



In this issue...



Wellbeing and Grit Festival

In a day dedicated to mental health, mindfulness and wellbeing, St Swithun's School, Hampshire, has held a Wellbeing and Grit festival – featuring workshops, activities and a special appearance by pop artist and author of 'Be Yourself and Happier: The A-Z of Wellbeing', Will Young, who gave a talk before taking part in a Q&A hosted by sixthform students.

The festival opened with a performance, Q&A and autograph session from band The Entitled Sons, who shared their advice and stories on bullying and mental health.

Girls then visited different zones around the school grounds, each promoting a different aspect of wellbeing.

Prep students had the opportunity to explore wellbeing tools with sessions in breathwork, hypnotherapy, mindfulness and vision boarding before bouncing across the field in zorbs and enjoying an inflatable obstacle course. The petting zoo, complete with alpaca walking, was a highlight for all students.

Back in the senior school, girls enjoyed a twist on the traditional HYROX with Swithrox – a combination of running and functional workouts to push and challenge them – as well as a sensory walk and a dancing session.

Pictured: Prep pupils with Mrs Nicole Miller at the Wellbeing Festival

Cover background

The sporting landscape

Why does football belong at the heart of schools? To find out more about this and the development of a new sports festival created for smaller schools to make connections, see our sport feature on pages 59 to 66.

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Is your school mentioned? Schools featured in this issue include:

Abbot's Hill School; Abingdon House School; Akeley Wood School; Ashville College; Ballard School; Banstead Prep School; The Beacon School; Bolton School; Bredon School; Bromsgrove School; Bryanston; Burgess Hill Girls; Cheltenham College; City of London School; Clifton Lodge, London; Croydon High School; Cumnor House School for Boys & Cumnor House School for Girls; Dame Allan's Schools; Denstone College; Dorset House Prep; Downside School; Duncombe School; Edgeborough School; Ellesmere College; Embley; Exeter School; Felsted School; Framlingham College; George Watson's College; Gordonstoun; Haberdashers' Monmouth School; Hendon Prep School; Hereford Cathedral School; Holme Grange; Huddersfield Grammar School; Hydesville Tower School; Kelvinside Academy; Kimbolton School; King's Worcester; Leighton Park School; Leweston School; Huddersfield Grammar School; Hydesville Tower School; Foundation; Malvern College; Meoncross School; Milbourne Lodge School; New Hall School; Newcastle High School for Girls; Newland House School; Oakfields Prep School, Essex; Pocklington School; Quinton House School; Ratcliffe College Prep; Repton Prep; Repton School; RGS The Grange; The River School; Rosemead Preparatory School and Nursery; Royal Grammar School Newcastle; Rugby School; Russell House School; School; School; Sevenoaks School; Solihull School; Stephen Perse Foundation; Stonyhurst College; St Alban's School; St Andrew's Prep, East Sussex; St. Andrew's School; St Gerard's School; St Margarets Prep School, Essex; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; St Michael's Prep, Kent; St Neot's Prep; St Nicholas' School; St Swithur's School; Taunton School; Ursuline Prep School, Warley; Warminster School; Westholme School; Wrekin College; Wycliffe College Prep; Wycombe Abbey; Yarm Prep School.

How Al is transforming independent school admissions

Parents are increasingly using Al as part of the school search process. But how should admissions and marketing teams be responding to that? Director of External Affairs at George Watson's College, Edinburgh, Jane Wilson, discusses.

Anna is moving to a new city and is searching for an independent school for her 11-year-old daughter - a bright, musical child who currently benefits from dyslexia support and thrives in smaller, nurturing environments. Her list of criteria includes a strong music programme, learning support, small class sizes, affordable fees and a location within 30 minutes of home. And on top of that, the school culture has to 'feel' right so she has a list of phrases and words she looks for on websites and in prospectuses.

Even just a few years ago this could have meant hours - if not days - spent researching websites and prospectuses, poring over social feeds and calling admissions

Today, Anna simply asks a generative Al assistant to do the work for her. Within minutes. she has a tailored shortlist, fee comparisons, and excerpts from parent reviews. The Al assistant will possibly even ask if she'd like all of this in a language and format that is appropriate for her 11-year-old child. For families like Anna's, Al platforms - like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot - are streamlining what was once a daunting and time-consuming process at the start of the search for a new school, allowing them to ask complex, highly specific questions and receive instant, personalised answers. With the announcement in July that OpenAl is launching its own browser, this trend is set to continue.

What's more, this shift in the search process is arriving at a time when the cost of independent education has risen significantly

- faster than wage inflation over the past decade. As a result, more parents are approaching school selection with a 'customer mindset' first and a 'parent mindset' second. They want value, fit, and clarity - and increasingly, they're using Al tools to find it.

Rethinking school marketing and admissions

As Al becomes a more important part of the parent journey, marketing and admissions strategies need to evolve to optimise content for Al discovery or 'Generative Engine Optimisation' (GEO) as it is becoming known.

Unlike SEO (search engine optimisation), which aims to boost rankings in traditional search engine results pages (SERPs), GEO is about ensuring your content gets cited, referenced, or integrated into Al-generated answers. The following simple considerations will help:

1. Consistency, accuracy and repetition

Whatever you want to say about your school, say it often, with consistent language and across multiple platforms. The content on your own website and other third-party sites should be wellwritten, up to date and presented in a way that is easy for the Large Language Models (LLMs) that power Al assistants like ChatGPT to understand and use in the answers to prompts about your school.

This will keep your most important messages at the forefront for GEO (and of course good old-fashioned SEO).

What might this look like in practice? Your school is shortlisted

for an award in the category of performing arts excellence. Your performance programme is one of your key selling points in admissions. To promote the award, use consistent language from your school's key messages and proposition (here's a tip - make sure you have a clear proposition, stories and key messages that are used across the school). Use these to write a blog by your head of drama on the school website, promote the blog on your social channels, and send an email to key stakeholders that includes your key messages at the top with easy-to-share content that they can use on their own channels. And finally, promote it in sector or local media to get coverage that gives you a second bite at the digital cherry, sharing links to the coverage with prospective parents. This last point about media is really important as it's no longer just about the audience of the media itself. Media coverage has an intrinsic value in GEO.

A recent report from marketing

2. The value of earned media

consultancy Hard Numbers found that, on average, earned media sources were cited 61% of the time by ChatGPT when responding to questions about the reputation of 100 of the world's largest brands. Similarly, SEO software provider Ahrefs looked at the factors which most strongly correlate with a brand appearing within Google Al Overviews. The most common factor was "branded web mentions" - which can be better understood as mentions of your school on third-

So, prioritise getting consistent, easy-to-read content that reflects your core proposition not only on

party websites.



your own channels but also on third-party websites and media.

3. Tailored messaging for specific needs

Because Al allows for personalised searching, families often ask questions about very specific needs and interests. Schools must respond with messaging that speaks directly to those needs. Rather than one generic narrative, develop modular content that can be repurposed across platforms - short videos, testimonials, blog posts, and staff Q&As that reflect diverse aspects of school life, using plain, jargon-free language.

A new era of discovery Generative Al is not replacing the human elements of school choice or the importance of human interaction and brilliant visit experiences, but it is reshaping how and when those moments happen. Parents now arrive at open days with highly informed expectations. Many have already formed impressions based on digital content curated by Al tools.

For marketing and admissions professionals, this means rethinking not just what is said - but how and where it's said. Schools that embrace Al's potential while also telling compelling stories and providing a first-class service to prospective parents will be better placed to connect with the right families, at the right time and in the right

Kind, Aware, Ready Leadership: a framework for challenging conversations

As a leader, handling difficult conversations is a fact of life, but how best to approach them? Deputy Head Academic, Glenn Bezalel, and Deputy Head Pastoral, Alice Martineau, from the City of London School, outline how the school values frame their approach to professional relationships and offer five top tips for navigating challenging conversations.

Every leader has been there. It may be line managing an underperformer we're particularly fond of; having to deal with a brilliant but abrasive teacher who intimidates other colleagues; or recognising that you can no longer turn a blind eye to a member of staff who consistently turns in their work past the set deadline. Such challenging conversations are part and parcel of leadership and management but make many of us flinch as we grapple with how best to broach the issue – or not.

While there are many inspiring approaches to leadership, we wish to offer the definition given by Bill Bradley, a former US Senator and New York Knicks basketball player: "Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better." Whatever your level of leadership, the best leaders internalise this fundamental principle and confront the discomfort of challenging directly. The best organisations are those where such a culture pervades and each of us recognises our responsibilities in helping others get better. This has to be the starting point for turning any challenging conversation into an opportunity for growth.

At City of London School, our school values – Kind, Aware, Ready – frame our professional relationships. This is true not just in our responsibilities towards our pupils but also in how we unlock our colleagues' potential to become better.

Kind

Kind means that relationships come first. To be effective as leaders, we have to genuinely care for the people in our teams. And this means caring for them as people rather than simply as colleagues. There would clearly be something lacking in a relationship that doesn't take into account a personal bereavement or ongoing stress that is keeping a colleague up at night. Conversely, it is so important we're there to celebrate successes - both personal and professional. None of us are only members of staff; we all appreciate the warm, human dimension that is sadly too often lacking in the workplace.

At the same time, it is crucial to remember that being kind is not the same as being nice. As former tech CEO Steve Vamos writes (Harvard Business Review, 2025): "Unfortunately, being a great people manager is not about being a friend or being liked by everyone all the time. People want a boss who cares about them and helps them get their job done." Although it may be easier to ignore problems and pretend all is fine when it isn't, that isn't the kind thing to do. Short-term gains will soon be outweighed by long-term headaches - for both you and your colleagues. You can't possibly unlock someone's potential to become better if they are led to believe that bad work is good enough. Just as we would be failing our pupils if we didn't offer them honest, if challenging, feedback on how to improve, so too do we need to balance praise with clear guidance for a truly kind approach.

Aware

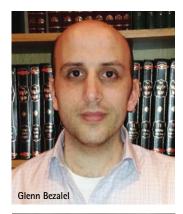
In their classic work 'Leadership on the Line' (2002), Harvard professors

Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky offer the metaphor of the dance floor and the balcony. Coming into work every day and teaching in the classroom is like being on the dance floor, as we focus on the here and now, interacting with those around us. This is necessary but, by definition, limiting. Every so often we need to step off the dance floor and get up on the balcony to gain a full awareness, see the whole picture of what's really happening. Such a bird's eye view helps us see who feels left out and unfulfilled, allowing us to be proactive and ready to step in and help correct the situation.

Indeed, reactive leadership isn't good enough, especially when it only comes into play when something goes wrong. Being aware means understanding what motivates our staff, being interested in their development, and seeking the practical means to support them. If a teacher wants to remain in the classroom and not climb up the management ladder, we need to show awareness by helping them become the best teacher they can be, rather than insist on their taking up leadership courses.

Ready

Be prepared and precise by focusing on the issue at hand rather than the person. This demonstrates respect and, it is to be hoped, will be repaid in kind. A coaching style that helps your colleagues probe any underlying issues and draw out the answers for themselves is particularly effective. This means practising how you frame your questions, offering them a chance to open up





about why their performance has been disappointing, rather than simply feeding them the answers.

As Kim Scott reminds us in her book 'Radical Candor' (2017), we need to put "care personally" and "challenge directly" together so that colleagues know, however harsh the feedback, it is ultimately because we as leaders are trying to help them.

Five top tips for challenging conversations:

- Internalise that your leadership is about unlocking people's potential to become better.
- 2. Relationships come first: demonstrate your humanity before challenging their work.
- 3. Being kind is not the same as being nice.
- 4. Be proactive, prepared and precise.
- 5. Timing is key for showing you care.

Unlocking the power of coaching and learning conversations in education

Education never stands still – pedagogies shift, policies evolve, and classrooms thrum with the chaos (ahem, energy) of young minds at work. In a profession where change is the only constant, the need for teachers and leaders to develop, reflect, and grow is more pressing than ever. But how do we make this happen without drowning in yet another wave of CPD PowerPoints? Enter coaching, mentoring, and the often-overlooked magic of the learning conversation.

For many, coaching and mentoring are those indefinable concepts thrown around in staff meetings, right up there with 'growth mindset' and 'cross-curricular links'. But when done properly, their impact is transformative. Coaching helps individuals unlock their potential through goal-setting and reflection, while mentoring draws on experience to provide guidance and support. Both require a careful mix of challenge and encouragement, structure and fluidity. When schools embed these approaches into their culture, they go from being another 'initiative' to a fundamental driver of improvement.

Transforming observations through coaching

An often underappreciated benefit of coaching in education is how it

can transform lesson observations from isolated, high-stakes encounters into collaborative, developmental conversations. Too often, staff feel that observations are 'done to' teachers – an exercise in performance management rather than an opportunity for true professional growth. However, when reframed through the lens of coaching, observations shift from scrutiny to support and reflection.

With basic, focused coach training, teachers can confidently step into the observer or coaching role, understanding that the goal is not to evaluate but to enquire and empower. In this context, the observation process becomes an opportunity for teachers to engage in meaningful reflection, explore possibilities, and refine their practice. Drawing on models such as Jim Knight's 'Partnership Principles' and instructional coaching frameworks, educators can cultivate a culture where observations are framed as learning conversations conversations that foster insight, not

One simple but highly effective approach to facilitate this shift is to utilise an 'ask, then offer' model. This method, outlined by Executive Education Leadership coach, Charlie Warshawski encourages coaches

to begin by asking open-ended, reflective questions that prompt the observed teacher to think deeply about their lesson. What went well? What challenges emerged? What might they do differently next time? Only after this reflective space is created does the coach offer insights or suggestions - ensuring that any advice is rooted in the teacher's own reflections and goals. This approach acknowledges that lasting change happens when teachers take ownership of their growth. Reflective questioning, as discussed in Costa and Garmston's 'Cognitive Coaching', deepens thinking and strengthens professional autonomy, while GCI's (Growth Coaching International) model highlights the importance of building trust and enquiry before introducing suggestions.

The coaching trio: A practical structure for school leaders

So, how do we make coaching practical rather than just another well-intentioned and abandoned initiative? One effective approach is the 'coaching trio' model. Think of it as a blend of peer support, accountability, and just enough structure to prevent it from descending into a weekly moan about workload.

This approach, deliberately kept

separate from the appraisal process (because no one wants their self-improvement journey turned into a performance review), ensures professional growth is built on collaboration rather than scrutiny. Over a term, teachers engage in structured cycles of observation, feedback, and reflection, helping both themselves and the wider school community.

How it works:

- Teachers work in groups of three, focusing on an area relevant to the school's strategic development plan (SDP).
- Each member researches and shares insights related to their chosen focus, while their peers ask coaching or Socratic questions designed to explore possible approaches.
- They engage in peer observation, offering questions solely on the agreed focus and avoiding personal interpretation or judgement.
- Reflections and insights are then shared with the wider staff body to promote school-wide learning and encourage self-discovery.

How it could be structured, with flexibility built in:

Weeks 1-2: Agree on focus areas and research supporting strategies.

Inaugural FelstEducate Conference

Teachers from schools across East Anglia have come together at Felsted School, Essex, for a day of seminars and workshops relating to professional development.

The first 'FelstEducate – Teach Meet' event was themed 'Knowing the Child' and offered a carousel of seminars on topics ranging from the importance of sleep for optimising cognitive performance and wellbeing, to relational practice, adaptive teaching and a coaching approach.

At a networking lunch, delegates shared practices relating to supporting pupils with English as an additional language as well as mental health first aid, and discussions on how the education sector might best respond to developments in Al.

This was followed by a keynote speech by Dick Moore, whose examination of the realities of ill mental and emotional health, while emphasising the power of relationships teachers build with their students, was simultaneously "laugh out loud" and tragic.

The afternoon offered a chance for staff from HMC (The Heads' Conference) to discuss one of two topics – matters relating to psychology or special educational needs. Meanwhile, a seminar for

remaining delegates outlined
Felsted's progress in assessment,
including the path members of
staff have taken to becoming
Assessment Leads with EvidenceBased Education, as well as
tasters of the core professional
development programme for
teachers being launched at Felsted
next year.

Felsted's Director of Teacher Development, Emily Predabon, said: "Sharing ideas and the latest practices is crucial if we are to ensure that education keeps pace with the modern world and continues to offer our pupils the support they need to make the



most of their learning. We are looking forward to hosting more FelstEducate events next year."

FelstEducate is part of Felsted's ambition to provide a regional hub for teachers. The school was one of the first in the country to launch its own bespoke Early Careers Teachers (ECT) programme in 2022.

Deputy Head at Banstead Prep, Surrey, and Fellow at the Chartered College of Teaching, Lisa Crook, considers the transformative impact coaching, mentoring and learning conversations can have and why they are essential tools for professional growth.

Weeks 3-4: Plan collaboratively and trial strategies in lessons.

Weeks 5–6: Conduct initial observations and apply coaching approaches.

Weeks 7–8: Continue testing ideas and refining approaches.

Weeks 9-10: Share findings with staff and embed successful practices.

When paired with models like the 'ask, then offer' approach, coaching trios become even more impactful. Teachers can engage in peer observation that is genuinely focused on growth, with questioning that deepens thinking and creates space for reflection before any suggestions are offered. This small but significant shift ensures that professional development remains teacher-led, fostering a sense of ownership and motivation.

Creating a culture of reflection and risk-taking

Feedback from those using this

model has been positive, with teachers reporting:

- A newfound safe space for risktaking, allowing them to trial new strategies without fear of judgement.
- A boost in collegiality and professional dialogue, making CPD feel relevant rather than imposed.
- A culture of reflective practice, ensuring that improvements are sustainable rather than one-off lightbulb moments that fizzle out under marking deadlines.

By embedding this approach within the school environment, coaching trios report a shift in teaching culture – more reflective, more collaborative, and refreshingly research-informed. Teachers become more willing to take risks, experiment with student-led learning, and rethink traditional classroom structures. Observations from participants include:

- Greater autonomy and ownership over professional development.
- Increased cross-phase collaboration, breaking down silos between departments.
- A renewed focus on active learning and pupil engagement.
- Higher expectations of students, leading to improved classroom dynamics.

Sustaining the momentum
To keep coaching trios from
becoming just another "great idea
we tried once", schools can refine
their approach by:

- Rotating coaching groups to ensure fresh perspectives and prevent stagnation.
- Developing a shared resource hub to document successful strategies and build a bank of best practice.
- Introducing more directed research elements to deepen discussions and keep them evidence-based.



 Ensuring coaching remains distinct from performance management, protecting its role as a supportive, developmental tool rather than a mechanism for judgement.

Coaching as an impactful way of being

The ultimate goal? A school culture where coaching, mentoring, and learning conversations aren't seen as addons or luxuries but as essential tools for professional growth. When coaching is woven into the fabric of a school, it stops feeling like extra work and starts feeling like the way things are done. And in a world where teachers are asked to do more with less, surely anything that makes professional learning feel meaningful and sustainable is worth embracing.

