identity matters more than ever and for every child, a school should feel very much part of who they really are.



Pictured: York House Pupils

Why every school should consider supporting their healthcare team through the Medical Officers of Schools Association (MOSA)

For today's school bursar, every investment must demonstrate clear value. Alongside financial sustainability, schools face growing expectations around safeguarding, regulatory compliance, risk management and pupil wellbeing. As the healthcare needs of children become more complex, ensuring that school healthcare professionals are properly supported has never been more important. Membership of MOSA provides this expertise in a way that is bespoke to the needs of school healthcare professionals and remains affordable.

Founded in 1884, MOSA was established to help schools prevent the spread of infectious diseases. More than 140 years later, its purpose remains just as relevant: advancing the health and wellbeing of children and young people by supporting school doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals with expert guidance, education and a strong professional network.

School healthcare is a highly specialised field. Unlike many NHS colleagues, school nurses and doctors often practise autonomously, managing acute illness, long-term medical conditions, safeguarding, mental health, public health responsibilities and emergency care, all within the unique environment of a school community. The complexity of these roles continues to grow as schools support increasing numbers of pupils with chronic health conditions, neurodevelopmental disorders, significant allergies, eating disorders and complex mental health needs.

For bursars, investing in professional support for the healthcare team is therefore an investment in safer clinical practice, effective governance and organisational resilience.

MOSA provides evidence-based clinical guidance, practical resources and continuing professional development (CPD)

specifically designed for school healthcare. Through educational meetings and CPD events, members remain up to date with current clinical practice and emerging health issues. Equally valuable is the professional support network MOSA provides. School healthcare professionals often work in small teams and can find themselves managing complex clinical situations in isolation. MOSA offers a confidential forum where members share experience, discuss complex cases and seek advice from colleagues facing similar issues. Recent discussions have focused on supporting pupils with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), managing increasingly complex mental health presentations, medication governance and safeguarding challenges.

"I have found MOSA to be a vital support for the 10 years I was a school's medical officer. Your educational events, and forum have been particularly valued. It is easy to feel quite isolated out there in what is a unique branch of general practice, and MOSA has been a vital support over the years."

Richard Hughes, Millfield School

Membership provides access to up-to-date clinical guidance, policies and resources covering infectious diseases, asthma, safeguarding, immunisation, public health and many other aspects of child and adolescent healthcare. Rather than developing policies from scratch,



Pictured: Delegates attending the MOSA Spring Educational Day at Eton College, where school healthcare professionals come together for expert-led education, professional networking and the latest developments in school healthcare

schools can draw upon established best practice, saving valuable time while ensuring that procedures remain current and evidence based.

"As a nurse new to independent school nursing, I've been so grateful for the support from MOSA. Their team are incredibly kind, responsive, and always provides evidence-based guidance. The quick, thoughtful advice they offer has given me confidence in my practice and truly empowers me to grow in this role."

Jenny Campbell, Nurse

Representing excellent value, MOSA membership provides year-round professional support, education, clinical resources and access to an experienced national network. Together, these resources offer schools a practical and cost-effective way to support their healthcare professionals.

Ultimately, supporting a school's healthcare professionals through



Dr Jim Ropner

MOSA benefits far more than the clinical team. It strengthens governance, promotes consistency of care, reduces clinical risk and helps schools provide the safe, responsive healthcare that pupils, parents and regulators rightly expect.

For bursars seeking to invest wisely in both pupil wellbeing and organisational resilience, MOSA membership is a practical investment in the health, safety and long-term wellbeing of the whole school community.



Pictured: Delegates at a recent MOSA Educational Day discussing current clinical practice and the evolving healthcare needs of children and young people.

Dr Jim Ropner, President of MOSA, welcoming delegates to the MOSA Spring Educational Day at Eton College. Visit: www.mosa.org.uk

With diesel prices soaring, is it time to start thinking about moving to an electric minibus?

For many schools, diesel has been the obvious choice when replacing a minibus. It has traditionally offered the range and convenience they need and is a familiar choice.

However, fuel is one of the biggest ongoing costs associated with running a minibus, and the average UK diesel price reached a record 199.18p per litre (at the time of writing, 30 September 2026).

Schools operating several vehicles or covering significant annual mileage will see a noticeable impact on their budgets.

When considering switching to electric, it isn't simply a question of comparing the price of diesel with the cost of electricity. You need to look at the whole-life cost of the vehicle.

That includes the lease or purchase cost, expected annual mileage, charging costs, maintenance, available charging infrastructure and how long you expect to keep the vehicle.

For some schools, the sums may increasingly favour electric. For others, diesel may still make more operational and financial sense.

Electric minibuses are becoming a more realistic option

One of the biggest changes in the electric minibus market over recent years has been the amount of choice available. That choice is continuing to grow as more organisations move to electric.

There are now electric options in a range of vehicle sizes, from smaller 8-seat to larger 16-seat minibuses, giving organisations more opportunity to find something appropriate for their requirements.

What about mileage and range?

This is still one of the first questions we're asked about electric

minibuses, and it's one of the biggest causes of range anxiety.

A better question is: "How far does your minibus actually need to travel?"

If your vehicle spends most of its time completing local school trips and returning to school, where it can be charged overnight, an electric vehicle could be the right solution. Range anxiety may be less of a concern.

There are other advantages to consider

Moving away from diesel isn't only about prices at the pumps.

1. Electric vehicles offer zero tailpipe emissions, which can be particularly attractive for schools looking to reduce their environmental impact.
2. They also provide a quiet, smooth driving experience and potentially lower routine maintenance requirements.
3. If you are travelling in and out of ULEZ or other low-emission zones, having an electric vehicle may save you money on charges.
4. Government guidance allows qualifying zero-emission minibuses of up to 4,250kg maximum authorised mass (MAM) to be driven on a Category B licence (conditions apply). Where the vehicle is fitted with additional specialist equipment for disabled passengers, the permitted MAM can increase to up to 5,000kg.