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Satellite launch

Pupils from Croydon High School, Surrey, have taken a major step towards achieving their dream to become the first all-girls school in the world to design, build and launch a satellite into space.

The final stage of Phase 2 of Mission Pegasus took place on 1 July 2025, at FAAM Airborne Laboratory aircraft, Cranfield University, when the student-led Astrogazers team conducted live flight testing of their CubeSat systems.

This milestone marks the culmination of a year of lab and remote testing, including work at the Surrey Space Centre and the

installation of a remote sensor station on the school roof.

After months of planning, the final preparations went according to plan and a member of the team travelled on board the FAAM Airborne Laboratory aircraft to carry out live flight testing of their CubeSat's systems.

The team successfully retrieved the data from the CubeSat and will now begin processing and analysing it alongside the measurements collected by FAAM's research aircraft during the flight. By comparing the two datasets, the Astrogazers team aims to validate their results.



Croydon High's Astrogazers now look ahead to Phases 3 and 4, which involve the engineering model build and securing a rocket

launch partner. They are now seeking sponsorship to help fund the construction of the final flight-ready satellite using space-grade materials.

Transforming access and outcomes for SEND students with a 'technology diet'

Abingdon House Senior School, London, was recently awarded the TES 2025 Award for Best Use of Technology. This was in response to their implementation of a 'technology diet' approach at the school. But what is a technology diet? Digital Education Lead at the school, Peter Reeves, explains all.

Abingdon House School (AHS) is a specialist school for children aged 5-19 with a range of unique learning profiles and needs, including those associated with autism and dyslexia.

We embrace technology to personalise learning and remove barriers to success - an essential part of promoting positive long-term outcomes for our students.

Developing 'technology diets'

Recognising the unique challenges faced by students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), we identified a gap in research and practice around when and how to apply accessibility features to support learning. To address this, we pioneered the creation of 'technology diets'.

Our approach involved assessing each student's handwriting, typing and voice typing capabilities through a three-minute writing sample for each method, using an image of their choice as a context for writing. We then used these baseline snapshots to compare students' writing ability across the three methods.



We combined these insights with student preferences, teacher observations and data from standardised assessments in reading, writing and spelling. We also factored in information from education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and medical reports, to capture needs relating to sight, hearing and motor function. This holistic evaluation allowed us to create our personalised technology diets - bespoke recommendations

outlining each student's most efficient way of working.

Student 2

Tools: Voice Typing, Screen Reader, Typing

Overlay: 3498db with ffff00 reading light





In the classroom, visual reminders help reinforce these recommendations. Stickers on Chromebooks (see illustration above) serve as constant prompts for both students and staff, ensuring everyone remains aware of the best approach for each learner. Our data shows the variety of learning methods preferred by students with joint learning approaches that can include voice typing, typing, handwriting, screen readers and coloured overlays:

- 1 student uses handwriting exclusively.
- 33 students use a joint approach that includes handwriting.
- 58 students use a joint approach that does not involve handwriting.
- 9 students rely primarily on voice

Establishing non-negotiables for setting work

These technology diets have transformed how we design and deliver learning. A core principle is that all work must be digitally accessible at all times - there is no room for instructions like "Just do a worksheet by hand," which risks excluding students from engaging fully in learning.

Consequently, we established universal expectations for all learning materials. Developed collaboratively by the Senior Leadership Team and teachers and therapists, these standards ensure that materials are readable, structured, engaging and accessible. Measures include:

- use of pastel backgrounds to reduce visual fatigue
- large fonts (size 12 or above) in

- clear, dyslexia-friendly typefaces such as Arial, Verdana, Lexend and Comic Sans
- left-aligned text for improved readability
- visual timetables
- · a variety of activities, including independent tasks, paired and group work, speaking and listening opportunities, and hands-on experiences

These standards are embedded in pre-designed templates for presentations and resources, saving teachers time and ensuring consistency. All resources are shared via Google Classroom, creating a streamlined platform for teaching and learning.

We also have a 1:1 Chromebook programme which gives all students access to tools such as voice typing, screen readers and the Read&Write Chrome extension, which features coloured overlays, picture dictionaries, and is platformagnostic so can be used at home no matter what devices students have.

Embedding voice typing and screen reader strategies

We encourage an integrated approach to accessibility: students use screen readers for reading, respond using voice typing, then play back their responses to check accuracy. This layered method empowers students to access and interact with materials they might otherwise find inaccessible.

Personalisation remains key. Some students prefer typing by hand, but use voice typing for difficult words, which has the added benefit of broadening vocabulary without fear of spelling mistakes. Our English teachers have observed that this flexibility helps students to grow in confidence and linguistic range, as they are no longer constrained by their spelling abilities.

To strengthen these skills, we run weekly intervention sessions focused on mastering these features. Our early findings have identified two main areas for development:



- 1. Students needing support in structuring their thoughts when using voice typing.
- 2. Students with non-standard voice patterns, who work with our speech and language therapists to develop their speech patterns to be better understood by the technology.

Impact on learning and engagement

Technology diets have had a measurable impact on wellbeing, engagement and attainment at AHS, helping to remove barriers to learning and give students agency over their learning.

Introduced at the end of the 2023 Autumn Term, by the Spring Term we were consistently seeing high engagement across all subjects. Our staff unanimously agree that technology has played a significant role in this sustained engagement and achievement.

Several students have also made exceptional academic progress, with some achieving two years' worth of improvement in English within a single year - progress that was previously unattainable without technological support.

Giving students choice and control over their technology diets has given them a sense of ownership, motivation and confidence. When students see the tangible progress possible with these personalised learning tools, their self-belief grows.

Conclusion

Our technology diets also show how thoughtful, structured integration of technology can revolutionise learning for students with special educational needs. By personalising methods of working, removing barriers, and embedding accessibility features into everyday practice, we empower students not only to succeed academically but to develop confidence, agency and a positive outlook on their educational journey.



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PEUGEOT FORD VAUXHALL RENAULT MERCEDES BENZ













School campus investment



Ashville College, North Yorkshire, has unveiled the next stage in its masterplan to develop and modernise its campus – increasing its investment over the last 12 months to more than £1m.

Phase 2 of the plans to reimagine the estate will be spearheaded by a major refurbishment of the Sixth Form Centre. The purposedesigned upgrade will feature a range of enhancements, all with the aim of impacting positively on students' lives as well as accommodating new technology and ways of learning.

This phase will also see a modern 'study and social' learning hub – modelled on a classroom of the future – brought to life for the new cohort of Year 7 pupils joining Senior School.

Both these projects, which represent over £500,000 investment, will be complemented by developments in Ashville's Prep School, where younger pupils will benefit from a refresh of the playground and senior pupils will be able to enjoy outdoor learning and socialising with an outdoor seating area – under canvas 'sails' – in the heart of the grounds.

The development work will take place during the summer ahead of the start of the new academic year in September, when Ashville will become a dedicated day school for both boys and girls aged between 2 and 18.

The summer initiatives build on Phase 1 of the modernisation programme, which saw the creation of two learning hubs for pupils in years 10 and 11, as well as the refurbishment of the Prep School entrance, foyer and stairwell.

Other innovations being considered as part of Phase 3 of the Ashville masterplan and beyond include a new, additional modern synthetic sports pitch that will be suitable for a wide variety of sports including rugby and football, to complement the existing artificial pitch that is mainly used for hockey.

There are also plans to include a running track around the new pitch for athletics and general athletic development, as well as new netball and tennis courts.

The aim is to develop these in tandem with a new car park and drop-off area that would greatly improve traffic management and amenity for pupils and their parents.

Longer term, Ashville is planning a large new 'hub' building at the heart of the campus between the Senior and Prep Schools, including new teaching and learning spaces.



Pictured: Planned spaces for Phase 2

Transfer of schools

Blenheim Schools, part of Outcomes First Group (OFG), has agreed terms to welcome 12 UK schools, currently operated by Cognita, subject to completion of regulatory processes.

Outcomes First Group Chief Executive, David Leatherbarrow, said: 'The schools joining us have strong foundations, passionate teams and thriving communities. We're excited to support them in going from strength to strength in the next chapter."

The transferring schools will remain under the management of Cognita until completion of the transition process, expected for the start of the Spring Term in January 2026.

The 12 schools transferring as part of the agreement are:

- Akeley Wood School, Buckinghamshire
- · Clifton Lodge, London
- Cumnor House School for Boys & Cumnor House School for Girls, Surrey
- Duncombe School, Hertfordshire
- Hendon Prep School, London
- Huddersfield Grammar School, West Yorkshire

- Hydesville Tower School, West Midlands
- · Meoncross School, Hampshire
- Milbourne Lodge School, Surrey
- Oakfields Prep School, Essex
- Quinton House School, Northamptonshire
- St Margarets Prep School, Essex

A Cognita spokesperson commented: "In view of our rapid expansion internationally over the last few years, we have taken the strategic decision to rebalance our UK portfolio of schools in line with our wider strengths and in the longterm interests of these school communities.

"Our focus and capabilities are now better suited to supporting larger schools in major population centres. At the same time, new providers have emerged in the UK with the expertise to support a diverse range of schools that provide a more tailored focus. We believe these 12 schools will be well served under their stewardship.

"Over the coming months, we will be focusing on our school communities to ensure a smooth and effective transition."

Weekly open morning launch

Burgess Hill Girls School, West Sussex, has announced that they will be hosting Open Mornings across the Prep School, Senior School and Sixth Form every Friday 9am to 11am during term time.

"We know that visiting a school in person is the best way to experience its unique energy, warmth and excellence," said Head, Heather Cavanagh. "By focusing our efforts on Friday mornings, we can give families the time, attention, and insight they need to make an informed decision about their daughter's education."

The experience will last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes when visitors will receive a welcome from a member of the Senior Leadership Team to learn about the school's ethos, vision, and all-round educational approach. There'll then be a tour to explore the relevant school Pictured: Burgess Hill Girls School



campus to gain a feel for daily life at Burgess Hill Girls. In addition, families will be invited to visit the Information Hub to meet key teams who will be on hand to answer questions and provide guidance on Admissions, Finance, SEN and Transport, as well as in relation to the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and school uniform.

Visits need to be booked in advance, where individual appointments will be confirmed by the Admissions Team.



A partnership between one of the UK's most widely used assessments and a powerful data analysis tool now allows independent schools to demonstrate that they are really adding value.

Independent schools face a persistent challenge: how do they show the real impact they are making on student progress when raw attainment data doesn't always tell the whole story?

From May this year, that task got a whole lot easier. GL Assessment has joined forces with Alps Education to bring CAT4 data into the Alps Connect platform – and for schools looking to demonstrate real, measurable value-added progress, that is a game-changer.

Why baselines matter

Teachers are only too aware that while final grades may provide the conclusion to a chapter, they don't tell the whole story. That's why progress – or value-added data is so important, especially under the updated ISI inspection framework. Inspectors now expect schools to show that students are "making good progress according to their ability" – and that this is benchmarked against national standards.

Enter CAT4. CAT4 goes deeper than a standard test of knowledge by assessing the core reasoning skills that underpin learning: verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial reasoning. It gives teachers a clear, reliable baseline that shows what students are capable of and where their potential lies – not just what they've already achieved. And because it's standardised on a large nationally representative

sample – 25,000 students – and validated regularly with data from over 250,000 learners, it's a stable assessment that is both robust and reliable.

Integrating CAT4 with Alps

Independent schools know Alps for its smart, visual data dashboards that help them monitor student progress and identify trends and problems early. Now, with CAT4 on its platform, schools will be able to compare student potential (using CAT4's Standard Age Score) with actual outcomes across GCSE, A level and IB – right down to subject level. That means schools can answer the questions that really matter:

- Are students making the progress expected?
- Are particular groups EAL, SEND, high prior attainers – improving equally well?
- Are there subject or teaching group patterns that need to be addressed?
- Are areas of real strength or barriers to progress being highlighted?

Thanks to the CAT4/Alps integration, teachers – whether in class or a leadership role – can monitor progress and demonstrate value added throughout the year. Data can be regularly uploaded, reviewed and used to guide timely and appropriate interventions whenever needed.

Holistic views of every student

With CAT4 data on Alps Connect, schools can form a richer, more holistic view of every student.

Teachers will be able to spot students who might look superficially on track but whose underlying profile suggests they could achieve even more, or those who may just make the grades but who might benefit from more targeted support.

If you're in an independent school that wants to demonstrate added value, this partnership between CAT4 and Alps provides you with all the evidence needed. And in a sector where parents and inspectors are asking persistent and insightful questions, being able to show clear progress from a reliable baseline isn't just helpful, it's essential.



For more information, please visit: uk.renaissance.com/using-cat4



Ask the expert:

How Zenergi helps independent schools navigate energy procurement with confidence

Independent schools often have more freedom in how they procure energy, but with that comes complexity. From flexible contracts to VAT challenges and sustainability goals, their needs can be very different from state schools.

Chris Jermy, our Director of Customer Success, shares how Zenergi tailors its approach to help independent schools make the most of their autonomy, while managing risk, cost and compliance.



Independent schools don't necessarily follow the same buying processes as state schools. They're not bound by public sector procurement rules. That gives them a bit more freedom to choose suppliers and be more reactive to the market. This flexibility means they can explore more tailored procurement strategies, including those that embrace a slightly higher risk-reward model.

Q: What kinds of contracts are most suitable for independent schools?

While many schools opt for fixed or hybrid approaches, independent schools are often more open to advanced strategies.

Rather than going for something like Zen Secure, they might choose one of our more flexible options, like our Zen Hybrid strategy. It lets them take some of their energy volume closer to the month of

supply. That reduces budget certainty, but it can lead to lower costs if prices are favourable.

We work closely with each school to understand their appetite for balancing risk and control, then recommend the best fit.

Q: Do independent schools have different sustainability priorities?

Yes, sustainability priorities can play a big role in procurement decisions. They often have more autonomy to invest in things like solar panels, heat pumps and other sustainability measures. We consider this in our contracts. The fact that 100% of our electricity is supplied from renewable sources can often be an important factor.

For a lot of schools, their environmental commitment is part of how they attract students. It's something that students and parents increasingly look for.

Q: Are there specific billing or compliance challenges independent schools face?

Absolutely, especially for boarding schools. They can benefit from reduced VAT on residential buildings, but understanding those rules and applying them correctly is key. We recently supported an independent school to recover over £100,000 in historic incorrect billing charges.

That's where Zenergi's Bill Validation service comes in. We check every invoice, ensuring the correct VAT rate has been applied and that schools are only paying for what they should. It's a critical part of getting the best value out of their contracts. It's surprising how many meters are still billed to estimates. Across large estates, this can have a huge impact. Our Portal highlights key risks like this, as well as allowing access to your stakeholders to add meter readings and observe trends.

Q: How does Zenergi tailor its support for independent schools?

Independent schools often need more bespoke support and that's why Zenergi has a dedicated team specialising in independent schools. We work closely with each school to build a strategy around their goals, timelines and regulations. That could mean considering renewable energy, flexible buying, or even governance support.

Whether it's navigating VAT exemptions, reducing long-term costs, or demonstrating sustainability leadership, Zenergi helps independent schools get the most out of their energy procurement, while staying compliant and aligned with their values.

We know this feels like the tip of the iceberg, but we're here to support. Scan the QR code for exclusive access to our independent school leader's guide to energy procurement.



About the expert

Chris Jermy leads a team dedicated to helping independent schools reduce energy costs and work towards net zero. His focus is on practical, impactful strategies that make sustainability achievable.

To speak to Chris' team about your independent school's energy strategy, contact hello@zenergi.co.uk.

Zenergi supports more than 300 independent schools across their energy and net zero journeys – offering everything from procurement and surveys to regulatory compliance and renewable solutions. Find out more at zenergi.co.uk.





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Get started



The power of relationships in driving successful learning outcomes



The culture of any learning environment centres around the relationships forged between teachers and students. Deputy Head (Academic) at St Albans School, Hertfordshire, Daniel Sabato (pictured), examines how the building of effective relationships with students from the moment they set foot inside the school can maximise their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Strong relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the educational experience. These connections significantly impact students' academic success, emotional wellbeing, and overall learning and development. A positive teacher-student relationship fosters a nurturing environment in which students feel valued, understood, and engaged. The quality of these relationships cannot be underestimated as they will hugely influence a student's resilience, motivation, and their willingness to approach learning challenges head-on.

As St Albans School continues to move forward with the extension of co-educational provision from September 2026, one of the most common questions on parents' and students' minds is "How will the school best prepare for teaching girls?" While there are subtle changes that will need to be made in the classroom and around the school, the culture of any learning environment centres around the relationships forged between teachers and students and that remains true of both single sex and co-educational settings.

Trust is the cornerstone of effective teacher-student relationships. When students trust their teachers, they are more likely to communicate openly, seek help, and express their ideas without fear of judgement. Teachers who take the time to understand the unique backgrounds, interests, and personal needs of their students will be able to tailor their teaching methods effectively, making learning more relevant and engaging. This engagement not only enhances academic achievement but also supports students' emotional development.

Intentional interactions: building trust and respect

In her 2013 TED Talk entitled 'Every Kid Needs a Champion', Rita Pierson encapsulates exactly the power of relationships, saying: "We know why kids don't learn. It's either poverty, low attendance, [or] negative peer influences. We know why. But one of the things that we never discuss, or we rarely discuss, is the value and importance of human connection. Relationships."

The relationships Pierson talks about are more than just knowing a child's name or what sport they play; they are about mutual respect and, as mentioned above, building on trust and feelings of belonging. There is considerable research that highlights the power of relationships, ranging from feelings of acceptance and support to emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement in lessons. There is no doubt that the building of effective relationships with

students can maximise their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

This starts the second a child walks onto the school site, where they begin interacting and connecting with members of staff. Crucially, these interactions between teacher and student must be intentional, providing the child with a sense of purpose and importance, and should not be confused with friendships. In a 2019 journal, Fisher and Frey used the phrase 'warm demanders' to describe how teachers should act within this context, insisting that children work to the best of their ability when acting with mutual respect and that perseverance is nonnegotiable.

The relationship between student and teacher also plays a critical role in the social dynamics of the classroom. Teachers are looked upon as role models and mentors, helping their students to navigate interpersonal relationships and develop crucial soft skills like communication and teamwork. This emotional and social support can be particularly vital in co-educational school environments, where understanding and empathy among peers, regardless of gender, can lead to a more inclusive atmosphere.

As Pierson also noted in her talk: "Teaching and learning should bring joy. How powerful would our world be if we had kids who were not afraid to take risks, who were not afraid to think, and who had a champion? Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."

Moving to a co-educational setting requires thoughtful changes

Building relationships is a fundamental part of what we do in school. Teachers are intentional in their drive to make students feel supported and important. You will see this from the moment a student steps off the coach into morning registration, in their lessons throughout the school day, and during their co-curricular endeavours. Teachers know and understand the pupils in their classroom. They strive to know each child on an individual level, to be able to stretch and challenge their learning, and to support them if they have a specific learning need. As we extend our school community and begin to welcome girls into the fold, the same principles apply - although subtle changes will of course be made to further enhance learning provision for all.

Relationships, as before, will come into play during this gradual period of transition. While co-education presents numerous benefits, including increased social integration and diverse perspectives, it also necessitates thoughtful changes in teaching practices and relationship-building strategies. For example, in coeducational settings, teachers must be attuned to the different dynamics that may arise between genders. Relationships can be influenced by societal norms and expectations around gender behaviour. Our teachers are trained to recognise these dynamics, promoting an environment where all students feel safe and respected. This involves addressing and breaking down stereotypes to create a more equitable learning experience for everyone.

Likewise, transitioning to a co-educational setting often requires schools to reassess their curricula to ensure it is inclusive and relevant to all students. This means integrating diverse perspectives and voices, particularly those of different genders. In line with this, our teachers will be working hard to establish new connections with a broader range of interests and experiences to engage every student effectively. By building on those all-important relationships and promoting mutual respect and collaboration, we can help students to appreciate their differences and learn how we can best work together. From a professional development perspective, creating more opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share experiences, and learn best practices will also enhance the overall quality of the education we deliver.

Time, effort and patience will pay off

Co-educational classrooms benefit significantly from mixed learning opportunities, where students of different genders work together on various projects and contribute to discussions. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating these experiences, encouraging respect, cooperation, and communication. By actively participating in students' collaborative efforts, teachers can further strengthen their relationships with all students and foster a sense of community within the classroom.

The transition towards a co-educational setting represents a huge opportunity for growth and development at St Albans. Central to this period of change is the recognition of the power of strong teacher-student relationships in nurturing an environment where all students thrive both academically and socially in a diverse classroom setting. That said, building effective and powerful relationships is hard work and it takes skill, time, effort and patience. Yet it is a fundamental ingredient of truly excellent teaching and is part of the fabric that makes a school a wonderful place to learn.

Visiting the Palace of Westminster



Pupils from Upper Two at Ursuline Prep School, Warley, Essex, have made a trip to London and the Palace of Westminster, in what has become an annual tradition at the school to mark the pupils' final year at the school.

This year the day started off by visiting the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, where the children learned about historical characters and vessels from the past. They also had the opportunity to look into the future in the Astronomy Section of the museum that features several photographers who have won the accolade of Photographer of the Year.

Pictured: Pupils with MP Alex Burghart

The children then went on to board the Thames River Boat cruise from Greenwich Pier for their journey to the Palace of Westminster, passing numerous historical sites on the way.

After disembarking at Westminster Bridge, the children went on a tour of the Palace of Westminster where they had the chance to listen to a debate in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The highlight of the visit was an unexpected drop in from MP, Alex Burghart, who answered questions from the children.



Bringing politics to life

Leweston School, Dorset, has welcomed West Dorset MP Edward Morello to the school to talk to pupils across the Prep and Senior Schools.

He began his visit by meeting with the Prep School Council Team, where he answered pupils' questions on a range of topics including the environment, the Better Planet Schools initiative, homelessness, how Parliament operates, and the responsibilities of an MP.

Later, Edward spoke to students in Years 7 and 8, who shared their posters on climate change and discussed ways to tackle environmental challenges. He explained how the UK Parliament works and gave insights into the daily life of an MP. No question was off-limits, with pupils asking everything from the most difficult parts of the job, to how MPs are elected, to what they earn.

The visit encouraged pupils to think critically about politics, deepening their understanding of how decisions are made both locally and nationally. Through open conversations and real-life examples, pupils gained insight into the responsibilities and challenges faced by those in public office. Edward's approachable manner and thoughtful engagement sparked curiosity and empowered pupils to see themselves as active participants in society, reinforcing the idea that their perspectives matter and their voices can help shape the future.

Pictured: Edward Morello with Year 7 and 8 pupils

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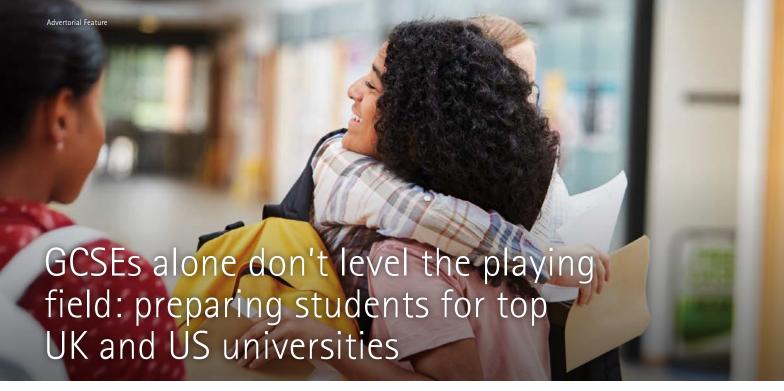
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Every summer, GCSE results fill the headlines. Once again, thousands of students across the independent sector have achieved outstanding grades, many with the coveted string of 9s. These results reflect the dedication of pupils, families, and teachers alike. Yet when it comes to applying to the most competitive universities, grades in general don't guarantee a place. At Oxford, Cambridge, and the lvy League, strong academic performance is simply the baseline.

For today's applicants, the real challenge begins once GCSEs are complete. With so many students presenting near-identical profiles, admissions officers are asking: what else? The two years of A Levels that follow are now critical, and it is in this period that the real preparation for top university admissions must begin.

Beyond the numbers: what universities expect now

At leading UK universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, admissions officers look for evidence of intellectual depth and academic curiosity that extends beyond the classroom. Successful applicants often demonstrate this through independent research, winning national essay competitions, or leading projects that showcase initiative and originality.

In the US, Ivy League and other top universities adopt a holistic approach, placing more importance on extracurricular leadership than academic results. The competition among international applicants means that starting early is imperative. Increasingly, the students who stand out are those founding societies, publishing research, and making a tangible impact in their communities.

www.crimsoneducation.org/uk

Put simply, excellence in exams is no longer enough for either side of the pond. Competition is fiercer than ever, and preparing students for success now requires support that extends far beyond the classroom.

Supporting families together Independent schools provide exceptional teaching and pastoral care. However, families applying to highly selective universities frequently seek additional guidance from outside the school environment. In 2023, 23% of the freshmen at the top-ranked lvy League university reported working with a private admissions counsellor on their application. At the same time, many families are also exploring global destinations such as Bocconi in Italy or Sciences Po in France, broadening the range of opportunities they expect schools to help them navigate.

At Crimson Education, students work one-to-one with alumni from Oxford, Cambridge, and lvy League universities on every stage of their application, while also having access to former admissions officers who provide insights and application reviews. This combination not only offers



families confidence in the process but, with Crimson, increases students' chances of admission by 2 to 10 times.

Looking ahead

Academic success remains an essential foundation, but it no longer sets students apart at the highest levels of university admissions. For headteachers and guidance counsellors, the challenge is ensuring that students are not only achieving excellent grades but also developing the qualities that selective universities expect.

With specialist support available alongside school, families can be reassured that their children are prepared for success on a truly

global stage. By working together, we can help the next generation of independent school students secure places at the world's most competitive universities and strengthen the outcomes that define a school's alumni success.





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Going co-ed? Reflecting on the last 20 years

In 2005, Solihull School, West Midlands, made the switch from all boys to co-education. Executive Headmaster, Charles Fillingham, considers the benefits that journey has brought and shares some of the lessons that have been learned along the way.

Solihull School these days is a thriving co-educational entity with nearly 1,600 pupils. It offers places from nursery to A Level and has almost exactly 50% girls and 50% boys. Though the school is nearly 500 years old, it was for boys only until 1974 when girls first joined the Sixth Form, before becoming fully co-educational just 20 years ago.

What is our model for success?
Well, it is not a secret recipe – it
is simply called good education.
Remaining true to this in the
midst of such a seismic change
was essential and the points below
speak of some of our lessons
learned and obstacles overcome.

1. Parents like it

I have been teaching for nearly 30 years and the vast majority of that time has been spent in single-sex schools for boys or for girls. I have enjoyed each of the schools in which I have worked, but it is clear to me that parents appreciate co-education. They find it contemporary; they describe it as more reflective of the "real-world"; they find it convenient. Let us not underestimate this last point – it can be quite a trial when your children's schools require you to

be in two or more places at the same time on the same evenings. Pupil voice is important in choosing schools, but so too are the hours in a parent's day.

2. Pupils adapt very quickly

Very many of the pupils have been at co-educational pre-prep, prep, infant and junior schools before joining Solihull and in this sense it is a wholly familiar environment. The wider community can take longer to assimilate the change. For example, at a recent event celebrating 44 years of service of a colleague, the speaker began many sentences with a reference to "Solihull Boys' School", no matter that we have been co-ed for a generation!

3. Music and sport flourish – maybe in new ways

Governors and school leadership teams will want to consider what will become of their 1st XV and their chapel choir. There might be an easy drift towards gender-typical interests when a single-sex school goes co-educational. For example, it might be easy to imagine that girls dominate in the school musicals and that boys retreat from performance in the concert hall towards performance

on the pitch. Both music and sport are thriving at Solihull, and while the rugby team is still all boys, the choir these days has an equal or greater number of girls. We have had to work hard to retain boys in the school musicals and I know of a former boys' school locally which has decided to play one tier lower in terms of rugby matches since half their pupils are now girls. We planned for the change and have largely ridden the wave - one of our netball teams is current U15 world champion and our boys' and girls' hockey teams both play in national tier one. It is crucial to value sport equally across both sexes and to offer role models in music and dance from both sexes too. It would be a mistake to press ahead without planning ahead.

4. Academic results could rise

When Solihull went co-ed in 2005, the school planned to grow from four forms to five at 11+. Our MidYIS data showed that the average ability of each cohort notched up considerably. This makes perfect sense, because we were drawing 120 pupils from the entire applicant pool rather than aiming to fill 100 places from only half of the applicants within



commutable distance. Looking back on the data now, you can see how the school became increasingly academically selective as a greater number of girls applied to join Solihull each year. This might be an important criterion for some governing bodies, but less important for others, depending on the nature of your school.

At Solihull, the drive has been to retain a high-quality offering, but now doing so for girls as well as for boys. Naturally, my predecessors here had to engage great staff as we grew. We also had to consider the nursing provision, the changing rooms and toilets and we chose to broaden the curriculum slightly. Being slightly larger allowed for exciting infrastructure projects too. Throughout, the school has stayed close to its values and kept an even closer eye on excellence. Solihull's decision to become fully coeducational has been a case study for success.

TIME Magazine 'Girls of the Year'

A 13-year-old pupil from Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow, has been named one of the firstever TIME Magazine 'Girls of the Year' after designing a solarpowered blanket for homeless people.

Rebecca Young, who was featured in the February 2025 issue of ISM, was just one of 10 young people from across the globe included in the inaugural list. She rose to global attention aged just 11, when she beat more than 70,000 entrants in the UK Primary Engineer competition for her invention – a heated Pictured: Rebecca Young

blanket built into a backpack and powered by solar panels. Her idea was made into a prototype, before winning silver at the MacRobert Awards a year later. She also won the commendation award which was chosen by a public vote. The design was later turned into a working model by engineering firm Thales and is now being trialled by a Scottish charity supporting people experiencing homelessness in Glasgow.

As part of the TIME recognition, a Lego figure has been created in Rebecca's image – which formed part of a special edition front page for the magazine.

The full list of 2025 TIME
Girls of the Year also includes:
Rutendo Shadaya, 17, an
advocate for young authors in
New Zealand; Coco Yoshizawa,
15, an Olympic gold-medallist in
Japan; Valerie Chiu, 15, a global
science educator in China; Zoé
Clauzure, 15, an anti-bullying
crusader in France; Clara Proksch,
12, a scientist prioritising child
safety in Germany; Ivanna
Richards, 17, a racing driver
shattering stereotypes in Mexico;
Kornelia Wieczorek, 17, a biotech



innovator in Poland; Defne Özcan, 17, a trailblazing pilot in Turkey; and Naomi S. DeBerry, 12, an organ donation advocate and children's book author in the United States.

Giving Day



Dame Allan's Schools, Tyne and Wear, has raised just over £106,000 through its second annual Giving Day to support the development of a new all-weather multi-sport pitch and expand its bursary programme.

Festivities began at the Senior School with a whole-school rowing challenge, during which pupils and staff collectively rowed over one million metres - equivalent to the distance from Newcastle to Cologne, Germany. The Junior School followed the next day with a celebration of niche sports and

Pictured: Dame Allan's Principal Will Scott and Junior School Head Geoff Laidler launch Giving Day 2025

activities, featuring orienteering, Kinball, inflatables and a shared picnic on the field.

Dame Allan's Development Manager, Katherine Leonard, said: "Giving Day is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when a school community comes together with a shared vision."

The planned all-weather pitch is designed to boost provision for sports such as hockey and football and will coincide with the refurbishment of the school's netball and tennis courts.

Supporting local families



Parents from Yarm Prep School, North Yorkshire, have donated a significant sum to local charity, Home-Start Teesside, following a fundraising ball which was organised by the school's social committee.

The Enchanted Forest fundraising ball brought together parents and friends of the prep school for an evening of entertainment, dinner, and fundraising, all with a magical woodland theme. Part Pictured: Presenting the cheque

of the evening's funds raised was matched by Santander, and another part was matched by Barclays.

The funds raised will help Home-Start Teesside continue its work providing emotional and practical support to parents with young children, especially during challenging times such as isolation, postnatal depression, and financial hardship.



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Are you leaving the digital gates wide open?

Why every independent school must rethink cyber risk – now

Fennec Cyber help headteachers and bursars uncover and secure unknown vulnerabilities before it's too late.

Independent schools are trusted custodians of more than just education – they hold sensitive data about pupils, parents, finances, and staff. Yet, many are unknowingly exposed to significant cyber risk through vulnerable systems, outdated software, and third-party suppliers.

High profile cyberattacks on UK organisations, such as the NHS, saw child acute cancer patients' details dumped online and a ransomware attack on Wootton Upper School, where hackers demanded a £500,000 ransom after accessing personal data, proving how devastating such breaches can be. Schools are not immune. With limited in-house IT resources and complex digital environments, independent schools are increasingly viewed as soft targets by cybercriminals.

Fennec Cyber can help independent schools like yours see their digital infrastructure the way an attacker would – and take fast, effective steps to secure it.

What's your school's 'attack surface'?

Your attack surface includes every potential digital entry point into your school's network – websites, email accounts, Wi-Fi, cloud

services, third-party software, and even forgotten devices. If it's connected, it's a target.

Too often, schools think their IT estate is under control, only to discover hidden risks. In one recent case, an organisation believed it had 152 internet-facing devices – the real number was 493. That's more than triple the exposure, including unknown servers, misconfigured software, and unsecured data stores.

For schools, the risks are real:

- Leaked pupil or staff data (including medical and safeguarding records)
- Operational disruption (imagine systems going offline during exams)
- Reputational damage with parents and governors
- Regulatory fines under laws like GDPR and the Dept. for Education

Independent schools are uniquely vulnerable

Many schools rely on a patchwork of legacy systems, cloud tools, and third-party providers. IT often falls to small internal teams or outsourced support. Meanwhile, increased online learning, parent portals, and mobile access continue to grow the digital footprint.

Add to these common issues like:

- Forgotten test servers
- Staff using weak passwords
- Unmonitored supplier connections
- Outdated software still in use ...and you have a growing list of vulnerabilities.

Why it matters – now more than ever

- · Protect student and staff data
- Avoid operational disruption
- Minimise regulatory and financial risk
- Preserve the reputation of your school

How can fennec help?

Fennec's Attack Surface Platform gives your school a real-time view of its digital exposure – without needing expensive tools or inhouse cyber experts. We take an 'outside-in' approach, mimicking how hackers scan for weaknesses.

Our process quickly identifies:

- Confidential data leakage
- Access management issues
- Misconfigured systems and default login credentials
- Outdated or unsupported software still in use
- Risks introduced by third-party suppliers

All findings are prioritised by severity, so you can act where it matters most – even with limited budget or time.

Support for headmasters, bursars, COOs and IT managers

We know your time and resources are tight. That's why Fennec is designed to be:

- Non-intrusive No installation needed, all remote
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- Actionable Clear recommendations without jargon
- Cost-effective Focused on what matters, not a one-sizefits-all approach

Whether you're planning a digital upgrade, onboarding a new supplier, or preparing for inspection, Fennec provides the visibility you need to manage cyber risk with confidence.

Don't wait for a breach

Cyber threats aren't going away. But with Fennec, you can move from reacting to proactively managing risk – protecting your school community and reputation.

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Carl Nightingale Managing Director, Fennec Cyber Ltd

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Tes Awards 2025

The impact and innovation found in the UK's independent schools has been recognised with a cluster of awards at this year's Tes Schools Awards.

The awards, now in their 17th year, recognise the very best teachers, schools and trusts from UK state and independent schools, across early years settings, primary and secondary.

Independent schools and educators won seven of the 23 award categories at a ceremony held in central London in June.

The independent school winners were:

Edgeborough School, Surrey – EYFS Setting of the Year

Judge, Professor Eunice Lumsden, Professor of Child Advocacy and Head of Childhood, Youth and Families at the University of Northampton, praised the school's "exemplary" understanding of child development, neuroscience and social and emotional wellbeing.

Abingdon House School, London
- Best Use of Technology

Each student at the independent special school receives a bespoke 'technology diet' so that every pupil can access their learning regardless of their individual challenges. Judge, John
Roberts, Director of Product and
Engineering at Oak National
Academy, said: "The care taken
to roll out technology with each
individual pupil in mind so that it
makes learning accessible is clear."

Rosemead Preparatory School and Nursery, London – Independent Prep School of the Year

The school uses Al tools to provide a bespoke educational experience tailored to every pupil and an innovative curriculum which includes robotics, esports, and Al-integrated learning.

Royal Grammar School Newcastle

- Independent Senior School of
the Year

RGS has significantly expanded its bursary programme to ensure that it remains accessible for talented students from all backgrounds, and has created a partnership with businesses, philanthropists and foundations to fund teaching in over a hundred state schools across the region. Judge, Durrell Barnes, Head of Governance at RSAcademics, praised RGS's "commitment to diversity and

For the full list of winners visit: www.tes.com/schools-awards/uk/winners/2025 For a more in-depth look at Abingdon House School technology diets, see page 8



giving back to the community" in its quincentenary year.

Bredon School, Gloucestershire – Boarding School of the Year Unlike traditional boarding schools, Bredon School has purely pastoral staff in its boarding houses – an approach that allows students to know that classroom concerns will not follow them and helps boarding staff to focus on the pastoral needs and welfare of the children. Students enjoy activity packed evenings and weekends, and weekly 'non-electronic Mondays' provide a

much-needed break from social media and online pressures.