The rules around who can drive a minibus still depend on the vehicle, driver, organisation and how it is being operated, so

licence requirements should always be checked for your particular circumstances.

How are you using your diesel minibus now? It's a good place to start

If you have a diesel minibus that is due to be replaced in the next year or two, start recording how you actually use it.

- How many miles does it cover each day?
- Where does it go?
- How long is it parked between journeys?
- Could you install a charger?
- How frequently do you make longer journeys?

That information makes it much easier to establish whether an electric minibus could work for you.

Illustrative example: cost comparison of a diesel and electric minibus

As an illustrative diesel example, a Ford Transit 17-seat minibus travelling 5,000 miles a year and achieving around 24.4mpg would use approximately 932 litres of diesel. At the UK average diesel price of 199.18p per litre at the time of writing, that would cost approximately £1,855 a year in diesel.

Ford publishes combined energy consumption of 46.5–63.4kWh per 100 miles for an L4 H3 e-Transit, depending on specification and conditions. Using approximately 55kWh per 100 miles, travelling 5,000 miles would require around 2,750kWh of electricity.

Using Ofgem's average domestic electricity unit rate of 26.11p/kWh for July–September 2026*, that would cost approximately £718 a year in electricity. Ofgem's average electricity unit rate of 26.11p/kWh for July–September 2026

That's an illustrative saving of £1,137 a year in energy costs alone.

Actual costs will vary according to the vehicle, passenger load, routes, driving style and weather, as well as the price an organisation pays for diesel or electricity. However, this simple comparison shows why, as diesel approaches £2 per litre, it may be worth looking at the numbers when deciding whether your next minibus could be electric.

Diesel or electric? Our advice starts with how you use your minibus

At Rivervale Minibus, we don't think choosing your next vehicle should simply be about following the latest trend or replacing like-for-like.

A minibus has to work for your organisation.

With diesel prices approaching £2 per litre, and electric vehicle technology and choice continuing to develop, electric is becoming a more attractive option for many of our clients.

Rivervale Minibus can help you compare diesel and electric options based on your mileage, passenger requirements, driving licence considerations and the way you actually use your vehicle.

* This is a domestic electricity rate, not a commercial tariff.

Speak to our team on 01869 253744 or email minibus@rivervale.co.uk, and we can help you understand which option makes sense for your organisation. Visit: www.rivervale.co.uk

TRANSITS & TRAFICS

READY FOR
IMMEDIATE
DELIVERY



RENAULT TRAFIC 9 Seat

A versatile vehicle, with plenty of room in the boot. Ideal for school runs, clubs and everyday use.



8 passenger seats



Drive on a B1 car licence



Twin sliding doors



Keyless start

FORD TRANSIT 17 Seat

A proven favourite for schools offering reliability safety, and comfortable space for 16 passengers



White, Silver or Blazer Blue



Manual or Automatic



130ps or 165ps engines



Trend or Leader trim

LEASE FROM

£499

+ VAT PER MONTH*

- ✓ LOW INITIAL PAYMENT
- ✓ ROAD FUND LICENCE INCLUDED
- ✓ FULLY MAINTAINED CONTRACT
- ✓ LOGO AND LIVERY INCLUDED
- ✓ NATIONWIDE DELIVERY

ALSO
AVAILABLE FOR
OUTRIGHT
PURCHASE



GET IN TOUCH
TODAY

01869 253744

minibus@rivervale.co.uk

rivervaleminibus.co.uk

*£499 + vat per month based on Ford Transit Leader. Initial rental payment £1497 + VAT. Payment profile 3+59 month. 5k annual mileage allowance. Business users only, subject to status, guarantees, and indemnities may be required. Excess mileage charges apply. Fair Wear and Tear and Damage Charges may apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.rivervale.co.uk. Rivervale is a broker and not a lender. Rivervale Minibus Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (registration number 3723474). We do not provide independent financial advice. We will receive a commission and/or quality-derived bonus for introducing you to one of our panel of leasing companies or finance providers. The commission we receive may be pre-set but can vary and will impact the amount payable by the customer.

A new chapter in bereavement education begins

As of September, the new statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance came into force, introducing bereavement and grief into health education. Founder of a bereavement network which connects grieving people with local and national charities and support services, Linda Magistris, discusses why grief belongs in education and how schools can take this opportunity to teach children about loss, helping them to understand that grief is a natural, highly individual response to death.



For the first time children will better understand the impact of a bereavement, the breadth of emotions that may be experienced; that grief is a natural response to loss; and that everyone grieves differently.

It is time we taught our children the language of grief, in fact this is a lesson we can all learn. With the introduction of grief education this year, schools have an important opportunity to help children and young people develop the language, understanding and confidence they need to navigate grief, loss and bereavement.

It is time to break down the taboos, and normalise grief as a natural part of life, to learn how to help those affected, and create a kinder, more compassionate society.

The statistics are stark.

An estimated one in 29 school-age children in the UK has been bereaved of a parent or sibling – roughly one child in every average classroom.

An estimated 26,900 parents die each year in the UK leaving dependent children – around one parent dies every 20 minutes – with approximately 46,300 children aged under 18 bereaved of a parent each year.

These figures underline why conversations about grief and loss belong in our schools.

Why grief belongs in education

Children and young people encounter bereavement but may

not have the words or tools to navigate the many emotions that can accompany grief.

School staff and parents may also struggle to know what to say or how best to support a young person, or a member of their community, following a death. All of us will experience a bereavement during our lifetime and will not know it will affect us until it happens.

Timely, personalised signposting to appropriate bereavement support at the earliest opportunity is essential. Ensuring that individuals receive the right support at the right time can provide reassurance, reduce the sense of isolation associated with grief, and offer hope during what may be one of the most challenging periods of their lives.

What we often get wrong

For too long, there has been an assumption that grief follows a predictable or linear path – that someone will eventually “move on” and return to how things were before.

But bereavement changes us.