There were also awards for
Sue Woodroofe, Headteacher
of The Grammar School at
Leeds, who was Independent
Headteacher of the Year, and
a Lifetime Achievement Award
for Professor Barnaby Lenon.
The former Harrow and Trinity
Headmaster and retiring Chair of
the Independent Schools Council
was recognised for his "broad and
deep impact" on education during
a career spanning more than five
decades.

National Kindness Award

Jo Dawson, a wraparound care worker and catering assistant at Newland House School, Middlesex, has been named the winner of the Kind Adult Award at the national Kindness Awards.

The award celebrates adults in school communities who go above and beyond to show exceptional kindness. Organised by the School of Kindness, part of the charity 52 Lives, the awards recognise individuals across the UK who are helping to make the world a kinder place.

Jo – known as Miss Jo to the children – was surprised by the School of Kindness team and presented with her award in front of staff and pupils.

The judges, who for this category were author Donna Ashworth, teacher and author Lee Parkinson MBE, kindness scientist and author Dr David Hamilton, BAME Nurse of the Year Jennifer Pearson, and Dan Devonald, Director of Einstein Tax, praised Jo's empathy, her ability to uplift everyone she meets, and her dedication to creating a nurturing environment where kindness thrives.

Award shortlist

St Andrew's Prep, East Sussex, has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Talk Education Awards for Innovation in Education 2025. The awards celebrate schools across the country that are breaking new ground and finding fresh ways to inspire pupils.

The school's nomination shines a light on its commitment to sustainability, which has grown this year through the creation of its Community and Sensory Garden. Once a disused area, the space has been transformed into a hub for learning, play and togetherness.

Headmaster Tom Gregory said, "We are absolutely

Pictured: St Andrew's Prep Eco-Committee Photo credit: St Andrew's Prep



delighted to be recognised in the Talk Education Awards. Sustainability is such an important part of who we are, and our pupils are at the heart of it – taking the lead in transforming the garden, exploring and learning in the Woodland Classroom, shaping initiatives like the upgraded cycle route and bringing our Eco-Day and community projects to life."

Finding meaning and purpose in the taught curriculum

Director of the Institute of Teaching and Learning at Sevenoaks School, Kent, Mark Beverley, puts forward some thoughts on how by reimagining educational practices, schools can incorporate meaning and purpose into different subject and classroom-focused activities.

Notions of meaning and purpose are common to several frameworks that seek to describe human flourishing and wellbeing. Seligman's PERMA model (2012), for example, posits meaning - "belonging to and serving something bigger than the self" - as one of its five building blocks. It is also one of the five flourishing domains identified by the Harvard Human Flourishing Program, which has been used as a basis for our recent work in association with Research Schools International.

Although challenging to define, and perhaps even more so to measure, there is an 'emerging consensus' that sees meaning in relation to various domains of human experience – cognitive, affective and motivational. Inherent in each is the idea of:

- Coherence an intelligible pattern
- Significance a sense of importance or value in one's activities and pursuits
- Direction having objectives that help direct, prioritise, and make sense of choices, goals, and actions

Our research shows that as students mature in their school lives, there is a decline in notions of meaning, purpose and an associated 'sense of wonder'. The main reasons for this, as cited by our students, pertain to increasing pressure associated with taking examinations and applying to university. These are seen to stifle reflective practices, engagement with deeper levels of independent thought, and creativity.

This leads us to consider how subjects might apply to school values and prompts key questions such as:

- How can we integrate purpose-driven learning into standardised curricula?
- How can school cultures nurture intellectual curiosity and learning engagement?
- How can Al be used in a meaningful way?
- How can creativity in the classroom be developed?
- How can teaching and learning practices attend to the needs of neurodiverse students?
- How can older students learn through play?

These questions give rise to interesting issues including intellectual, social, cultural and political; they also reframe the way we approach units of study. Asking questions positions learning as an act of discovery and participation, as much as something students receive. It changes how they engage with the subject, giving them greater purpose in the classroom and supporting them to derive meaning.

This principle can extend to day-to-day learning interactions. Learning is most meaningful when students are cognitively and behaviourally engaged in it. Using open questions promotes collaboration, critical thinking, discussion and reflection. These are powerful metacognitive processes to encourage learners to see the purpose of what they are learning about.

To nurture students to be inquisitive, teachers and educational leaders need to address overarching issues, for example principles associated with prescribed curriculum content and design, which is more tightly defined in the middle and

upper school years. While the syllabus is created to fulfil exam requirements, there is merit to it being driven by a broader sense of purpose and instilling a lifelong



love of learning. By reimagining educational practices, schools can incorporate meaning and purpose into different subject and classroom-focused activities.

To give educators enough time to reflect on these issues and to explore how schools can increase meaning and purpose, Sevenoaks School has made this the central theme for their biennial teaching and learning conference. Designed to support primary and secondary teachers and educators, the one-day programme includes keynote presentations, talks and informal, practical workshops and interactive sessions designed to help students flourish.

The 'Educating for Meaning and Purpose' Conference takes place on 17 October 2025 at Sevenoaks School. Further information is available at: www.sevenoaksschool.org/academic/institute-of-teaching-and-learning/itl-conference-2025 Tickets are free for state school educators or £70 for the independent sector.

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Embedding PSHE into the heart of school life

Denstone College, Staffordshire, has implemented a PSHE and Wellbeing programme that seeks to ensure the subject is not standalone but instead is a shared responsibility that reflects the ethos and values of the school. Assistant Head (Partnerships & Wellbeing) at the school, Chris Farman, takes a look at how the school has aligned the curriculum with national expectations while tailoring it to meet the lived experiences of pupils, and build trust and collaboration across the school community.

At Denstone College, we believe that personal development is not an optional extra, but should play a central role in a young person's educational experience. Our PSHE and Wellbeing programmes sit at the core of Denstone life, shaping how pupils grow into responsible, resilient and respectful young people. Over the past five years, we have redefined how PSHE is delivered within our community: moving it from the margins of the timetable to a whole-school priority that is lived and breathed by pupils, colleagues, parents and the wider community.

Traditionally, PSHE has sometimes been viewed as a subject that stands alone: seen as important, but is separate from achievements academically. At Denstone, we have sought to change that perception of the subject. Our approach positions PSHE and Wellbeing as integral and integrated within every aspect of school culture. Weekly timetabled lessons, assemblies, tutorial programmes, and drop-down days are all part of the structure (nothing groundbreaking there!). However, the real impact lies in how PSHE themes are reinforced in daily interactions across classrooms, Houses, boarding life, and co-curricular activities.

This integration is guided by our wellbeing and behaviour policies, underpinned by crucial values. Pupils are not just taught about wellbeing, relationships, or digital literacy, they are given opportunities to practise these skills in context. Whether through restorative conversations after a fall-out with Tutors, Heads of House, and Heads of School; leading pupil voice groups; or supporting peers online, young people are continually encouraged to apply learning in real-world situations.

At the heart of our success has been the importance of meaningful engagement with our stakeholders. Our recent PSHE, Wellbeing & RSE Audit highlighted how leadership, governors and pastoral teams have shaped the programme strategically, with policies co-written alongside parents and pupils. We have worked with governors, the School Council and the safeguarding team to ensure every decision is evidence-based and data-informed.

Parents play a key role in the delivery of our curriculum and the culture we have created. They are regularly consulted on policy, curriculum and content, not only through formal meetings but also via channels such as newsletters, podcasts, YouTube videos, and parent transparency packs. This openness builds trust and ensures consistent messaging between school and home.

Pupil voice is hugely influential in our decision making too.

Mechanisms such as surveys, ambassador groups, and Fourth Form curriculum committees ensure young people help shape what is taught. One outcome was the appointment of Wellbeing Ambassadors, pupils who

champion respectful behaviours, gather peer feedback, and support whole-school campaigns such as Mental Health Awareness Week.

Our spiral PSHE curriculum revisits themes with increasing depth and is informed by national data, local safeguarding trends, and pupil surveys. For example, falling HPV vaccination rates in Staffordshire and rising concerns about vaping have shaped specific curriculum interventions.

Our strong partnership with Life Lessons ensures lessons are evidence-based, flexible, and rooted in best practice. Interactive videos, peer-led scenarios, and updated resources make sensitive topics accessible and engaging. This means pupils don't just learn about healthy relationships, consent, or digital safety, but they have the language to discuss them.

Perhaps the clearest sign that PSHE has moved from subject to culture is how it now underpins our Behaviour Policy. Updated for 2025–26, the policy frames behaviour as everyone's responsibility and explicitly connects expectations with education. Pupils are taught about intent vs impact, and that mistakes are learning opportunities.

As our staff consultation confirmed, consistency is key, but so is the relational approach. Pupils are not defined by their mistakes; instead, they are supported to reflect and rebuild.

The ultimate aim of PSHE and Wellbeing at Denstone is to



prepare pupils for life beyond school. We want them to become confident individuals who understand themselves, respect others, and are able to navigate the complexities of the modern world with resilience.

Our curriculum covers everything from mental health to relationships. Pupils learn not just the what, but also the how: how to disagree respectfully, how to support friends, how to manage setbacks, and how to balance ambition with wellbeing.

Leadership opportunities reinforce this. Pupils act as Wellbeing Ambassadors, peer mentors, and House leaders, ensuring that PSHE is not something done to them but something they actively shape.

As we move into the next academic year, our focus is on continual improvement. Just as we ask our pupils to reflect and grow, so too do we as a school. Our audit identified priorities including expanding CPD for tutors, strengthening parent engagement, and deepening local partnerships with PCSOs and health teams.

At Denstone, PSHE is not a bolton or a compliance exercise. It is the thread running through every classroom, every House meeting, every boarding conversation, and every sports team huddle. By embedding PSHE into the culture of the school, we are equipping young people not only to succeed academically but to thrive as responsible, resilient and respectful young people.



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Beyond the grades -

why education should encompass both academic and personal development

Principal at Stephen Perse Foundation Cambridge, Richard Girvan, discusses the importance of a well-rounded education that ensures students are prepared for the world outside the classroom.

The world into which our students will graduate is complex, volatile, and unpredictable. They will face challenges that range from environmental degradation to geopolitical unrest, while contending with increasingly rapid advances in technology. Looking towards this future, education must do more than transmit knowledge, but instead look to support in the development of personal attributes like emotional intelligence, perseverance and resilience. At Stephen Perse Cambridge, we speak often of 'the whole child' and this philosophy has never been more important.

As educators, our task is to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need to navigate life beyond the classroom. A child's time at school is just one chapter in a much richer narrative: one that includes the growth of character, the deepening of understanding, and the building of resilience through facing adversity.

The true confidence which evolves through experience and maturity is something neither educators nor parents are capable of gifting our children. It is something that they have to discover in themselves. often pushed to the surface in difficult moments of perseverance. As educators and guides, we can help by reminding them, gently and often, of the progress they've already made. At school, we share stories about individuals who faced obstacles and kept going. Not as tales of aspirational heroism, but to normalise the important role of mistakes in the journey to adulthood.

We often think of resilience as grit, or the ability to keep going under pressure. In this respect,

the examination period offers an opportunity for young people to exercise their resilience. Wherever there is challenge, there is an opportunity for personal growth. In my experience, though, resilience can also come from something less directly challenging and instead can be gained through the ability to find meaning, comfort and encouragement in the world around us. Students do not thrive on intensity alone and education should build these deeper reserves by ensuring that young people are supported through times of challenge.

Support for students does not just come from family and friends, though. It is rooted in the culture of their school and in the community they have around them. There is something powerful about the peer culture that a school can create. In a well-led school, intellectual



ambition is not mocked, but admired. Curiosity is not sidelined, but shared. The community becomes a place where it is safe to be clever, where it is admirable to care and where effort is valued as much as falent.

Again, this doesn't happen by chance. It requires sustained attention by teachers and leaders. When it is done well, a school becomes more than a place of teaching; it becomes a place of formation, nurturing young people who become confident in themselves and their abilities.

And in the end, that is the true measure of education: not only the grades achieved, but what will endure beyond the grade. It's the character a student has developed, ensuring they are capable of rising to whatever challenges they may face in the future.

Pastoral Care Award

Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG) has been named the winner of the Debrett's Education Award for Outstanding Pastoral Care, as part of the Muddy Stilettos National School Awards 2025.

This national award honours schools that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to pupil wellbeing, recognising those who go above and beyond to create inclusive, nurturing, and empowering environments.

Reacting to the announcement, Head, Mrs Amanda Hardie, said: "We are absolutely overjoyed to have won the Debrett's Education Award for Outstanding Pastoral Care. This is a wonderful acknowledgment for the care, compassion and deep expertise our staff bring to



school life every single day.

"As an all–girl school, our pastoral programme is rooted in our deep understanding of how girls thrive and flourish. Our approach not only supports our pupils, but it also empowers each and every one of them – from our youngest girls in Junior School through to Sixth Form – giving them the space to develop their voice, grow in confidence and embrace their full potential both academically and as a person."

Student Leadership Conference

St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen, has welcomed student leaders to a day-long Student Leadership Conference, designed to develop confidence, communication and leadership skills in young women.

The event brought together student leadership teams from St Margaret's and St George's, Edinburgh.

The conference was hosted by Headteacher at St Margaret's, Anna Tomlinson, who was pleased to welcome Dr Susi Wiseman, Hydrogen Development Manager and Cromarty Hydrogen Projects Lead at Storegga, as a guest speaker. Drawing on her personal journey and career experience across the energy and pharmaceutical sectors, Dr Wiseman delivered



an interactive session which encouraged pupils to think about the kind of leaders they wanted to be.

Dr Wiseman also shared stories from her own life, from captaining her volleyball team in Brazil at the age of 12, to filing global patents during her PhD in hydrogen production, and navigating male-dominated industries. She reflected that at the heart of her leadership journey was a commitment to helping others to thrive.



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Latin and Classics – getting it right at KS3

Classics is a fantastic subject with great potential to help students thrive across the curriculum. Every Classics teacher wants the subject to prosper but attracting sufficient numbers at GCSE is a perennial worry. It is at KS3, where student attitudes to Latin are codified, that this battle is won or lost. Students will only choose to take a subject further if they enjoy it, see its value and feel they can do well. So how do we get Classics provision right at KS3?

Dr Daisy Knox, Head of Classics at King's Ely School in Cambridgeshire, shares her tips on how to engage your KS3 Latin students.



Capitalise on the familiar

Use popular media like *Percy Jackson* or even *Harry Potter* to build on what students already know. These introduce Classical characters, culture and vocabulary in engaging ways. While not always the most accurate, they spark interest and are a great starting point for discussions. Use these references to build connections as you introduce new content, vocabulary and grammar throughout the course.

Treat Latin as a 'ghost language'

Latin might be a 'dead language' but that doesn't mean it's irrelevant. It haunts English, MFL, Science and many other areas. Highlighting these links helps students see Latin's interdisciplinary value. Latin can also be framed as 'PE for the mind', building transferable skills like critical thinking and language analysis which benefit students in many other subjects and future careers.

Be positive

Celebrate every element of Latin, including tricky grammar and vocabulary, rather than fearing that they might put students off. You might be surprised which students thrive and what they enjoy: some may love the structure of grammar and others might find the predictability or slower pace of translation more accessible than the demands of MFL.

Teach the language rigorously

Vocabulary and grammar are essential knowledge so teach them clearly and thoroughly. Explore derivations and language connections to foster curiosity and revisit new words and concepts regularly. Teach translation actively through modelling and practice and consider using composition to reinforce these skills. Solid understanding leads to confidence.

Relentlessly celebrate

Testing is valuable but success is not just about top marks. Recognise improvement, effort and small victories – each

accurate sentence or new word remembered. Use competitions, group projects and creative challenges to give all students a chance to shine. The more opportunities they have to feel successful, the more motivated they will be.



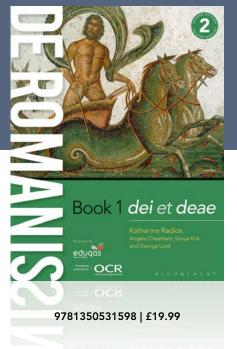
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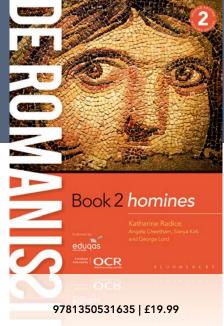


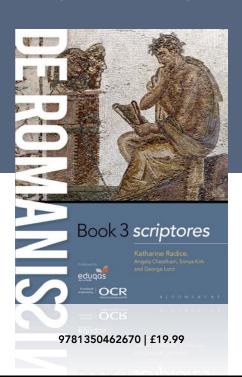


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- ▶ Early introduction of Latin stories rather than isolated sentences builds student confidence from the start.
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Nurturing revision and retention outside of 'testing culture'

How can children be supported to retain information for the long term? Teacher, Oliver Shearman, discusses the importance of creating meaningful connection and how developing relevant retention strategies can successfully embed revision and retention skills.

It is widely accepted that regular testing and exam culture can significantly undermine the joy of learning for students by creating an environment where grades and scores overshadow the intrinsic value of education. When students are constantly pressured to perform well on standardised tests, they often develop a fear of failure that can lead to anxiety and disengagement. This focus on high-stakes assessments can also stifle creativity, critical thinking, and a genuine curiosity about the world around them.

Of course, exams do manage to do one thing effectively: they test for students' ability to retain information and use it on demand. Yet this is a very narrowminded measure of checking retained knowledge, particularly if the subject in question leans more towards memory recall and regurgitation of facts, such as biology or history. The ethos of learning should always be focused on curiosity, but if that learning is constrained and confined to narrow bands of learning in silos, we miss the window of opportunity for questioning and critical thinking to occur. For example, if a student is interested in learning more about genetic inheritance for a GCSE Biology exam, they would be expected to focus on, and be restricted to, monohybrid inheritance. Yet, if they wanted to explore this topic further, they could look to dihybrid inheritance, codominance and incomplete dominance, DNA / RNA and much more, to deepen their learning and understanding in that field.

One approach to consider is crosssubject learning where typical subjects transition into others, i.e., by using key curriculum subjects like English, mathematics and languages alongside other subjects like history, art, design and physical education (PE) to allow teaching to go further. Focusing on interesting topics that are not usually part of the traditional curriculum can help too, such as financial education, life skills, investment and entrepreneurship. All of this must be taught in a way that is age-appropriate and where this can be achieved in smaller groups, with the opportunity for one-to-one discussion, even better.

When it comes to retaining information, developing a strong memory/recall is all about making meaningful associations with information to help students to visualise and connect with the data. This is becoming even more important with the rise of Al (Artificial Intelligence) and its prevalent use in the future. Using a variety of teaching methods to help connect student learning to the real world is imperative, as is using data, graphs and visual prompts where appropriate. Likewise, teaching students to learn to use the frameworks that resonate with them personally comes into play.

In practice, schools can consider so many different methods of teaching to support retention in the classroom. Storytelling or researching historical figures and current influencers in the relevant subject areas (such as historians, scientists and entrepreneurs) is a great way to bring learning to life, engage students with the subject material, and connect concepts with facts. For centuries, humans have related to stories because they evoke emotions, foster empathy and resonate through shared experiences. Whether that is through Greek mythology, telling campfire stories, reading science fiction or simply having conversations with others - students learn best when they are able to connect facts and concepts through engaging insight.

Learning through a real-world based case studies is another great example of how students can effectively learn about a topic across a period of several days. By going deeper into a subject rather

than moving around at rapid speed, students are more likely to retain the information associated with that project. At school we have used such an approach by examining a water pollution case study to help us to learn about the water cycle and water pollution - from a learning perspective this covers aspects such as public perception, finances, importance of order of solutions and effectiveness of solutions. Working in this way is also great for fostering collaborative skills as it has been run as a small group activity where students have taken on different roles and tasks.

As teachers, if we are to successfully embed revision and retention skills into everything we do, it requires practice, making connections and bringing students back to their learning over and over again. Even as little as three questions per week on some previous topics of learning can bring certain topics back up to the surface for students. Taking this a step further, at school we also aim to start each lesson with an interesting fact that relates to our previous learning, which works wonders for recall. Harvard's Project Zero (an educational research initiative designed to enhance learning and thinking) can be helpful if woven into daily teaching practice, as it can help to ensure that visible thinking routines underpin the way a lesson is taught. Making these supportive thinking concepts routine has been very helpful in class - such as: See, Think, Wonder; Connect, Extend, Challenge; Parts, People and Interactions.

Another approach that can be used is 'Reconnect Monday', where students are challenged to connect the coming week's topic to something we have previously learned in the year. For example, if students are learning about space exploration that week, a student might suggest connecting to the week where we explored government, taxes and public



spending in different areas such healthcare, transportation and scientific outlets such as ESA and NASA, for example.

There are, of course, many other activities that you can adopt to support learning and retention, which again moves away from more traditional testing structures. An excellent example of this would is a 'teach-backs' concept whereby students are expected to develop and teach an entire lesson for a class, once per term. This means that each student will teach the teacher and their fellow peers a topic of their choice three times per year. This approach helps them learn to appreciate the effort that goes into devising effective lessons and what skills you might need to become a teacher. It also supports students with their learning, as they will go much deeper into the material to effectively educate others - providing them with clear, defined expectations to sharing their learning on a regular basis.

Although having a less intense exam programme, which proportionally counts for a lower percentage of overall grades, would be preferable across the board, rather than using tests or exam-style assessments to gauge attainment and learning outcomes during the academic year, schools need to consider the alternative approaches they can use which veer away from that pressurised culture which has the potential to destroy the love of learning for a child. By shifting towards more formative and interactive evaluation methods, such as project-based learning, collaborative assessments, and continuous feedback, schools can help students to develop deeper understanding and critical thinking skills that are essential for success in the real world.

Oliver is a teacher from School Beyond Limitations

Rapid expansion of your estate with a modular education building

When it comes to expanding a school estate, time, disruption and long-term value are key considerations. For many schools across the UK, school holidays present an ideal opportunity to undertake construction works without impacting daily operations. Modular buildings offer a rapid and reliable solution for schools needing additional teaching space, specialist classrooms or support facilities.

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Here's why more schools are choosing modular buildings to expand their estates during the school holidays.

Fast-track construction with minimal disruption

Traditional construction projects on school sites can be lengthy, disruptive and often require works to continue during term time. For many schools, this can raise concerns around safety, noise and interruption to teaching and learning. Modular construction solves these issues by relocating the bulk of the work off-site.

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weekend or during the school holidays. This ensures schools return to education with new spaces ready to use.

This streamlined process not only accelerates delivery but also minimises the impact on staff, students, and parents. A crucial factor for schools looking to maintain continuity and wellbeing across the academic year.

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Modular systems also offer room for growth. With repeatable designs and scalable layouts, schools can add more modules in future phases



or relocate them entirely to other parts of the estate if necessary. This long-term adaptability provides great value to local authorities, trusts and independent schools alike.

Whether you need temporary teaching blocks or permanent expansions, modular construction allows you to respond quickly and cost-effectively to rising student numbers or curriculum changes.

Sustainable, compliant and cost-effective

At Wernick, we understand the importance of value for money and environmental responsibility in the education sector. Modular buildings offer schools a more sustainable way to expand, with significantly reduced material waste, fewer carbon emissions, and improved energy performance when compared with traditional builds.

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not just important for regulatory compliance, but for delivering on their own climate commitments and fostering environmental awareness among students.

The programme certainty offered from modular greatly reduces the risks of weather delays and any on-site complications. This means more assurance and better control over costs. This will therefore result in a high-quality building delivered on time and within budget, all during a window that suits your school calendar.

Plan now for school holiday installation

It's never too early to plan ahead. Schools looking to expand should soon begin their planning and procurement processes to ensure their project is ready for installation during the next break.

At Wernick Buildings, our expert team can guide you from design through to handover, offering a full turnkey service that includes planning applications, groundwork, landscaping and interior fitout. With decades of experience delivering school buildings across the UK, we understand the pressures schools face, and we're here to help you find a solution that works.



ISEB Project Qualification (iPQ)

ISEB's Head of Qualifications and Delivery, Hayden Wood, answers some of the questions schools ask about the groundbreaking ISEB Project Qualification (iPQ).

- Q. What is the iPQ and what makes it special?
- A. The iPQ is an independent project where pupils explore a question or challenge of their own choosing. Unlike traditional assessments, the iPQ focuses on the process of learning, researching, reflecting and presenting: putting the power in the hands of the pupil.
- Q. How can the iPQ be used by schools? How can it be modified to fit a unique curriculum?
- A. The iPQ has been designed to be highly flexible to fit the individual needs of our schools. We have schools that use the iPQ as a standalone subject with timetabled lessons, others that embed the iPQ within existing subjects, and some that use off-timetable enrichment, such as clubs or collapsed timetable days.

This adaptability makes the iPQ ideal for schools seeking to enrich their curriculum without needing to completely overhaul it. Our team are available to support schools throughout the process and help fit the iPQ to your students.

- Q. What is project-based learning?
- A. Project-based learning encourages pupils to explore real-world questions through sustained enquiry. This pupil-led approach empowers children to take ownership of their education, choosing a topic that matters to them. The iPQ supports this model by fostering independence, motivation, and deeper engagement with learning.
- Q. What do pupils produce at the end of the iPO?
- A. Pupils produce a final project that reflects their research and thinking. We encourage students to submit their portfolio of work as well as a final product that displays their efforts. Pupils have previously submitted their projects as exhibitions, written reports, podcasts, videos, performances, mobile apps, and even a trebuchet. The iPQ is designed to allow students to play to their strengths and passion to produce something meaningful that highlights their learning.
- As one school leader put it: "The iPQ is intellectual candy. It's way too powerful not to do. Find a way."

Q. How is the iPQ assessed?

- A. The iPQ is assessed using comparative judgement, an innovative tool that uses a large pool of judges to mitigate against the inherent subjectivity in project marking. This highly accurate method offers powerful data which in turn gives real meaning behind an iPQ certificate because we can ensure that each project has been assessed accurately and fairly.
- Q. What skills does the iPQ encourage and develop?
- A. The iPQ cultivates a wide range of skills with a focus on independent research, critical thinking, creativity, presentation and reflection. These are the skills pupils need to thrive in senior schools and beyond, into further education.
- Q. How does the iPQ prepare pupils for senior school and beyond?
- A. The practical skills assessed by the iPQ are becoming ever more important. Students must learn to utilise the vast amounts of information they have access to, process what is relevant and produce their own piece of work with their own stamp on it. The iPQ supports students in learning how to do this from an early age.

- Q. How do schools benefit from using the iPQ?
- A. Schools that adopt the iPQ report increased pupil engagement, improved academic outcomes, and a stronger culture of enquiry.

 Becoming an iPQ Gold School awarded to schools registering 30 or more candidates also enhances reputation and showcases commitment to innovative education.
- Q. How can I use the iPQ in my school?
- A. Start by registering with ISEB and exploring the support materials available at www.iseb. co.uk/assessments/ipq. Our experienced team are always on hand for calls to discuss implementation and help shape iPQ to fit the needs of your school.
- Q. How can schools explore the iPO?
- A. To learn how other forward-thinking schools across the UK are already embedding the iPQ into their curriculums, visit iseb.co.uk/iPQ to read a set of case studies. Schools can also get in touch with ISEB directly at ipq@iseb.co.uk to discuss how the iPQ can be tailored to suit their needs.

EXPLORE THE iPQ

Find out how enquiry-led, skills-based learning can transform pupil motivation, engagement and achievement.

How can your school benefit from the iPQ?

- Create and set your own curriculum identity
- Encourage independent and creative thinking
- Build essential skills for senior school and beyond

Can I build a hovercraft from scratch?
Design & build | Benjamin

How have punishments changed throughout the ages? Shadow Puppet Film | Rose

How technology can help with mental health Website | Josh

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THEY REALLY
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Energy optimisation

School budgets are tighter than ever. While most schools now have a longer-term interest in achieving net zero, and all schools are required to have a Climate Action Plan in place, the immediate challenge is more often than not to save money on energy usage.

What to do? The answer is arguably to focus on energy optimisation. In my view, energy optimisation means ensuring all aspects of a school's buying, generation and use of energy have been rendered as efficient as they reasonably can be. Using less energy and generating more of it onsite will reduce operating costs and save money. This is also part of the recognised route to net zero: first be efficient and reduce energy usage, then deliver what energy is still required via renewable means.

Any reader who has looked at this previously will know that there are many options for energy optimisation and to some extent the challenge can be working out how to prioritise. (Personally, 1 like the expression 'optimisation pathways' because - like the idea of a roadmap to net zero - it conjures up the idea of a journey and progress.)

The received wisdom seems often to focus on fabric improvements, encapsulated by an outstanding example of alliteration in the phrase 'fabric first'. However, this can be misleading. A team of leading engineers recently studied empirical data derived from various school surveys, to determine the effectiveness of optimisation measures in the real world. These were then colour-coded red, amber, green (RAG status) to indicate their varying effectiveness.

Of course, the view on effectiveness does rather depend on what one is trying to achieve and which parameters are being assessed, which meant that the team derived several versions of the RAG status. But in terms of financial payback, fabric definitely wasn't first.

Here's a snapshot from a much-simplified version of the relevant RAG chart. In this case the RAG boundaries were:

Does not pay back in its lifetime Pays back in under 10 years

Pays back but not in under 10 years

Measure	Average Capital Cost	Average Payback (Years)	Average RAG Status	% Saving Heating & Hot Water	% Saving Power
Boiler to condense	Very low	0	Green	5%	0
Upgrade extractors	Low	1.0	Green	0	23%
LEDs	Low	1.8	Green	-3%	26%
Destratification	Low	2.9	Green	6%	-2%
Weather Compensation	Low	3.3	Green	10%	0
Loft insulation	Medium	3.5	Green	15%	0
PIR	Low	4.4	Green	0	5%
Suspended ceiling insulation	Medium	4.8	Green	3%	0
Rooftop Solar PV	High	9.2	Green	0	20%
Cavity Wall Insulation	Medium	19	Amber	12%	0
Secondary glazing	Medium	53	Red	1%	0
Flat roof insulation	High	81	Red	11%	0
Vacuum glazing upgrade	High	90	Red	10%	0
Double glazing	High	105	Red	9%	0

I'd caution against getting too fixed on the precise numbers here: this was just a sample and the results for a given school will depend on the detail of the situation. However, there are some clear trends and it's interesting to note that some measures that are often taken as a given - such as double glazing - rank so poorly in financial terms. Conversely, there are some plant room measures that are relatively cheap and will pay back quickly.

I'd note two takeaways from this brief foray into energy optimisation:

- 1. It can save schools money and is definitely worth pursuing.
- 2. School estate folklore should not be taken for granted: any school estate needs to be assessed holistically before investing in optimisation measures, lest the school wastes money or time on the wrong measures.

Nigel Aylwin-Foster, Director, ReEnergise | nigel@reenergisegroup.com | 07496 950531

Green Tree School Award

New Hall School, Essex, has received a Platinum Award from the Woodland Trust, the UK's largest woodland conservation charity. The award is the highest level of achievement in the Woodland Trust's Green Tree Schools Award programme, which encourages schools to connect with the natural world through a range of practical and educational activities.

To achieve the award, pupils in the Preparatory Divisions took part in a range of initiatives, including a woodland photography walk that inspired creative art pieces, interactive lessons on woodland animals and their habitats, and tree identification exercises. The pupils also helped the Estates team to plant 60 trees, 200 native saplings, and over 100 metres of hedgerow, as well as



creating wildflower meadows and pollinator zones around the school site.

Head of the Preparatory Division, Mrs Samantha Twomey, said: "We are incredibly proud of our pupils' enthusiasm for the natural world. Exploring the grounds at New Hall has inspired so much of their learning, and our pupils have demonstrated a strong sense of environmental responsibility: helping to plant trees and create wildlife-friendly

Pictured: Samantha Twomey with Prep School pupils

Green Flag Award

Ballard School, Hampshire, where children have planted 420 trees this year, has achieved the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award with Distinction.

The Green Flag scheme is the world's largest environmental education programme, run in the UK by Keep Britain Tidy. Designed to be pupil-led, the scheme requires schools to implement a sevenstep framework that includes an environmental review, action plan, evaluation, awareness-raising, curriculum integration, and community involvement.

Recognition with Distinction is reserved for schools demonstrating exceptional commitment across all areas. This year, Ballard's submission saw the school achieve a significantly improved score of 188 points, up from 122 in 2022, out of a possible 252 marks.

Ballard Headmaster, Andrew McCleave, said: "From tree planting and biodiversity tracking to Pictured: Ballard's Eco-Ambassadors



rainwater harvesting and weekly Beach and Forest School sessions, these projects and activities help our pupils understand their power to make a positive difference and put environmental values at the heart of life at Ballard.

"This award is a testament to that hard work and the strength of our shared commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural world."

Ballard's Eco-Ambassadors, a team of pupils spanning Year 3 to Year 11, have now set their sights on a third Green Flag next year. Their focus will be on increasing participation across the school, especially among older pupils, and sharing their message more widely with the community.



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Born: Salisbury, Wiltshire

Married: Yes

Children: Yes, a three- and a five-year- old

Schools and universities attended:

Cheltenham College and Oxford Brookes University

First job: Door-to-door milk salesman!

First job in independent education:
Bursar, Shiplake College

Appointed to the current job: April 2025

> Favourite piece of music: Bitter Sweet Symphony by The Verve

Favourite food: Lamb chops cooked on coals/ embers

> Favourite drink: Red wine

Favourite holiday destination: Western Cape, South Africa

Favourite leisure pastime:
A long dog walk

Favourite TV or radio programme/series:
Currently 'The Bear'

Suggested epitaph: 'Told you the risk register needed updating'

Profile

In conversation with Will Dixon

You started your career in the military before moving into finance/banking and then education. What drew you to education?

Quite simply: culture and purpose. I loved my time in banking and learned a lot working with talented, high-performing teams. But I reached a point where I wanted to apply those skills somewhere I could have a meaningful and visible impact every day. Independent schools offer exactly that. You cannot fail to be inspired by the people you work alongside and the extraordinary opportunities we create for young people. The sector is full of complexity and challenge, but also purpose, and that's a powerful combination.

Are the duties of a chief operating officer very different to those of a bursar? If so, how?

Some might say it's just a shinier job title, but the truth is that it's an attempt to describe a change in emphasis in the role. The term 'bursar' often evokes an image of someone behind a ledger, quietly making the numbers add up. A COO, by contrast, is explicitly tasked with driving change as much as managing risk.

In many schools, including LWC, the role has evolved in response to increased scale, complexity, and strategic ambition. Yes, I still oversee finance, estates, people, operations and IT. But I also spend a great deal of time on growth planning, investment decisions, partnership working and transformation projects, like our recent merger with St Neot's Prep School. In essence, it's not just about running the business; it's about building it.

Your background – like that of so many bursars in the past – is military. What makes ex-services personnel so suitable for the role?

We're slowly becoming a more diverse bunch, I promise! I only served for a few years as a junior officer before a medical discharge and so didn't spend as long in the forces as some.

That said, the military remains one of the best leadership incubators in the world. It teaches you to lead under pressure, make decisions with incomplete information, and stay focused on outcomes. Those qualities such as clarity, resilience and adaptability are vital in schools, particularly as the landscape becomes more volatile. Combine that with a desire to serve wider society, and you can see why education appeals to many veterans.

You have taken up your role as COO at what could be described as one of the most financially challenging times for the sector. Has this stress changed the dynamic between heads and COOs across the sector?

It may have in some places, but I'd argue it shouldn't have.

The relationship between the head and the COO (or bursar) is one of the most critical dynamics in any school. Done right, it should be a true partnership: a blend of vision and execution, of educational leadership and operational delivery. When the stakes are high, as they are now, the need for clarity, trust and alignment becomes even greater. Financial challenge should drive collaboration rather than division.

You have said that in the current climate commercial diversification is key. What opportunities has LWC considered in this respect?

At LWC, we're not looking to diversify for the sake of it – we're looking for opportunities that align with our values, make use of our estate, and enhance our educational offer.

One current example we're really excited about launching is an international immersion programme to support overseas students as they transition into British boarding life. It's being run as a partnership but controlled by the school, with strong safeguarding, academic and pastoral oversight. It generates income, but more importantly, it extends our mission and reputation globally. We're also looking closely at the wider potential that our 1,200-acre campus can bring during holiday periods throughout the year, and at how our

Will Dixon is the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Lord Wandsworth College (LWC), Hampshire. He joined the school in April 2025, moving from Shiplake College, Oxfordshire, where he had been bursar for three years.



commercial enterprises can better integrate with the school's identity.

LWC is continuing with a planned programme of investment which includes the opening of a new Sport, Fitness, Health and Adventure Centre. What has made you decide to proceed when financial caution might have dictated otherwise?

You don't stop sowing seed just because the economic weather is uncertain. We believe in planning for the long-term success of the school, and The Grange development is about more than just a building. This is about creating a lifelong love of health, wellness and adventure, and will be central to the holistic experience we offer our pupils. It's no secret that physical activity has been linked to longevity across the world. We're keen to create a space where all of our pupils can weave this into their everyday lives - whatever their passion. From a financial perspective, bold moves like this, taken at the right time, can strengthen our market position for the future.

I've been fortunate to inherit a really well-thought-through estates masterplan from my predecessor, Baz Bennett (now COO at Sedbergh School, Cumbria). This masterplan is fully aligned with our educational strategy and allows me to step seamlessly into leading the delivery of that plan. There are obviously financial checkpoints along the way and we'll review the plan alongside our long-term financial forecast on a regular basis, to ensure we're striking the right balance between being bold and being careful.

LWC sits on a large school estate which includes an arable farm and several listed buildings and structures. These will all come with their own considerations. How do you balance investment and development needs against those of the natural and historic environment to ensure they dovetail with local community opinion?