We do not simply “move on” from the death of someone we love. We learn to move forward, finding ways to live with a new reality and a “new normal”, ideally with love, support and hope for the future.

Everyone grieves differently.

There is no single timetable, no right way to grieve and no simple

sequence of emotions that every bereaved person will experience.

What good grief education looks like

Good grief education should be age-appropriate, inclusive, preventative and embedded in school life, rather than something that is only discussed after a death occurs.

It is about normalising conversations around death, loss and grief so that children, young people and the wider community, have the confidence to talk, ask questions and seek help when they need it.

It is also about equipping all of us with the skills to support others. We can learn how to listen without judgement, communicate with empathy, acknowledge and validate feelings, and offer appropriate support while recognising that every person's experience of grief is different.

These are skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

Practical support for schools

The introduction of bereavement and grief into statutory health education provides an important opportunity for schools to look at the wider support they offer.

Schools can review their bereavement policies and resources, improve staff confidence, explore curriculum opportunities and strengthen communication with families.

A whole-school approach can help ensure that bereavement is not treated as an isolated event, but as something that can affect pupils, parents, teachers and the wider school community.

We cannot remove grief from school, but we can make sure that no one has to navigate it alone.

Changing the conversation around grief

Children deserve the opportunity to understand what grief can feel like, why people respond to loss in different ways, and where they can turn when they, or someone they care about is struggling.

Grief education can help raise greater awareness; this is about changing the culture around grief for generations to come.

Finding support

Bereavement can be overwhelming and knowing where to turn for help is not always easy. Connecting people with trusted sources of support when they need it, in a way that works for them is crucial.

By providing schools with practical resources, compassionate guidance and greater confidence, we can help create environments where children, parents, staff and the wider community feel safe to talk about loss, seek support and understand that grief is something none of us should have to face alone.

Grief can be complicated but access to support should never be.

Linda Magistris is Founder and CEO of The Good Grief Trust.

The Good Grief Trust is supporting schools across the country to respond to this change, providing practical and accessible resources that can make a real difference to pupils, families, staff and the wider school community. Find out more at: www.thegoodgrieftrust.org

How do you make the shortlist?



No parent chooses a school in isolation. They research. They visit. They compare. Gradually, a long list becomes a shortlist, and a shortlist becomes a decision.

**Chapel
& Tuck**

The research starts before the first visit. A generation ago, parents arrived at the Open Day with questions. Today, they arrive with answers and even sharper questions. They've had long conversations with their favourite AI model. They've spent time on forums. They've looked up the inspection report. From the conversations I've had at open days, some parents aren't forming a view so much as testing a hypothesis.

In an age defined by big data, the questions are bound to be harder than they used to be. Is the school financially sound? How far have fees risen in five years, and what does that mean for the bill when their child reaches the Sixth Form? If it's boarding, how many pupils actually board at weekends? What are the results? And then come the comparisons: three schools all promise excellence, nurturing warmth and opportunity... so how do parents ultimately decide?

Here is something we noticed building Chapel & Tuck. We read every independent boarding

school's website in the country. 431, to be exact. We noticed that schools talk at length about values, but they almost never talk about value. Yet value is exactly what a comparing parent is looking for. If your fees are higher than the others on the shortlist, why? If co-curricular activities are central to your pitch, are they actually different or better than your peer group?

You can't answer that by guessing. You can only answer it with evidence.

Chapel & Tuck gives you that evidence. Pick the schools you genuinely compete with. See where you stand against them: fees, finances, pupil numbers, provision and the language each school uses to describe itself. Not opinion. The public record, sourced, with every figure traceable to its origin.

The diagnosis helps you decide what to say; the second part is about determining whom you say it to. Our catchment tool maps your real drive-time market: who lives there, what

kind of families and where the room to grow is. Upload your own pupils' postcodes, and the platform shows you where your families already come from and which similar areas you've barely touched.

Put it all together and marketing stops being guesswork. Benchmarking shows how you compare, while catchment analysis shows exactly where your market is. As the platform grows, it is specifically built to track what families engage with before they ever reach your admissions pipeline.

That last part improves with use. The more parents interact with Chapel & Tuck, the clearer the picture becomes by creating a continuous feedback loop between what families look for, where you stand and what you say to them.

We are now looking for a founding cohort of schools to work with. As an early member, you will have the unique opportunity to help shape the future of this tool.

Find our more:

www.chapelandtuck.co.uk
hello@chapelandtuck.co.uk

Anniversary celebrations

St Peter's School in York has commenced its 1,400th anniversary celebrations.

The school, which is the third oldest school in the UK, was founded in AD 627 by St Paulinus.

The celebrations began on Peterite Day on 5 September and featured sporting fixtures between pupils and alumni (Old Peterites), together with a Chapel service, children's entertainment, a reunion and tours of the new Junior School, which has just opened.

Headmaster at St Peter's, Jeremy Walker, explained: "There is an exciting year ahead at St Peter's as we celebrate the school's 1,400th anniversary in 2027.

"It is set to be an exceptional year with the launch of our Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in October, and in January we open The Rise Nursery.

"Along with all this, we are celebrating 40 years of full co-education and, as the choir school for York Minster, looking forward to hosting the Choir Schools Association annual conference with a live broadcast on Radio 3.

"As one of only three schools in the country to reach the 1,400 milestone, we are looking forward to celebrating all that makes St Peter's so special with pupils, families, alumni and the wider York community."

The Junior School at St Peter's, which opened this academic year, is part of a structural shift to a two-school model with the Senior



Pictured: Special anniversary beer with old Peterite Harry Johnson and Jeremy Walker

School operating from Year 7. It features spaces for outdoor and indoor learning with a new library, modern science labs, Art Studio, Design Technology Workshop, Theatre and sporting facilities.

The new Junior School is part of a streamlined structure creating a continuous path from Nursery and Pre-Prep all the way to Sixth Form at St Peter's, with a new Sixth Form Centre and Cafe already open, and new buildings to be added in 2027.

Meanwhile, in an initiative launched as part of this special anniversary year, St Peter's is also collaborating with successful brands run by Old Peterites. One special edition product launched on Peterite Day is the St Peter's 1400 Wold Top Beer, created by the Mellor family, whose daughter Jenni heads up the marketing for Wold Top and is an Old Peterite.

The school have more brand collaborations to come, as well as a programme of events, some in partnership with York Minster.



Pictured: St Peter's Junior School Opening



*The Independent
Schools Magazine*

Is your school marking a milestone in 2027?

To coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Independent Schools Magazine next year we want to highlight and celebrate the milestone and anniversary events also happening across the sector.

Do get in touch with all your news or if you have something special or unusual planned that you'd like to write about and share, we'd love to hear from you.



editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk





Do you know what personal data your school holds?

Legally, you should be able to answer these questions. If you can't, APIMS can help.

We automate your data governance, flagging risks before they become incidents, giving you the confidence to fulfil your data responsibilities and embrace AI safely.

We make your data duty of care, clear.

apims.co.uk



Where is it?



Why do you have it?



Who's responsible for it?



How should independent schools respond when online misogyny influences pupils

Legal expert Rebecca Smart, who specialises in youth and serious sexual-offence cases, offers some advice.

Schools are increasingly facing the challenge of misogynistic attitudes among pupils, with degrading language, sexualised comments and threats becoming normalised and too often dismissed as “banter.” Addressing such behaviour effectively is essential. Doing so not only fosters a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment, but also protects a school’s reputation and maintains parental confidence. The issue has taken on added significance following the introduction of the updated Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum in September 2026, which places a greater emphasis on tackling misogyny, challenging harmful online narratives and helping pupils understand the impact of incel culture, pornography and unhealthy attitudes towards consent and relationships.

When does behaviour cross a criminal threshold?

As a solicitor specialising in youth crime and serious sexual offences, I am regularly instructed in cases involving allegations between pupils on school premises. For independent schools, understanding when behaviour risks crossing the criminal threshold is essential. This is not only a safeguarding issue but also a matter of legal risk. Schools may face criticism where harmful behaviour is minimised or inadequately investigated, but equally where matters are escalated unnecessarily, causing disproportionate harm to a child.

Rebecca Smart is a Legal Director in the Criminal Litigation team at Payne Hicks Beach law firm. Visit: www.phb.co.uk

While allegations of sexual assault, physical violence or involvement with prohibited substances may be obvious, many situations are less clear cut.

Importantly, schools are not expected to act as criminal investigator. Their role is to identify when behaviour may have moved beyond a disciplinary matter and requires a safeguarding response, external consultation or referral. Seeking specialist advice at an early stage can help schools strike the right balance between protecting pupils and avoiding the unnecessary criminalisation of children.

The warning signs schools should not ignore

Misogynistic attitudes rarely emerge through a single serious incident. More often, they develop gradually through language, peer-group dynamics and exposure to harmful online content. Independent schools are particularly well placed to identify emerging concerns because of the close pastoral relationships that often exist between staff and pupils.

Warning signs may include the routine use of degrading or sexualised language towards girls, the ranking or objectification of female pupils, repeated references to misogynistic influencers, hostility towards discussions about consent or equality and the normalisation of sexist jokes under the guise of humour. Schools should also be alert to coercive or controlling behaviour in teenage relationships, online harassment and the sharing of

inappropriate content through social media or messaging platforms.

The key is not to view incidents in isolation. Behaviour that may initially appear immature or attention-seeking can, if left unchallenged, become embedded within a wider school culture.

Recording, escalating and investigating concerns

Designated safeguarding leads should be informed where behaviour involves sexual harassment, threats, coercion, online abuse or any indication of harm to another pupil. Consideration should then be given to whether parents should be informed, whether external agencies should be consulted and what immediate measures are required to safeguard those affected.

Schools should avoid both extremes – minimising harmful conduct on the one hand, and rushing immediately to punitive outcomes on the other. Investigations should be fair, proportionate and focused on safeguarding, while ensuring that all parties are treated appropriately.

Engaging constructively with boys influenced by online misogyny

Many independent schools are reporting concerns about boys consuming content from influencers and online communities that promote hostility towards women, rigid gender stereotypes and distorted views of relationships.



Successful interventions tend to focus on education and critical thinking rather than confrontation. Discussions about consent, respect, accountability and healthy masculinity are often more effective than simply condemning particular individuals or online personalities. Many pupils exposed to misogynistic content do not fully understand its implications or recognise the real-world impact of the attitudes being promoted. Early intervention is therefore crucial.

A leadership issue

For independent schools, responding to misogyny must extend beyond the RSHE curriculum. It requires a whole-school approach involving leadership, safeguarding policies, staff training, pupil education and clear behavioural expectations.

Schools that identify concerns early, record them carefully and engage pupils constructively are far better placed to protect their communities and themselves, than those that wait for a serious incident to occur. As schools implement the updated RSHE framework, they have an opportunity not only to meet their safeguarding obligations, but to foster cultures of respect, safety and accountability that benefit every pupil.

Hospitality kitchen officially opens

Milton Abbey School, Dorset, has officially opened its new Old Miltonian Hospitality Kitchen. The new professional-style facility has been designed to inspire students and develop culinary, hospitality and life skills.

The hospitality kitchen was opened at a special ribbon cutting ceremony attended by Milton Abbey Association (MAA) President, Hugo Mieville, Headmaster, Mr James Watson, Chair of Governors, Ian Bromilow and Governor and Old Miltonian, Justin Frampton.

The opening marks the culmination of a fundraising and refurbishment project, made possible through the generosity of

the Milton Abbey community.

The project was launched with a £40,000 donation from the MAA. Milton Abbey pupils subsequently raised a further £12,000 through a variety of individual fundraising challenges during the summer term, while Old Miltonians also contributed. The final contribution came from an anonymous Old Miltonian, whose £18,000 donation enabled the school to reach its overall £70,000 fundraising target.