The farm is one of the many reasons I was keen to get this job. Few schools have their own working farm, and we

have an amazing relationship with our Farm Manager, Paul, who is as passionate about educating the next generation about the stewardship of our countryside as he is about his shiny new combine harvester!

You have to start from the position that none of these things are in conflict. Just like farmers, a school should be a responsible steward of its heritage and its environment, not simply a developer of it.

At LWC, we work closely with local planners, conservation officers and the community to ensure that every step we take enhances what we've inherited. That might mean retrofitting listed buildings rather than replacing them or managing the farm in a way that supports biodiversity, such as the regenerative approach that we adhere to. Like many others reading this, we don't always make progress as quickly as we would like. But I know this is a common experience with the planning process throughout the construction and development sector right now.

Responsible stewardship also isn't restricted to our environment. LWC was originally founded to provide an education for those who had lost the support of one or both parents. We continue to offer this opportunity today, through our transformative Lord Wandsworth Foundation. This requires careful oversight and we hope to grow the number of Foundationers we support in the coming years.

LWC entered into a formal collaboration with St Neot's Prep, Hampshire, in 2021 to extend the educational pathway to 2 to 18. At the start of this academic year the merger will be complete. Part of that alliance has involved sharing some of LWC's senior business staff to work together on strategy and future projects. What is the key piece of advice you could give to schools embarking on a similar journey?

That it's not a transaction; it's a relationship.

You can draft the legal documents and set the strategy, but what makes it work is trust, humility, and the willingness to spend time together, understanding each other's culture. It very much helps when the organisations' values align from the start, as is the case between LWC and St Neot's.

This mindset shapes everything. It means recognising that good ideas and strong leadership exist on both sides. It means not rushing the integration process and being honest about the fact that some things will take time, and some things might look different in each setting, and that's okay.

Ultimately, the goal isn't to create a single organisation that looks uniform, it's to build something that feels united, where the strengths of each school benefit the other. That only happens when you treat it less like a corporate restructure and more like a long-term partnership rooted in shared values.

LWC and St Neot's will feel exactly the same to pupils and parents from day one. But our offering will be much stronger for the skills and expertise brought by both schools.

Independent education is a major investment, often entailing significant lifestyle sacrifices from families – you believe "It must be clear and obvious at every step of the educational journey that the investment was more than worth it." Have you an example of how this benefit can be communicated?

Now more than ever, parents are making enormous sacrifices – emotionally, financially, logistically – to invest in their children's education. So, it's not enough to offer value; we have to show it.

One thing we focus on is visibility. That could be through showcasing our academic outcomes, but it also comes through highlighting stories of current pupils, staff and alumni, demonstrating enrichment opportunities, or simply having a thoughtful conversation with a parent at pick up. Families should be able to feel the impact of their investment not only on A Level results day, but in the confidence, kindness and resilience their child brings home with them.

Continued >

Profile In conversation with Will Dixon (continued)

We're also very conscious that while capital projects grab headlines, it's the everyday experience that really defines value for most families. That means investing in the core proposition: great teaching, warm and well-run boarding houses, classrooms that feel alive and looked after. New facilities matter as they send a signal about ambition and building for the future, but they must never come at the expense of the people and places that shape a pupil's experience day in, day out.

With international students whose parents live overseas making up , 4.7% of the pupil population (ISC1), it is clear that the international boarding market is key to the sector. What can schools do to make sure their offering continues to appeal to that market?

It's absolutely an area we are looking to grow and we've invested **L**time and resource into really understanding what a great boarding experience looks like for our international community. We feel it's about partnership, not just placement. Many international families are looking for more than just a school, they want an immersive experience in British education and culture. That means not only helping pupils to thrive academically, but supporting them and their families at every step of the way: from

the first conversation with an agent, to integration into Sixth Form or beyond.

We've been actively seeking feedback from agents, families and pupils - not just about the big things like curriculum and university destinations, but the small moments that shape a student's experience: arrival day, food, guardianship, friendships, even how we explain the school routine to families navigating a new system. These 'microinteractions' are often the most powerful indicators of whether a school really understands its international audience.

It's also a matter of mindset. Our international programme is a strategic area of growth that strengthens our global brand awareness and our educational community. That means investing in cultural integration, language support, and building trusted longterm relationships with overseas partners.

Looking ahead you have said that the role of a great COO is to stay ahead , of the curve. The key question is which curve dominates your thinking?

There are two curves that spring to

The first is the demographic curve. We're all aware of the pressures coming from falling birth rates and questions around long-term affordability - this curve will

vary in different locations. The second is the expectation curve. What families are looking for from schools is evolving quickly, and not always in ways the sector has been prepared for. Boarding is a great example of this.

The real challenge is how to respond to both at the same time. For me, that means trying to be proactive, open to change and always anchored in our values and purpose. It's about listening carefully to families, pupils, colleagues and the wider market and making sure we stay relevant in both what we offer and how we deliver it.

Smart decisions taken now will leave the school in an even stronger position in the years to come. This falls back to the stewardship responsibility and continuing to be the trusted guardian of more than a hundred years of educational experience.

With the responsibilities of the job and a family, it must be important to find time for yourself now and again. What's your chill-out of choice?

Anything involving food, fire and a bit of chaos. I love to cook, especially outdoors, and I'm at my happiest when I've got BBQ tongs in one hand, a rugby ball being thrown around the garden, and a very persistent black Labrador trying to eat everything in sight.

1 ISC, www.isc.co.uk/schools/about-isc-schools/international, accessed August 2025

Merger completed

Lord Wandsworth College (LWC) and St Neot's Preparatory School, Hampshire, have successfully merged, following more than four years of formal collaboration.

The two schools first entered into a formal partnership in April 2021.

Since then, both LWC (which provides an independent co-ed education from 11 to 18 years) and St Neot's (offering an independent co-ed education between 2 and 13 years) have seen pupil numbers rise.

Merging to form the Lord Wandsworth Family of Schools is the next step in the collaborative process and will create a seamless educational pathway from 2 to 18 years.

continue to learn from each other and enjoy the journey." While both schools will maintain their own unique identities, the partnership will yield opportunities to share facilities, best practice and examples of educational excellence.

"We are incredibly excited

Pictured: (top) Lord Wandsworth College and (bottom) St Neot's Preparatory School. Photo credit: Lord Wandsworth Family of Schools



"We have taken our time with the merger, to ensure that we got it right," said St Neot's Headmaster, Jonathan Slot. "Now we have two schools with a shared ethos, values and ambition. Because of this shared outlook, pupils joining LWC from St Neot's will feel very much at home. The future is bright and we've only just begun."





Pre-School opening



Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire, has announced the opening of a brand-new Pre-School in January 2026.

Located within the grounds of the current Kimbolton Prep School, the Pre-School will be housed next door to the Reception classrooms, to help ease the transition into school life and pupils will also benefit from a secured place in Kimbolton's Reception class, All children will have access to a range of facilities including an on-site swimming pool, where weekly swimming lessons will form part of

Pictured: Kimbolton School pupils

the Pre-School curriculum. Forest School sessions will take place in Squirrel Wood, also located on site, where children will be able to explore the great outdoors.

Head of the Prep School at Kimbolton, Mrs Claire Petrie, said: "A natural extension of our Prep School, the Pre-School team will be focused on nurturing curiosity, building confidence, and instilling a lifelong love of learning in pupils. We very much look forward to welcoming our first cohort in January."



Global leadership team appointments

The Repton Family of Schools has announced three appointments to its global leadership team. They are:

- Sarah Fletcher, High Mistress of St Paul's Girls' School (2017-2025) and former Head of City of London School.
- · Martin Collier, Master of Haileybury (2017-2024) and former Head of St John's Leatherhead, with six years as Chair of HMC's Academic Policy sub-committee.
- Sue Woodroofe, current Chair of HMC (2024-2025) and first female Principal of The

Grammar School at Leeds (2016-2025), with leadership experience spanning state and independent, single-sex and co-educational schools.

The Repton Family of Schools educates more than 10,000 students across three continents. It comprises eleven schools in the UK and internationally. Beyond Repton and Repton Prep, the group includes schools in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, China and Egypt, as well as three further UK prep schools: St Wystan's in Repton; Marlborough House Vinehall in Robertsbridge, East Sussex; and St Hugh's in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire.

Pictured: Repton School Photo credit: Repton School



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Book your free Minibus Operations Review

John Peterson, Director of Minibus Services, explains why Rivervale Minibus has launched this free service, exclusive to members of the ISBA and readers of The Independent School Magazine.

At a recent exhibition in London we had several independent schools approach us to ask if we completed minibus audits because they had 'inherited' a tangled web of different aged minibuses: some owned, some leased, some hired, with different providers for the vehicles, training and maintenance. They wanted to understand what they had, what they needed and if they could save time and costs. "We just want to look at what we would do if we could start from scratch with our minibuses," said one school.

So, we launched the Minibus
Operations Review. One of two
reviews we have completed since
has reassured one school they have
everything they need, but we made
some recommendations like using
a free app for minibus walkaround
checks. The other school needed a
significant amount of help organising
their Section 19 Permits and safety
inspections.

Could you save money (and time) streamlining and consolidating your minibus operations?

If you think your school might benefit from an overview of minibus operations and an expert eye, talk to Rivervale Minibus.

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then let us help.

- Do you think a fully maintained leasing contract might save you money and help avoid unexpected costs?
- 2. Would on-site safety inspections for all your vehicles save you time and money?
- 3. Are you thinking that buying a used vehicle outright might be a better option than leasing?
- 4. Are you a vehicle short but don't know whether to lease, purchase or hire?
- 5. Are your minibuses from different lenders, causing confusion when there are issues?
- 6. Do you have older buses that are costing more with 6-week safety inspections and would like comparative costs for younger buses?

- 7. Are you wondering if replacing some minibuses with 9-seaters would be more cost-effective?
- 8. Are you struggling to find quality MiDAS and D1 driver training?
- 9. Would you like some comparative costs to see if you can make any savings with different leasing, purchasing and maintenance scenarios?

We can help you understand what you have, where there are gaps, and how you could be saving time and money in the future.

All these questions and more can be answered in a free consultation. We will help you get to grips with all your minibus operations and see if bringing it all to one provider will not only save you time but, more importantly, money.

Rivervale Minibus are in the unique position of being able to offer leasing, rentals, used-sales, driver training, on-site safety inspections and other online support services. We value our clients, and pride ourselves on our exceptional



customer service. The more services you take from us, the easier it becomes to look after all aspects of your minibuses. Making Minibus Manageable.

Would it save you time to have one minibus provider supply your vehicles, deliver D1 and MiDAS driver training, and complete your minibus safety inspections? What would that look like financially? And how could it be achieved? We'll show you how.

Rivervale will help you understand what you need to be doing to run legally compliant and best practice fleets, and we will help you calculate whether moving to a single provider would save you money.

Spend an hour or two with our expert minibus team and work through everything you currently do minibus wise, identify any gaps and make a financial plan that will save you money and bring everything minibus under one roof.

Rivervale are the only minibus provider that can offer all the services you need, and this review has no strings attached. If you choose to stay as you are, then we hope we will have helped you identify ways you can improve your minibus operations or reassured you that you have everything covered.



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Rivervale

UK-Japan Young Scientists Workshop and Conference

The UK–Japan Young Scientists programme brings together 16–18-year-old students from both countries to live and work in small international teams with British and Japanese scientists and engineers. The aim is to bring young scientists together, for them to collaborate on a university-level project and present their findings in 'conference style' to each other. Head of Science from Framlingham College, Suffolk, Sam Lebbon, explains what it is all about.

On Sunday 20 July, 25 pupils from six UK schools - Framlingham College, Suffolk; Wycombe Abbey, Buckinghamshire; Taunton School, Somerset; Hinchley Wood School, Surrey; Salvatorian Harrow, Middlesex; and Urswick School, London, arrived at Jesus College, Cambridge, to take part in the 2025 UK-Japan Young Scientists Workshop. They were joined by 25 students from schools in Kyoto and Tokyo, who had travelled via Heathrow after a cultural tour of London, including a visit to the Royal Society. Each UK participant had been selected by their school as a high-potential scientist and was tasked with representing the UK as a Youth Ambassador for

British Science.

Although many arrived not knowing anyone outside their own school – and some as the sole representative from their institution – within days, students had formed lasting friendships and connections that extended far beyond the laboratory.

The week offered a packed programme of academic and cultural activity. During the day, pupils attended lectures from scientists, including Professor Roger Cashmore and Professor Lord Martin Rees, in one of his final engagements as Astronomer Royal. They also participated in panel discussions with

postdoctoral researchers and industry professionals, gaining insight into the realities of scientific careers.

And each evening offered opportunities for cultural exchange, with both UK and Japanese students leading sessions. These ranged from a traditional Japanese tea ceremony and calligraphy, to a ceilidh, the sharing of national snacks, and light-hearted games such as 'duck, duck, goose' – all of which fostered a joyful and collaborative spirit.

Central to the workshop were six project-based research strands, each hosted by departments within the University of Cambridge:

- Nuclear Energy with Professor Wade Allison
- Jet Engine Efficiency at the Whittle Laboratory
- Paleoclimate Analysis through Sediment Sampling with the Department of Earth Sciences
- Protein Identification in Cancer Cells at the Department of Pathology, in collaboration with Cancer Research UK
- Catalysis and Nanomaterials at the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology
- Science Communication with the Naked Scientists, where pupils documented and presented the work of the other groups.

Over three days, pupils immersed themselves in their chosen topic before presenting their findings in the Yusuf Hamied Theatre at Christ's College. The audience



of St Andrews; Yasumaro Haruta (First Secretary at the Embassy of Japan); a delegation from Otowa Electric; Dr Michael King from The Japan Society; members of the Japanese Women's Association, and many more. The calibre of the student presentations was extraordinary, particularly given the short duration of lab work and preparation – comparable in clarity and originality to much longer-term undergraduate or even postgraduate projects.

To celebrate the end of the presentations, there was a formal dinner in the Upper Hall of Jesus College, preceded by drinks in the Pump Court. Seeing the pupils gaze at the beauty and history of the hall was enlightening and we hope it will foster their love to continue studying science for many years to come.

The week concluded with the first ever UK–Japan Young Scientists Alumni Event, hosted back at Jesus College. Over 40 former participants from across the years returned to reconnect and network – an encouraging turnout for an inaugural event. Plans are already underway for a larger celebration in 2026 to mark the 25th anniversary of the programme.

As the workshop alternates annually between the UK and Japan, the 2026 edition will take place in Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo.

For those looking ahead to the 2027 Cambridge workshop, further information is available at: www.ukjapanscienceworkshop.com

General Knowledge Quiz Champions



The General Knowledge Quiz Team from Russell House School, Kent, has triumphed at the General Knowledge Quiz Club National Finals, held at the University of Oxford.

The competition, which attracted 435 teams from 260 schools, saw just 34 of the top teams qualify for the live finals. Russell House emerged victorious after a tense series of rounds.

Administered by Quiz Club, a school quiz provider, the championship challenges pupil teams on a broad spectrum of subjects – history, literature, science, geography, and current affairs. Competitors move through live online heats before advancing to the final showdown.

Pictured: The winning team

From conversation to culture - embedding equality, diversity and inclusion

"It's no longer merely about having an effective, supportive and adaptable DEIJ (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Justice) strategy. Schools should actively engage, empower and educate pupils, staff and parents on these sensitive and often emotionally charged topics." Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead at Bryanston School, Dorset, Oliver Nicholson, outlines the journey the school has been on to put equality and inclusivity front and centre, and the ways in which it has most resonated with the pupils.

Teachers everywhere recognise the mounting social pressures that mobile devices, algorithm-driven feeds and influencer culture place on teenagers. Rising misogyny, relentless body-image messaging and comparison chip away at pupils' self-esteem. At Bryanston, we decided that countering those forces could not remain an optional pastoral extra; it has to become part of our core educational purpose. Four years into that journey, a clear framework has emerged: one that any school, regardless of size or setting, can adapt.

Our first step was to give staff a common language and evidencebased strategies for tackling sensitive issues. We partnered with Bold Voices for whole-staff CPD and brought in consultant Michael Conroy to challenge entrenched assumptions about gender and power dynamics. Their training moved quickly from theory to practice, supplying case studies and conversation templates. Because the work was led by specialists, staff felt both supported and professionally stretched, rather than overwhelmed by yet another initiative

Bryanston sits in a rural pocket of Dorset, so collaboration with neighbouring schools was essential. We teamed up with The Blandford School to host joint workshops that drew in nearby primary and secondary pupils. By pooling resources, we not only amplified the reach of each event but also modelled community responsibility that inclusion is everyone's business, not a single school brand.

Sustainability depends on pupil

voice. Sixth Formers now co-plan

and co-deliver sessions for Years 7

to 11, transforming workshops from

lectures into peer-led dialogues. Younger pupils listen differently when the messenger is a teenager who understands TikTok references and the social minefields of Snapchat streaks. Meanwhile, the older ambassadors refine leadership, public speaking and project management skills, astonishingly powerful professional preparation disguised as pastoral work.

Early on, we asked pupils which topics felt most urgent. Their answers were candid and wideranging and included: the pressure to attain digitally perfect bodies; the stigma attached to tears and "big feelings"; the seductive authority of online influencers; and the hidden gender signals embedded in toy aisles, cinema screens and even the Barbie renaissance. When teachers framed lessons as myth-busting adventures rather than moral lectures, engagement soared. Pupils wanted to debate, challenge and dissect assumptions, precisely the critical thinking behaviours we apply across the curriculum.

The classroom conversations soon spilled out into wider school life. A newly formed EDI Inclusion Society composed of neurodivergent and neurotypical pupils launched assemblies and micro-campaigns. A parallel Female Empowerment Society began auditing policies from PE kit design to fixture scheduling and presented evidencebased recommendations to heads of department. Whole school events gained fresh authenticity because pupils curated them. International Women's Day featured a pupilproduced concert celebrating female composers; Black History Month transformed corridors into galleries of art and lyrics selected by pupils themselves.

Every phase of Bryanston's journey offers transferable practices. Start by gauging staff confidence with a focused CPD session led by external experts. That single intervention crystallises shared vocabulary and reveals blind spots. Enlist older pupils as allies from the outset and you will gain both credibility and capacity. Pilot one tangible change - a sensory-friendly reading corner or a pupil-designed corridor exhibition - and publicise it loudly to start conversation. Embed content inside curriculum time, particularly in PSHE, to avoid the

'one-off assembly' trap. Finally, track progress through quick qualitative pupil voice surveys: shifting attitudes surface more clearly in pupil reflections than in exam data.

The momentum continues. Bryanston's next goals include expanding peer mentoring across boarding houses and discussing these ideas in local schools. The overarching aim is to equip every educator, not just specialists, with practical tools to help young people navigate digital noise and promote inclusive mindsets.

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At a time when providing nutritious, cost-effective, and high-quality school meals has become increasingly complex for many schools, apetito, one of the UK's fastest growing school caterers, is stepping forward to address these challenges head-on.