The result is a purpose-built hospitality and teaching environment designed to give students practical experience in a setting of a professional grade kitchen. The refurbishment has included new electrical, plumbing and gas systems, new flooring, a purpose-built teaching station, plastering and painting and the installation of new kitchen equipment and cookers.

Headmaster Mr James Watson said: "As Milton Abbey marches into the future with its ethos of character education, this kitchen is a key component in preparing our



Pictured: Hugo Mieville cutting the red ribbon with James Watson

students for both everyday life and interesting, future-ready careers."

Head of Hospitality, Mrs Forster, said: "The new kitchen is the culmination of months of hard work, planning and preparation, made possible in large part through the generous financial support of the Old Miltonian Association. Their contribution has helped the school create a modern and versatile commercial-style kitchen and classroom area that will provide students with opportunities to develop skills and experiences that will benefit

them both during their education and long into the future. The new facility will give students the opportunity to work in an environment that closely reflects a professional hospitality kitchen. They will develop practical cookery skills alongside important qualities such as teamwork, organisation, independence and responsibility. These are skills that students can take with them beyond school, whether they are cooking for themselves at university or pursuing a career within the hospitality industry."



Pictured: The build process Photo credit: Milton Abbey School

Advertorial Feature

Professional catering and laundry equipment suppliers

Southern Contracts is one of the UK's leading suppliers of industrial laundry, catering and commercial cleaning equipment.

We work for many schools, colleges and universities as well as other sectors such as care, leisure, offshore and marine and Local Authorities, the NHS and the MoD.

Founded in 1964, we are still family-run today and are proud to have become a global supplier to well-known independent

and national clients. We pride ourselves on delivering the very best products and service to our customers.

By stocking the leading products of commercial washing machines and industrial tumble dryers, cleaning and catering equipment, we are able to offer independent and

unbiased advice to ensure your purchase precisely meets your requirement and budget; our expert team of technical staff are on hand to ensure your business is supported through every aspect of your purchase, from initial advice on current government standards (e.g. infection control for commercial

washing machines and meeting government legislation with regard to kitchen appliances) we understand the importance of minimal disruption to our clients and cover all aspects of installation through to customer training and ongoing maintenance service and repair.

For more information regarding our services for:

• Laundry equipment • Kitchen appliances • Cleaning equipment

Contact us now on: 03301 222888 office@southerncontracts.co.uk www.southerncontracts.co.uk

Follow us on: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn



Building clay courts for the next generation

Queenswood School, Hertfordshire, has recently opened the country's first large-scale Red Plus clay court facility in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association. Director of Tennis at the school, Catherine Sluter, explains why this development is so important not just for their players, but for the wider development and growth of the sport.

Ask any junior coach in Britain where a young player learns to build a point on a slow ball, rather than end it in one shot and the answer is: not many places. Clay courts of real quality, the kind that play the same in a wet March as they do in a hot July, are common across France, Spain and Italy. They have been rare here in the UK. Queenswood already sits among the top schools for girls' tennis in Britain and home to one of the strongest teams in the world for our age group, but leading a field is not the same as closing every gap in it. That is why our partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association matters to me well beyond the ribbon-cutting.

In June, Queenswood opened the country's first large-scale Red Plus clay court facility in partnership with the LTA. Eight brand new courts, built with the support of a £600,000 LTA investment, now form the largest clay court competition venue in the UK

The case for clay is technical, not sentimental. Hard courts, the surface most British juniors grow up on, reward power and short points. Clay does the opposite. It slows the ball, extends the rally and punishes anyone who cannot construct a point patiently. If a

British player wants to compete seriously in Europe, or later on the clay swing of the professional tour, they need years of practice on a surface that will not forgive impatience.

Queenswood could already offer a good deal of this, but the addition makes the offer richer still, 27 all-weather courts in total, eight of which are clay, at a scale that does not exist anywhere else in the country.

I want to be clear about what this facility does and does not do. Eight additional courts do not, on their own, turn Queenswood's players into Wimbledon champions, but what they will do is give our current and future players, and a good number of visiting players from other schools and clubs, somewhere serious to learn a version of tennis that British juniors rarely get enough of.

Queenswood has been near the top of British girls' tennis for a long time and I've been asked whether a project like this is really about reputation or about access. My answer is that reputation and access reinforce each other. A school that already leads in a sport has a responsibility to widen what it offers, not simply defend a ranking. That is part of why the

courts sit inside the Queenswood LTA National Tennis Centre, which already runs coaching, camps and competitions far beyond our own pupils. The new clay extends that reach instead of narrowing it to our first team.

Tennis is, in fact, one of the more gender-balanced sports for children in this country, and the LTA has been working deliberately to keep it that way through initiatives like 'She Rallies'. That is not an excuse for complacency. Girls who play here need coaching, court time and competitive opportunities that match their ambition, not just access in principle and I would rather Queenswood's investment be judged on whether it delivers that than on any national statistic.

One of our Year 12 players, Edie, competed at Junior Wimbledon this summer, having trained throughout on our new clay. I think her progress says more about what these courts are for than any figure I could quote. Clay teaches patience and tactical range in a way that shows up on grass and hard courts too, and that is precisely the kind of development this facility exists to support, for her and for the players coming up behind her.

If I were advising another school



Catherine Sluter

considering a project like this, my first piece of advice would be to be honest with yourselves about whether you are building for your best players or for the widest possible group. Ours is meant to do both, but that only works because it sits inside a wider programme, coaches, strength and conditioning support and an existing culture that treats tennis as a serious pursuit rather than a games-afternoon extra. A court on its own does not build a player; a programme does.

We are proud of what has opened this summer. We are prouder, I hope, of what it will make possible over the next decade, for players most people have not heard of yet, training on a surface that finally matches their ambition.



Pictured: Tennis and campus



Pictured: Tennis at Queenswood



Eventing champion

A pupil from Haberdashers' Monmouth School pupil has been crowned Pony Club National Eventing Champion.

Libby Wenden (Year 10) secured victory with her horse Dunloughlan, a 19-year-old dun-coloured gelding whom has been with the family for the past two years, at the Pony Club National Eventing Championships, competing against some of the country's leading young riders. The achievement capped a season in which she also won both the Pony Club Area 9 Dressage Qualifier and the Pony Club Area 9 Eventing Qualifier.

Pictured: Libby Wenden with her horse Dunloughlan

Earlier this year, Libby also won both of her classes at a schools dressage competition to qualify individually for the National Schools Equestrian Association Championships at Hickstead, while also helping Haberdashers' Monmouth School Equestrian teams secure qualification for national finals.

Libby also claimed victory in the 90cm class at the SEG One Day Event at Dauntsey, Wiltshire, qualifying for the School Equestrian Games Eventing Championships and further cementing her reputation as one of the region's most promising young riders.

1st XV rugby coach appointment



Bedford School has announced that Old Bedfordian and England international, Fraser Dingwall, will return to the school this season to coach their 1st XV rugby squad, committing to a two-year contract.

Fraser, who attended Bedford School between 2013 and 2017, captained the school during his time as a pupil before embarking on a professional career with Northampton Saints. Now an England international with ten caps to his name, he recently committed his future to the Premiership club

Pictured: Fraser Dingwall as Captain of Bedford School 1st XV

by signing a new two-year contract and was named Club Captain.

Speaking about his return to Bedford School, Fraser commented, "Having spent many years here as a pupil myself, it's a real privilege to be coming back and giving something back to a place that played such an important role in my own development, both on and off the field.

I'm really looking forward to the season ahead and to working with the players and coaching staff."

Development programme

Malvern College, Worcestershire, is partnering with Chelsea FC to launch the Midlands' first development programme of its kind, giving talented young footballers the opportunity to pursue an enhanced sporting pathway alongside an independent education.

Available to boys and girls aged 11-18 at Malvern College and The Downs Malvern, the selective programme will be delivered using Chelsea FC coaching methods and staff. It will provide enhanced football coaching, performance support and individual player development alongside Malvern College's academic, pastoral and boarding provision. Pupils will continue to study for GCSEs, A Levels or the International Baccalaureate, with their football development integrated into their wider education.

Pupils accepted onto the programme will benefit from a weekly development schedule including technical and tactical coaching, strength

and conditioning, speed and agility development, recovery and mobility, sports psychology, nutrition, leadership and resilience workshops, together with individual player development, match analysis and performance feedback. They will continue to represent Malvern College or The Downs Malvern in school fixtures while also accessing additional development opportunities where appropriate.

Unlike a traditional full-time football academy, pupils will remain fully immersed in every aspect of school life. The programme has been designed to complement, rather than replace, the broader educational experience.

The Chelsea FC Development Programme will initially be available as a pilot to selected current pupils from January 2027, with applications open now for new pupils joining Malvern College and The Downs Malvern from September 2027.

Some Sports Scholarships will



Pictured: Girls Football at Malvern College



Pictured: Football at Malvern College

be available at 11+, 13+ and 16+, recognising pupils who demonstrate exceptional sporting ability and potential. Families

requiring financial assistance are also being encouraged to enquire about the college's means-tested bursary programme.

Growing girls' cricket

Over the last few years girls' cricket at Prior's Field School, Surrey, has seen significant growth both within the curriculum and through their co-curricular programme. Director of Studies at the school, Sam Garvey, takes a look at the journey the school has been on to embed a culture where all girls not only play but enjoy the sport.



When I arrived at Prior's Field five years ago, cricket played a relatively small role in girls' sport here. The decision had been made the previous year to move from rounders to softball cricket in both the curriculum and team sports. Since then, a significant journey has taken place which now means cricket is one of the most popular activities across the whole school, with sustained success at softball county level and unprecedented participation. Competition victories and individual triumphs have of course been memorable, but the real success has been the embedding of a culture where all girls can play, excel in and most importantly, enjoy cricket.

The vision at the start of this journey was to provide all students with access to a rapidly growing sport nationally and where female cricketers were becoming role models. We were lucky enough to have an ex-player on our PE staff at the time who was the driving force

both in terms of enthusiasm and expertise. Introducing something new always provides its challenges but upskilling all relevant staff, getting non-PE staff onboard all the way up to leadership, and exposing all girls to the sport in the curriculum allowed us to overcome this easily, alongside great enthusiasm from students. They saw that this was not just swapping one summer sport for another but providing them with greater opportunities. Our 2023 cricket tour to Manchester inspired more students to play hardball and none of the girls will forget their opportunity to be coached at the Old Trafford facilities, meet Lancashire women's top players at the time, and attend an Ashes fixture.

Integrating the sport into the curriculum was an enjoyable and fun project for the PE department and provided CPD opportunities for those who had not delivered cricket before; it is now delivered by every member of the department throughout the summer term.

Wanting to quickly introduce hardball alongside softball has come with greater challenge in terms of investment, facilities and expertise. However, our Parents Association have been fantastic in supporting this by funding two indoor cricket lanes as well as a bowling machine. Having such facilities and then coupling this with close links to a local club who provided expert coaching, has allowed us to support competitive, high performing players as well as beginners, and our early morning winter nets sessions have gone from strength to strength in this regard. Seeing accomplished players coaching

and supporting complete beginners in the nets with a hardball has been a particular highlight of mine and cricket does seem to provide a particularly inclusive and supportive environment.

Alongside the broad development of cricket and an associated culture has come notable success for both teams and individuals. We have now been U15 Surrey Schools Softball Champions for five consecutive years which is a superb achievement and shows the dedication to improvement our students have shown. 80% of those participating in this year's success had never played cricket in any form before they came to Prior's Field and yet they have been able to sufficiently develop the many skills required for cricket success to achieve this. As participation has rapidly increased, performances have followed. Alongside this has been hardball success. Our U15 hardball captain was the first ever girl to score a century for her club; we saw our first ever half-century scored by a Prior's Field student with a beautiful knock of 56 not out, we beat a well-established cricketing school on their own turf, and we have several students now on County pathways.