To explore the key findings of its 'Shaping the Future of Independent School Catering Report', released earlier this year in collaboration with the Independent Schools Association (ISA), apetito is launching a brandnew webinar. Hosted by Peter Woodroffe, Deputy Chief Executive of ISA, it brings together key voices from across the sector to explore and examine the complexities and possibilities of independent school catering that the report uncovered.

Joining Peter on the panel is Rudolf Eliott Lockhart, CEO of ISA, who offers strategic insights into the evolving needs of independent schools; Rupert Weber, General Manager of apetito's Education Division, who shares strategic ideas about how independent schools can solve the catering challenges they are currently facing; and James Stacey, Managing Partner of ISCC, who brings a consultancy perspective on how schools can achieve operational and catering efficiencies.

This webinar delves into the evolving landscape of catering in independent schools, offering a clear and comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities shaping the sector today. Drawing on extensive qualitative and quantitative research, the webinar examines each of the key report themes.

The key findings: what schools are saying When apetito began analysing the data collected for the report, three priorities emerged as the most pressing concerns for independent schools in relation to catering: cost, quality, and nutrition.

During the webinar, when examining the issue of cost, the discussion focused on changes schools can make to reduce the financial burden of their catering operations. The panel then turned to examine why schools are finding it increasingly hard to offer high-quality meals and shared insights and steps schools can take to deliver better quality meals for pupils. Focusing on this issue of nutrition, the group's conversation covered the challenges schools face in offering broad and nutritious menus and what measures schools can take to diversify their menus and offer a variety of balanced and healthy meal options.

The webinar also explores more of the report's findings and shares practical strategies on how independent schools can deliver school meals which make a real difference to their pupils. Further discussions by the panel cover:

- Pupil and parent engagement: Why there's a growing need to involve families and pupils in food choices and education.
- Tacking the labour crisis: The impact of staff and skills shortages in school kitchens and how to mitigate these issues.

- Food safety and allergies: Why effectively managing dietary needs safely and inclusively is a non-negotiable for schools.
- Education and sustainability: How important it is for schools to teach food education and adopt more sustainable catering practices.

Unlocking the future: learn how to revolutionise school meals

When apetito set out to begin this research project it wanted to examine the true landscape of independent school catering. Partnering with the Independent Schools Association and ISCC for this webinar has allowed apetito to dive deep into both the challenges and successes schools face when it comes to their catering. This webinar is a valuable resource, enabling school leaders, catering teams and education professions to learn from industry professionals how to deliver an excellent school meal provision.

Watch the webinar on-demand here:

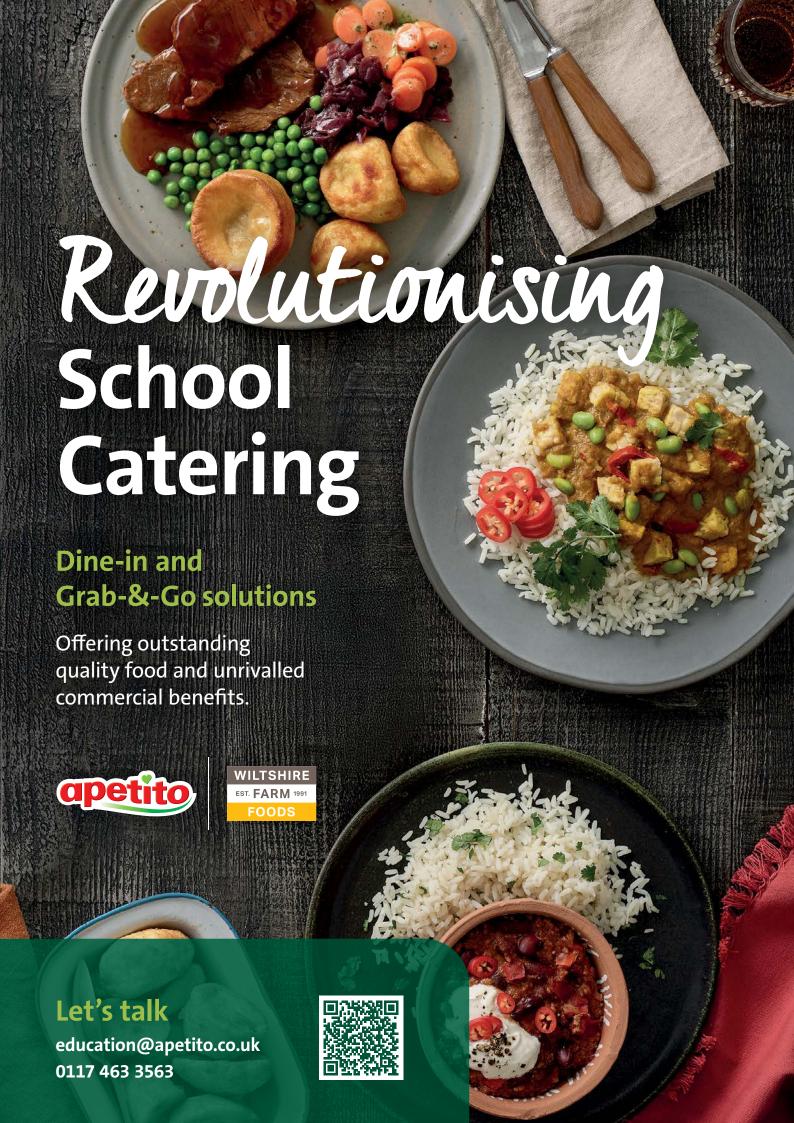


Download the full report here:



Transform Your School Catering

Reach out to apetito's Education team and discover how apetito can transform your independent school's catering with a focus on quality, ease and significant cost savings by visiting https://apetito.link/ISM2025 or contacting 0117 463 3563.



Cost of independent education - new research

Recent analysis released from Weatherbys Private Bank has suggested that the total cost of sending a child to independent school from reception through to Year 13 is set to double when taking into account the impact of VAT and inflation on school fees.

The research found that assuming inflation sat at 3%, parents enrolling reception-age children in day school in 2025 could expect to pay around £377,000 in fees to see them through private schooling to A Level. This figure rises to £763,000 for boarders. Around two thirds of the increase is due to inflation.

This figure has been compared to an average total cost of fees for this year's school leavers 2012-2025 (assumed education to A Level) of nearly £205,000 for day pupils at day school, just under £260,000 for day pupils at boarding schools, and nearly £414,000 for boarders.

In their report they state that: "The cost of private education

has risen sharply in the past year, largely as a result of the imposition of VAT in January 2025. But schools are also under pressure from rising wages and the increase in National Insurance contributions. In addition, private schools have lost their eligibility for business rates charitable relief."

Head of Private Clients at
Weatherbys Private Bank, Oliver
Barnett, said: "I'm sure sending
out invoices with VAT on was
a nail-biting moment for some
heads, who would have been
nervous about losing pupils.
As things settle and over time,
it would not surprise us to see
management attempting to
recover some of the discount they

applied in January. Research from Weatherbys shows that schools have historically increased fees by above inflation, so our 85% fee growth estimate is definitely conservative."

Responding, ISC chief executive Julie Robinson commented: "Schools will always do all they can to keep fees affordable for parents. A third of pupils at ISC schools receive some sort of fee assistance, and the amount spent on bursaries is at an all-time high. However, the government's decision to tax education will inevitably have an impact on cost, with a cumulative effect over several years."

Partner in the Employment Team and Head of Education at Birketts

LLP, Abigail Trencher, said: "One of Labour's key objectives was its growth agenda, to build the economy from the 'bottom up and middle out' by creating the conditions for sustained economic growth through a combination of stability, investment, and reforms. It seems to fail to recognise what an important economic powerhouse our education sector is. The independent school sector, together with the further and higher education sectors, have all been hit by Government policy decisions. This will not just impact schools, and families struggling to afford to keep their children in independent schools, but it will also have a huge impact on the global standing of our education sector and to Great Britain plc."

For further information on the research visit: www.weatherbys.bank/insights/costs-of-privately-schooling-next-generation-set-to-nearly-double

Blue Plaque

A plaque commemorating the life of a mountaineer, who was part of the first expedition to conquer Mount Everest, has been installed at the school where he taught.

The Blue Plaque in honour of Wilfrid Noyce has been placed at Malvern College, Worcestershire, where he taught Classics and French after the Second World War.

Mr Noyce was a member of the party that conquered Everest in 1953. The successful attempt was famously made by Edmund Hillary and sherpa Tenzing Norgay on May 29. Hillary and Tenzing were the second pair to attempt to reach the summit after Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans were forced to abandon their attempt. Had Hillary and Tenzing failed, Mr Noyce and his climbing partner Mike Ward would have undertaken a "third and last attempt".

Speaking at the plaque's unveiling, Mr Noyce's son, Jeremy, said: "Like many young people emerging from the armed forces at the end of the Second World War, my father struggled to find a direction and purpose to his life in the new peacetime world.

"One certainty was that he would continue to climb. His pre-war climbing experience had mainly been in Snowdonia and the Lake District, with a single trip to the Alps in 1938. But during the war, his horizons were greatly expanded by three climbing trips to the Himalayas, while he was stationed with the Army in India, and this experience was probably a factor in his inclusion in the team which made the first ascent of Everest in 1953.

"He also wanted to continue with his writing, and quite unusually had a passion for both prose and poetry. He had already published numerous articles for various climbing journals and was working on his first book 'Mountains and Men', which would be published in 1947. He started writing poetry at school, and had two volumes of poetry published in later years.



"However, neither of these activities paid the rent and, after a period of consultation and reflection, he accepted a teaching post at Malvern College."

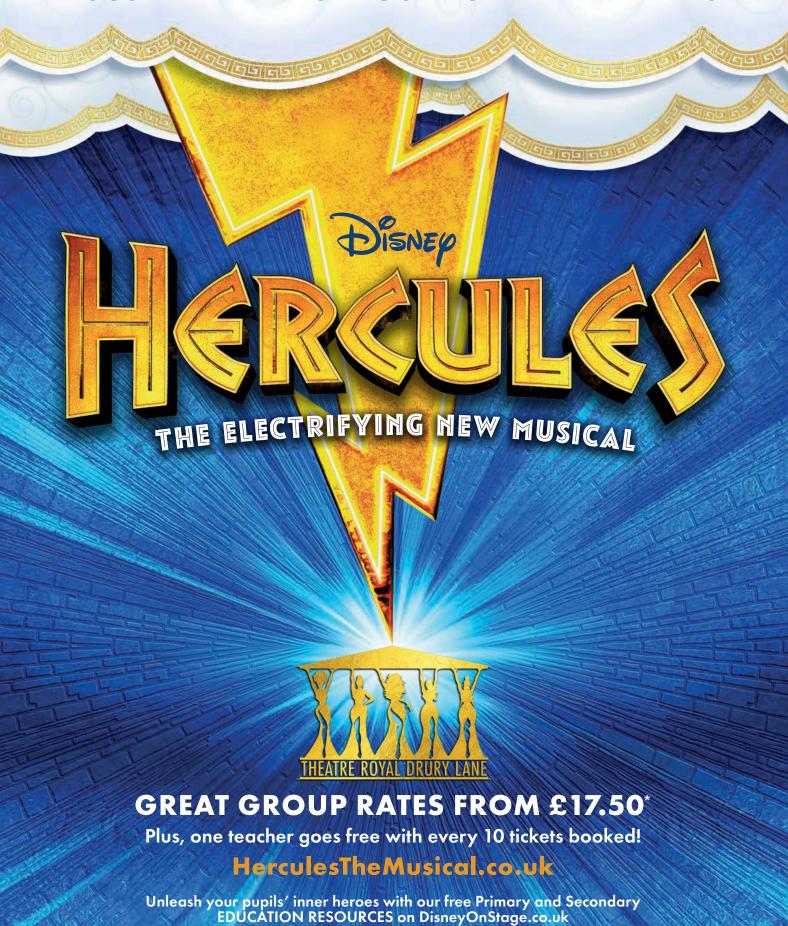
During his time at the College, Mr Noyce became involved in various extra-curricular activities, both in the school and in the town where he was founding member of the Malvern Anglo-French Society and the Malvern Writers' Guild.

It was also while at Malvern that he met his wife Rosemary, who was teaching at the Girls' School. They were married in the Priory in August 1950 and soon after moved to Surrey where Mr Noyce went on to teach at Charterhouse.

Stephen Holroyd, Deputy Head, Curriculum, at Malvern College, who is himself a keen mountaineer, attended the unveiling of the plaque, which is placed near the entrance to the school's sports centre.

He said: "Wilfrid Noyce is a well-known name in climbing circles because of his role in that ground breaking ascent of Everest over 70 years ago. We are very proud of our association with him, and so we are delighted to have a plaque in his honour here at the school."

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*Terms & Conditions: Educational group rates currently available on selected seats and performances to 18 July 2026 (excluding school holidays on selected seats, subject to availability and may be revoked at any time. Valid to select Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening performances and Thursday matinee performances only. Additional exclusions apply. For every ten (10) paid student tickets, Groups receive one (1) free licket for use by a feacher. Education group tickets purchased shall not be resold via social media channels to individuals. All attendees must be from the same education group (we reserve the right to verify these details at the theatre). All sales final; no refunds/exchanges. Prices, dates, times and cast subject to change without notice. Age guidance 6+, under 4s will not be admitted. Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult. © Disney

Music, Drama & Dance

Dance World Cup



Eleven-year-old Sienna Hodgson, a Year 7 pupil at Westholme School, Lancashire, has achieved international recognition after being crowned World Champion at the Dance World Cup 2025 in Burgos, Spain.

The Dance World Cup is one of the largest international dance competitions in the world, bringing together thousands of young dancers to compete across a wide range of styles and age categories.

Sienna competed as a Team England finalist at this year's event, which featured dancers from 76 countries.

After qualifying earlier this year with four solo routines, she was selected to perform three –

Pictured: Sienna Hodgson

jazz, lyrical and contemporary
– in line with England's 2025
competition rules. Each of Sienna's
performances was choreographed
by Emily Charlton, Principal at
Vale Studios where Sienna trains.

Sienna secured the gold medal in the Children's Jazz category, earning the title of World Champion in this field. She also achieved a bronze medal for her lyrical solo and placed 7th globally in the contemporary dance category.

In recognition of her success, Sienna has now been awarded a Golden Ticket – a scholarship-style invitation to attend an elite dance masterclass weekend in Spain, later this year.

Glastonbury 2025



Back in June, Bergie, a Music Scholar in Lower Grammar (Year 9) from Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, found himself performing at the Glastonbury Festival 2025 – before an exclusive audience on its opening night.

While on a family ski holiday in Val d'Isère, Bergie was playing Ludovico Einaudi's 'Experience' on the hotel piano, when he caught the attention of Jen Oldland, the founder of Camp Kerala, described by Vogue as "the most glamorous way to experience Glastonbury".

Impressed by the rendition, Jen approached Bergie to offer a personal invitation to perform at Pictured: Bergie at the piano Camp Kerala's VIP opening night at Glastonbury.

Introduced to the crowd as "an amazing young man with the brightest of futures ahead," Bergie played a 20-minute set, featuring a rendition of 'Experience'. He has since been invited back to perform at Glastonbury in 2027.

In preparation for the performance, Bergie received mentorship from Mark Crown – member of the British dance group Rudimental and known for his production work with artists including Mahalia, Plan B, Rita Ora, Jess Glynne, and Ed Sheeran.

Bugsy Malone



Year 8 pupils from Wycliffe College Prep, Gloucestershire, have been custard pie-ing to their heart's content during a production of 'Bugsy Malone' as part of their drama week.

The pupils were off timetable all week, working together to form an hour-long performance of Bugsy Malone, complete with songs and costumes.

Pictured: With splurge guns used in the performance

Rock musical



Pupils from Ashville College, North Yorkshire, have swapped performing in their school's Soothill theatre for the open air in their latest original rock musical with a difference.

Ashville broke new ground with its outdoor, technological performance of 'Beth – a modern take on Shakespeare's Macbeth – written, composed and directed by Karl Boyd, Director of Performing Arts.

Members of the audience each wore broadcast headsets to hear the performances, which had been Pictured: Performing 'Beth pre-recorded in the studio, while pupils put on a visual performance live in the grounds of the school.

Karl Boyd said: "Theatre is a great way of unlocking creativity and 'Beth was a very interesting and unique concept that aimed to do just that.

"The school's purpose-designed auditorium has played host to thousands of productions and performances, but this was the first time we have taken drama into the open air in this creative way on such a scale."



From Rome to New York

Wrekin College Choir, Shropshire, who have previously performed at the Vatican in Rome, have now taken on the Big Apple as one of only five choirs worldwide to be accepted to sing in the guest concert series at St. Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue, New York.

The group of students from across the different year groups at Wrekin also sang at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and the Riverside Church.

Director of Music Mr Simon Platford said the choir received three standing ovations during their

Pictured: The choir at St. Patrick's Cathedral

performances singing a mixture of liturgical music from psalms to Gospel choir.

Alongside the concerts, the choir packed in as many sights as they could, seeing the Statue of Liberty and Liberty island, Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Times Square, Macy's department store, Grand Central Station, One World Trade Center and the 9/11 Memorial, Radio City Music Hall, The Rockefeller Center and also a trip to the headquarters of the United Nations, where the choir were allowed into the General Assembly room while it was in session.

'Wilde' at The Fringe

A group of 13- to 17-year-olds from Embley Senior School, Hampshire, have performed a production of 'Wilde' – the untold story of Constance, wife of Oscar Wilde – at, this year's Edinburgh Fringe.

The students, who form the Tír na nÓg Theatre Company, were inspired by Franny Moyle's 2011 biography of Constance Wilde. With support from Oscar and Constance Wilde's only grandchild, Merlin Holland, and the Wilde estate, the Company wrote and composed the play themselves.



A tale of courage, loyalty and love, 'Wilde' reveals the resilience of the woman who stood alongside one of literature's greats, and the scandal that destroyed them both.



Pictured: Performing 'Wilde'

National songwriting competition

An Upper Sixth student from Leighton Park School (LPS), Berkshire, has won a national songwriting competition for the fifth year running.

Eliza won her age group in the Independent Schools Association (ISA) National Composing Competition for her piece 'Break in the Loop'.

She was just one of three LPS students celebrating success in the competition with Alana in Year 11 securing second place in the Junior age category and Micah coming runner up in the Instrumental category. This success follows on from Leighton Park students also winning 1st and 2nd place in the national ISA Young Musician Competition, and the Music Department being recognised as one of the top departments in the country, as a Finalist for the Outstanding School Music Department Award in the Music and Drama Education Awards 2025.



Pictured: Eliza playing the harp at Abbey Road Studios



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Sister Act Jr.



Twenty-five Year 7 and 8 boys from The Beacon School, Buckinghamshire, have performed the musical 'Sister Act Jr.' at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Over the past academic year, the boys have worked hard to bring the production to life. Supported by the school's Performing Arts department and a dedicated costume team of mums, the cast spent hours learning lines, rehearsing choreography, fine-tuning musical numbers, and developing their acting skills.