But more important than these achievements has been the building of a cricket culture and a visible, tangible joy that the sport brings to students, staff and parents throughout the summer term. Participation levels are exceptional; at least half of every year group picks cricket as a co-curricular activity, with this number rising to 75% in some year groups. More and more students have committed

to playing cricket outside of school at their local clubs than ever before off the back of their enjoyment in school- we are lucky to have a lot of inclusive local clubs with a lot of opportunities for girls such as Farncombe Cricket Club, Chiddingfold Cricket Club and Blackheath Cricket Club, and long may these opportunities remain.

I have also been very proud of the way students have given back to cricket through activities such as volunteer coaching of young players at their clubs on a Friday evening and through our Sports Leaders programme with local state schools at Prior's Field; the girls understand how the opportunities they have had have benefitted them and want others to experience the same enjoyment of cricket. One of our students was even a flag bearer at the recent Women's one day international semi-final at The Oval having been nominated by her club.

I am, though, incredibly proud of what we have achieved as a whole community to this point; it really has been a team effort across school from staff, parents, local clubs, coaches and of course our fabulous students. While the growth of cricket at Prior's Field over the past few years has exceeded expectations, there is still more to do. As increasing numbers of students embrace hardball cricket, a key long-term ambition is the development of a dedicated hardball pitch on site. Achieving this will require careful planning, investment and the right facilities, but it represents the next exciting step in a journey that has already transformed the sport at the school.



Pictured: Girls cricket at Prior's Field

Nottinghamshire Cricket Academy Player of the Year

A Year 13 student at Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire, Joshua Beer, has been awarded Player of the Year by the Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club Academy.

Joshua was awarded the Charles Vernon Price Memorial Plate at Nottinghamshire and The Blaze's End of Season Awards following a

season which saw him register over 1,000 runs across all under-18s cricket in 2026.

Based at Trent Bridge, the Academy's elite talent pathway is designed to help aspiring athletes transition into the world of professional cricket.

Joshua is also part of Loughborough Schools Foundation's Cricket Player Pathway Programme which aims to provide young players with an insight into the demands of professional sport. Participants benefit from a package of support including specialist strength and conditioning sessions, nutrition and athlete lifestyle advice alongside the development of time management and self-discipline skills to maintain sustained academic excellence.



Pictured: Joshua Beer

Scotland internationals join forces



It has been announced that former Scotland rugby captain, Greig Laidlaw, is to come to Merchiston Castle School and work alongside Scotland internationals Magnus Bradbury and Jamie Dobie.

Led by new Director of Rugby and High Performance, Jack Moran, the coaching team brings current and former international experience directly into the school's rugby programme.

For Bradbury and Dobie, the new role brings their rugby journeys full circle. Both developed their game at Merchiston before progressing into professional rugby and representing Scotland, and are now sharing that experience with the next generation coming through the school.

Director of Sport and Activities at Merchiston and former Scotland international, Nick De Luca, said: "Every new term brings new talent through our doors, from boys

beginning their rugby journey at 8 to those preparing to take their next step beyond school. We have a proud track record of developing players who go on to the professional game, including the likes of Magnus and Jamie, and more recently being involved in Jake Dalziel's journey as he made the move to Newcastle Red Bulls' senior academy this year.

"But success isn't only about producing professional players. It's not simply about spotting talent; it's about developing all the talent a player has and helping them reach their potential. It's about developing resilience, discipline and ambition in every boy. Having coaches who know first-hand what it takes to reach the highest level – to handle pressure, overcome setbacks and thrive is incredibly powerful. Not just for sport, but for life."

Pictured: Merchiston Castle School rugby coaching team

Football partnership



Woodhouse Grove School, West Yorkshire, has announced a partnership with Chelsea Football Club.

At the heart of the partnership is the launch of a new Football Specialism programme, designed to provide young players with access to elite coaching, development opportunities and industry-leading support.

From September 2027, boys and girls will be able to join the programme in Years 9 and 12, with both boarding and day places available. Applications will open in September 2026.

Pictured: Football at Woodhouse Grove School

The partnership also complements the school's expanding specialist sports offering, including the Grove Golf Academy.

Bradford City AFC also continues to be a valued partner of Woodhouse Grove. The education of academy scholars, the use of school facilities and collaborative work with the club will continue exactly as before. This new relationship with Chelsea FC is complementary, creating additional opportunities for young people within existing football provision.

ACE
PADEL COURTS

Padel: A Smarter Investment for Schools

Expand your school's sports provision. Generate new income. Make use of underutilised space.

Padel is an inclusive, easy to pick up sport that encourages teamwork and communication. Enhance your curriculum with a great addition to your school's facilities.

- 🔸 **Diversify income** and improve long-term sustainability with a padel centre.
- 🔸 **Speak to us** about a range of business models tailored to suit your site, resources and objectives.
- 🔸 Create a **long-term asset** that benefits your school and enhances community engagement.
- 🔸 Show that your school is investing in **innovative, modern sports development**.
- 🔸 Speak to us about our multi sports court. **Future proof** your investment and create resilience in the long-term.

Sport. Community. Income.
One Smart Investment

info@acepadelcourts.com
0207 689 7500

CEO appointment

Intellego Education has appointed Christopher Stacey as their Chief Executive Officer.

Christopher joins Intellego following more than 15 years of leadership in international education, including senior roles at Cambridge Education Group and most recently as Group CEO of CATS Global Schools.

Intellego schools currently include Brighton College Madrid, Brighton



Christopher Stacey

College Rome, Brighton College Lison, St John's Beaumont Windsor and Core International Rome.

Deputy Rector appointment

Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow, has appointed Dr Lucy Hay as its new Deputy Rector.

Dr Hay has more than 30 years of experience in education, having held teaching, pastoral and leadership positions at settings including George Watson's College, Edinburgh, St Columba's School, Inverclyde, and Edinburgh Academy, as well as spending time teaching in Chicago at the North Shore Country Day School.

Dr Hay, who started her career in science, studied pharmacology at the University of Aberdeen



Dr Lucy Hay

before completing her doctorate in Pharmaceuticals. However, a long attraction to education led her to retrain as a teacher. She began in her new role at the start of term in August.

Welcoming a new Warden



A new Warden has been installed at Glenalmond College, Perth.

Mrs Jenny Davey, who has worked at Glenalmond since 2009, was formally installed in September.

The service in the College Chapel was led by the Most Revd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. He was joined by the Rt Revd Ian Paton, Bishop of St Andrews,

Dunkeld and Dunblane, and by the school's board, staff, pupils, parents, alumni and guests.

Bishop Strange said: "I was delighted to be at Glenalmond to continue the tradition of a new Warden being installed by the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Bringing together spiritual life and learning is as important as ever in this changing world."

Pictured: Glenalmond College Warden installation



CReSTeD

How good is your provision for pupils with SpLD?

We exist to help you find out and then we tell parents.

We offer:

- For your school: a visit by an SpLD expert to assess your provision
- For parents: a free Register of schools accredited for their Learning Support Provision







Contact CReSTeD via email: admin@crested.org.uk

Or visit our website: www.crested.org.uk

Registered Charity no. 1052103

Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic pupils

Heads Hunted

Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

Alleyn's Hampstead Nursery & Junior School	London
Ashford School	Kent
Bromsgrove School Winterfold	Worcestershire
Roedean School	East Sussex
Saint Felix School	Suffolk
St John's School, Leatherhead	Surrey
St Paul's Cathedral School	London

If you would like mention made of your upcoming head or principal appointment for which applications are sought please let us know – there is no charge for a listing.

News items, contributions, comments and suggestions are always welcomed by the editor.

Please email:
mail@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk



The Independent Schools Magazine online



This magazine, and back issues, are available to read online or download, visit:

www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk/view-issues.html

You can receive notification of future issues as soon as they are published

– simply register your email address here: www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

(Your email address will never be sold on or otherwise made available to third parties and you can cancel at any time.)

There is no charge for these online eMagazines, thanks to the support of:

**Practical technology for
awkward problems.**



01235 251 531

**CODE
FANDANGO.COM**
INDEPENDENT SOFTWARE AND SYSTEMS CONSULTANCY

Bring your school's walls to life®

Wall Art.

By Promote Your School



BRING PADEL TO YOUR SCHOOL
LET YOUR STUDENTS ENJOY THE UK'S
FASTEST GROWING SPORT!

© acepadelcourts.com info@acepadelcourts.com



ADVERTISE WITH US

Unrivalled Print & Digital Opportunities

Visit www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk for our Media Pack.

Call Sean McKeon 01242 259249 or email ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk



The Independent Schools Magazine

Vires per Verum – Strength through Truth

The Independent Schools Magazine is read by decision-makers – Governors, Heads, Bursars, Departmental Managers – and reflects news, ideas, influences, and opinions in the independent education sector. A personal printed copy is mailed to heads and other key personnel in fee-paying independent schools plus opinion formers in government, political parties and educational associations. It is also available as a free eMagazine and online.

Editorial Advisory Board

The publishers are grateful for the interest, advice and support of a distinguished Editorial Advisory Board whose members currently include:

Elisabeth Lewis-Jones: a governor of Bloxham School, Oxfordshire; 2008 President of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Director of Liquid Public Relations, a consultancy with expertise within the education sector

Emily Roberts: Communications Officer, Independent Schools Council (ISC)

Darren O'Connor: Partner specialising in independent schools and not-for-profits at Accountants and Business Advisors James Cowper Kreston

Alex Beynon: Media Co-ordinator, Independent Schools Council (ISC)

Will Dixon: Chief Operating Officer at Lord Wandsworth College, Hampshire

Jesse Elzinga: Head, Sevenoaks School, Kent

Ceri Jones: Head, Caterham School, Surrey

Deborah Leek-Bailey OBE: Head of Independent schools, Education Development Trust; Education Advisor Child Bereavement UK; Consultant DLB Leadership

Natalie Sanderson: Managing Director of Sublime Public Relations – journalist and independent PR specialist with particular expertise in the independent education sector

Advertising Sales & Accounts:

Sean McKeon, Fellows Media Ltd, The Gallery,
Manor Farm, Southam, Cheltenham GL52 3PB
T: 01242 259249
E: ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Editor & Publisher, Distribution:

Angharad Jones T: 01635 201125
E: editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Design Studio/Pre-press Production, Website:

Andrew Wicks T: 01635 201125
E: studio@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Consultant:

Kimble Earl
E: consultant@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

The Independent Schools Magazine
Serif House
Blake Road, Hermitage
Berkshire, RG18 9WN

eMagazine: Free, please register at:

www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

All rights reserved. Any form of reproduction of this magazine in part or whole is prohibited without the written consent of the publisher. Any views expressed by advertisers or contributors may not be those of the publisher. Unsolicited artwork, manuscripts and images are accepted by the publisher on the understanding that the publisher cannot be held responsible for loss or damage however caused. All material, copy, and artwork supplied is assumed to be copyright free unless otherwise advised in writing. Advertisement bookings are accepted subject to normal terms and conditions – see website.

The Independent Schools Magazine is published by ISM Publishing Ltd
Reg in England No. 15757051 © Copyright ISM Publishing Ltd

Printed by Micropress Printers, Reydon, Suffolk.



TAILORED, NOT UNIFORM

We work in partnership to forge strong relationships to truly understand your school's community and what sets it apart.

Creating uniforms that students are happy and proud to wear.

Call us on 0113 238 9520 or email info@perryuniform.co.uk
perryuniform.co.uk

Perry
UNIFORM