The cast debuted their production with two performances at The Spinney Theatre at The Beacon, which served as the perfect send-off before the group travelled to Edinburgh the following day, where they performed back-to-back shows over six consecutive days.

Show Director and Head of Drama at the school, Zenelle Oosthuizen, said: "The company have stepped it up every day: from flyering on the Royal Mile with perseverance, to delivering six sold-out performances! We are incredibly proud of these boys."

Pictured: At the Fringe

New Director of Performing Arts and musical theatre reinstatement

Kirkham Grammar School, Lancashire, has appointed Michael Hodgkinson as their new Director of Performing Arts, effective September 2025. The new role is set to unify the school's Music and Drama departments, and paves the way for the first Senior School musical production in many years.

A seasoned educator and accomplished musician, Mr Hodgkinson earned his degree in Music from Royal Holloway, University of London. He has since held leadership positions at The Blackpool Sixth Form College and AKS Lytham Independent School, where he successfully oversaw the Music and Performing Arts departments.

With a background in classical music, as a composer and multi-instrumentalist, Mr Hodgkinson's appointment aligns with the school's ethos of blending heritage with modernity.

Pictured: Michael Hodgkinson



In his first term, he plans to revive traditional concerts, making full use of the school's venues, such as The Old Hall. Mr Hodgkinson said, "The Christmas Concert will be the highlight of the year. I plan to bring something really special to Kirkham from day one, creating experiences that resonate throughout the school community."

Advertorial Feature

The musical, inspired by the animated film, based on the ancient myth

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Ancient Greece. A time of gods, mortals... and Hercules, who doesn't quite belong to either. But if he's not a god, how can he possibly save the world from Hades? It's one thing flexing those pecs, but going from zero to hero requires a different kind of strength.

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School groups can take advantage of educational workshops, discounted education rates and free curriculumlinked resources for Disney's

'Hercules' at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London's West End.

Resources for Key Stages 2 and 3 include lesson plans and activity sheets.

Primary teaching resources focus on Ancient Greece and use Hercules as inspiration for activities in English and art lessons. Secondary resources explore Greek theatre, live production notes and offer an insight into creative careers.

Workshops led by Disney teaching artists are also available and can be tailored to the needs of groups. The workshops provide pupils with the opportunity to perform scenes, songs and choreography from the stage show while developing communication and team building skills.



School groups can choose between acting workshops which use scenes from the show to explore character techniques and investigate how actors use voice and movement to tell a story, and movement and music workshops exploring choreography and music inspired by the musical.

Discounted education rates for Monday to Wednesday 7.30pm and Thursday 2.30pm performances are available and apply to groups of ten or more pupils.

Our FREE curriculum-based Education Programme is available at DisneyOnStage.co.uk Find out more on our group and education rates at herculesthemusical.co.uk



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Beyond the classroom - curriculum meets campfire

In an era of technology, finding the balance between preparing pupils for a world increasingly shaped by digital fluency and time spent learning outdoors can sometimes be a challenge. Headmaster at RGS The Grange, Worcestershire, Gareth Hughes, and Head of Computing and Digital Learning at the school and IAPS National Computing Advisor, Matt Warne, outline how the school is going about embedding outdoor learning as a key component of their educational philosophy and not just for pupils!

In an age of algorithms and acceleration, the simple act of stepping outside may be one of the most radical things a school can offer. At RGS The Grange, we believe that learning does not stop at the classroom door. In fact, some of the most profound lessons happen under open skies, with muddy boots and curious minds.

As you arrive at RGS The Grange, one of our Forest School sites welcomes you on the left, marked by a sign bearing the timeless Wordsworth quote: "Let Nature be your teacher." It's more than a greeting - it's a guiding principle. We are reminded of its wisdom time and again during our Forest School sessions. Just last term, a group of Year 3 pupils immersed themselves in quiet collaboration, constructing a den from fallen branches. There were no instructions, no screens - only imagination, resilience and the simple joy of working together in nature. And during a recent staff campfire, under a canopy of stars, we were all struck by the quiet power of shared presence - a moment of pause that reaffirmed why we do this work.

Outdoor learning is not a break from our curriculum; it is a vital extension of it. It offers space for risk-taking, reflection and a reconnection with the natural world that so often restores balance in a digitally driven age. As we continue to innovate and embrace new technologies in our classrooms, including the fast-moving world of Al, we do so with a commitment to thoughtful progress. For us, innovation is as much about forward momentum as it is about creating room to stop, to wonder and to grow.

In recent years, we have placed significant emphasis on outdoor

learning – embedding it not as an enrichment activity, but as a core component of our school's educational philosophy. We believe that schools must not choose between digital innovation and time in nature; the most forwardthinking schools embrace both.

From philosophy to practice: curriculum meets campfire Our philosophy is strong, but how does it translate day to day? It begins with fire, tools and fearless curiosity. Outdoor learning is not confined to Early Years. Every pupil, from Nursery through to Year 6, has structured, progressive access to outdoor spaces, with a minimum of six weeks spent in one of our two dedicated Forest School sites each year. Our newly launched curriculum for Years 3 to 6 takes pupils through a carefully designed sequence that includes tool use, knife skills, whittling, den building, shelter construction, fire lighting and a final campfire celebration where pupils cook damper bread together - a ritual that blends learning, reflection and community. But curriculum is only part of the equation. The real transformation comes from culture. To make outdoor learning meaningful, we started with staff. Our INSET training began not in the hall, but around a campfire. We wanted to spark curiosity, invite risk-taking and send a strong signal that outdoor learning matters. It worked. Outdoor learning is now a formal target on teachers' annual Personal Development forms. Staff are not just encouraged but empowered to take their lessons outside, whether for science, poetry, maths or computing. We've created a permission-rich culture where trying something new is celebrated. As a result, we see increased

engagement, deeper learning and

a renewed sense of joy across year groups. Pupils who struggle with focus indoors often thrive outside – our internal observations show an increase in engagement during outdoor sessions across Years 3 to 6.

Values in action

This impact is best understood through The Grange Way, our school's framework of values. Outdoor learning is a living, breathing expression of these values in action:

- Curiosity thrives as pupils explore minibeasts, identify trees and ask big questions about ecosystems and survival.
- Risk-taking is encouraged through fire lighting, tool use and shelter construction – activities where safe challenge becomes real growth.
- Resilience is built as pupils learn to persevere through damp wood, tangled string or shelters that collapse and must be rebuilt.
- Collaboration shines when pupils problem-solve as teams, share resources and build together with rope, tarps and sticks.
- Creativity emerges in the dens they build, the stories they tell around the fire, and the natural art they create from leaves and
- Initiative is developed as pupils take responsibility for gathering materials, managing their tools and reflecting on their choices.
- Empathy is felt deeply in group tasks, as children learn to listen, support one another and care for the natural world.
- Perseverance is embedded throughout, especially when learning to master whittling, drill with care, or keep a fire alight.



The science behind the spark

The evidence is clear. Research by Natural England and the University of Exeter shows that time in nature improves wellbeing, boosts focus and enhances cognitive performance. Richard Louv's concept of Nature Deficit Disorder warns us what's at stake when we remove children from the outdoors. As schools, we must provide balance, intentionally and urgently.

At the recent IAPS Festival of Learning, Matt Warne spoke about this very topic in a session titled 'Behind the Screen'. He shared the message that outdoor learning must sit alongside, not behind, our digital priorities. It is not about stepping back from innovation – it is about creating balance.

From intention to implementation – what works

Here are a few principles that helped us transform our outdoor learning vision into a living part of our school culture:

- Start with staff Hold your next training session outside. Begin with a small fire, warm drinks and stories of what outdoor learning can be. Inspiration is infectious.
- Make it a priority, not a perk embed outdoor learning into individual developmental targets and development plans. Give it strategic weight.
- Use what you have you do not need acres of woodland. A corner of the playground or a raised bed can be a wilderness in miniature with the right lens.
- Integrate, not isolate outdoor learning is not just for Forest School. Challenge teachers to take one curriculum subject outdoors every half term.
- Celebrate the wins share photos, quotes and reflections in staff



meetings and newsletters. Cultural change grows through visibility.

 Let pupils lead – some of our best outdoor innovations have come from pupil curiosity. Give them agency and watch what happens.

The forest as faculty: what we've learned

As Headmaster, I have had the privilege of witnessing how outdoor learning transforms not just pupils, but staff too. There is a sense of shared purpose, of curiosity reignited, when a team gathers beneath the trees to explore what education can truly be. The strategic integration of outdoor learning into our curriculum and professional development has enhanced engagement and deepened our identity.

This approach aligns beautifully with RGS The Grange's core values and our long-term vision. We want our pupils to be grounded and adventurous, connected and curious. To be digitally literate, yes, but also to be wise, well, and resilient in a rapidly changing world.

My message to fellow educators is this: take the step. Whether it is a lesson beneath a tree or a simple story read under open skies, it starts with one small shift. The rewards – engagement, joy and connection – are waiting.

To our incredible staff: thank you for your courage, creativity and commitment. To our pupils: thank you for your enthusiasm, your muddy boots and your brilliant ideas. Let us continue to learn beyond the classroom. The forest is calling.

Helping pupils bloom

Artist, Paul Cummins MBE, best known for his poppy installation at The Tower of London that commemorated the centenary of the First World War, has delivered his first-ever school workshop to pupils from Repton Prep and Repton School, Derbyshire.

Held at Repton Prep, the workshop involved prep and senior school pupils in a shared artistic experience. Each participant received a hand-crafted ceramic tulip – replicas of those featured in Paul's Candy sculpture, which was exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show. Under Paul's guidance, pupils painted their own tulips, all of which will form part of a collaborative art installation later in the year.

Pictured: Paul Cummins with pupils



During the day, pupils had the chance to hear Paul speak about his creative journey – from his early days in ceramics to his large-scale public art installations. He shared the story behind Candy, inspired by 17th-century Dutch tulipomania, and explained the emotional symbolism in the 2,300 individually painted tulips, some of which are patterned to mimic cancer cells affected by fungal distortions.

This visit built on a long-standing creative relationship between Paul Cummins and the Repton community. During the creation of his Tower of London installation, which featured 888,246 ceramic poppies representing fallen soldiers of the First World War, Repton Prep pupils were visited by members of Paul's ceramics team and created their own commemorative display within the school grounds.

Summer Arts Festival

Over 200 pupils at Warminster School, Wiltshire, celebrated the end of the Summer Term with a variety of fun and inspiring activities to spark creativity as part of the 2025 Summer Creative Arts Festival.

With 18 new workshops this year including percussion, collage-making and Warhammer, along with pupils' new theatre productions, Year 7-10 and Lower Sixth pupils all tried something new, discovered hidden talents and Pictured: Balloon-making workshop

joined together across different age groups to have fun.

A number of workshops were especially popular with the pupils including parkour, kitchen chemistry, dance, stage combat and balloon-making. The pupils also enjoyed their own performances of 'Animal Farm' and 'Education, Education, Education'.

Huw Jones, Deputy Head, commented: "The Festival really offered something for everyone



 uniting our community in curiosity, creativity, and celebration. It was a festival to remember, and we're already looking forward to what next year will bring!"

Self-portrait poems

Pupils from Pocklington School, East Yorkshire, have put on an exhibition titled 'Self-Portrait Poems' at Pocklington Arts Centre.

The exhibition showcases a series of personal poems written and photographed by pupils as part of a school project exploring identity, self-expression and the world as they see it. Each piece pairs a poem with a photograph chosen by the pupil themselves to reflect who they are at this moment in their lives

These self-portraits, both visual and written, offer a poignant and often thought-provoking window into the minds of young people navigating their sense of self.
From joyful observations to quiet

Pictured: The 'Self-portrait Poem' exhibition



introspection, the work is as diverse as the pupils who created it.

Adding a multimedia dimension to the project, Third Year pupils also recorded themselves reading their poems aloud. Visitors to the exhibition could access these audio renditions via QR codes displayed alongside each piece.



Snowdon Run

Students and staff From Ellesmere College, Shropshire, have completed an all-terrain running challenge of more than 71 miles in memory of their former Headmaster, Brendan Wignall, who passed away after a battle with pancreatic cancer in January 2024.

The team of 27 revived the school's Snowdon Run challenge this year, an event that was first held in 1999 but lapsed during Covid and involves relay teams running the 71.5 miles from the school gates to Yr Wyddfa, the highest point in Wales.

Starting at 4am, the runners took 11.5 hours to reach the car park at the bottom of the Pen y Pass where bad weather forced them to abandon the final climb for safety reasons. The team raised £1,408 for Pancreatic Cancer UK.

Geography teacher, James Baggaley, who did his first Snowdon Run in 2009 and has completed each once since, commented: "There has been a gap in the Snowdon Run but this year students asked if they could bring it back, and we were delighted to do that and organise the event in memory of our former Head."

Pictured: Ellesmere College Snowdon Run, June 2025



Tall Ships event

Students from Gordonstoun, Moray, have taken part in this year's Tall Ships Races – one of only two UK schools to take part in the event.

Two crews sailed Gordonstoun's 80ft-long Ocean Spirit of Moray yacht, along with 49 other vessels, on the month-long journey through the English Channel and North Sea.

The Ocean Spirit of Moray, with two masts, is a fully equipped ocean-going yacht used as a sail training vessel to introduce and prepare students for sea expeditions in all weathers.

Pictured: Onboard the Ocean Spirit of Moray Photo credit: Gordonstoun

Twelve girls and ten boys from Gordonstoun – aged between 14 and 18 years – took on the challenge, which required every student to be part of a 24-hour 'watch system' to ensure the yacht continued sailing night and day.

The first crew took part in the first half of the race from Le Havre sailing via Dunkirk, arriving in Aberdeen on 19 July. The second crew then sailed from the Granite City via Kristiansand before arriving in Denmark on 6 August. The races are designed to encourage international friendship and training for young people in the art of sailing.

Advertorial Featur

Reach higher, grow stronger

The benefits of outdoor education far outreach simply having fun in the fresh air.

people skills.

With nature as an inspirational backdrop, outdoor learning provides opportunities for development and growth, including exploration, hands-on learning and risk-taking. When combined within a supportive programme designed for discovery and accomplishment, children gain skills and establish strong foundations for strengthening both life skills and subject knowledge.

Here are some ways school trips can present children with opportunities to develop their skills and abilities to help achieve their potential.

1. Confidence building

From spending their first night away from family, scaling climbing walls or simply speaking out loud in front of peer groups – the challenges children may face (and most importantly be supported to overcome) will undoubtedly empower them.

2. Developing social skills

Outdoor experiences encourage teamwork and communication and offer opportunities to engage and collaborate in new groups. Learning to work as a team, negotiate and resolve disagreements is all part of the experience, increasing social

outdoors, children learn to develop

an appreciation and respect for nature.

At our centres children learn how we affect our environment, what

and emotional development and

3. Environmental awareness

By participating in activities

At our centres children learn how we affect our environment, what they can do to reduce their impact, and gain a sense of responsibility in doing their bit to help.

4. Evens the playing field

A child who wasn't so assured in class is now the child who confidently navigates in the woods or climbs first into the canoe, becoming a leader within the group and helping instil self-belief in others. Outdoor experiences are a great way to help bring children out of their shell and be seen in a different light.

5. Risk-taking, resilience and adaptability

Activities provide children with opportunities to take calculated risks, and the chance to develop resilience and increase adaptability. Resilience is recognised as playing a



crucial role in promoting children's wellbeing and preventing the onset of mental health issues.

Our trips provide opportunities for exploration and discovery. We give children the chance to try something new that they wouldn't otherwise experience, within a safe, supportive and enjoyable environment.

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The pros and cons of being a selective or non-selective school

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a selective or non-selective school? Head of Abbot's Hill School, Hertfordshire, Sharon Schanschieff, considers both types of setting and the different roles they play in the education landscape.

In many cases, top-performing independent schools are selective in order to maintain high academic standards and ensure their students are well-suited to a fast-paced, highly focused environment. Selectivity allows schools to curate a student body with a consistent academic profile, which can foster a culture of achievement, stretch the most able learners, and encourage high levels of performance across the board. These schools can adapt their teaching methods, shape their curriculum, and direct resources in a way that supports and challenges students with very specific academic goals. For children who thrive on competition and are motivated by working alongside equally driven peers, this type of environment can be hugely rewarding.

For non-selective schools, the picture is different - but equally compelling. They welcome students from a broad spectrum of academic ability, background, and learning style, creating a truly diverse community. This variety enriches the school experience by fostering empathy, adaptability, and collaboration. While nonselective schools still uphold strong academic expectations, the learning environment often allows for a more measured pace and a broader definition of success. For some children, this can mean developing confidence without the constant pressure of competing for top grades; for others, it allows them to explore subjects in greater depth or pursue wider interests alongside their studies.

One size does not fit all For some highly academic children, attending a non-selective school means being among the most able in their class. This can give them opportunities to take on leadership roles in learning mentoring peers, setting a strong example, and being stretched in more individualised ways by their teachers. They also gain valuable life skills from working alongside classmates with different strengths and challenges, developing the ability to explain ideas clearly, adapt their communication, and collaborate effectively with people of all abilities.

Both selective and nonselective schools have high expectations for each student's progress, but the way these expectations are experienced can differ significantly. A selective environment may prioritise pace, competition, and measurable academic outcomes, while a nonselective one might place greater emphasis on individual growth, resilience, and the ability to learn from mistakes. Neither approach is inherently "better" - it is about which environment supports a child's wellbeing and personal development alongside their academic growth.

It is also important to recognise that a diversity of learning needs exists in every school. Dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and other learning differences are just as present in selective settings as they are in non-selective ones. In any environment, these differences can influence how lessons are taught. For example, if a dyslexic student needs additional time

to process information from the board, a teacher might slow the pace, give alternative formats for the material, or incorporate more discussion. These adaptations often benefit other children too - including those who simply learn better through auditory or practical approaches. In a non-selective school, students may encounter a wider range of learning needs in their day-today classes, giving them greater awareness of their own learning style and an appreciation of different ways of thinking.

Transitioning from selective to non-selective

Many academically able students join non-selective schools after attending selective ones. The reasons are varied, but a common factor is the effect of constant competition on emotional wellbeing or mental health. For some children, the absence of that pressure allows them to flourish – they rediscover enjoyment in learning, feel able to take intellectual risks, and are more willing to try things without fear of "getting it wrong".

This can be especially important for perfectionist or highly self-critical children. In a non-selective environment, mistakes are often viewed as a natural and valuable part of the learning process. A wrong answer can open up discussion, deepen understanding, and encourage resilience – qualities that are just as important as exam grades in later life.

That said, it's equally true that some personalities thrive in



selective schools. They may relish the camaraderie of working alongside equally high-achieving peers and find motivation in the challenge of aiming for the very top. The point is not to suggest one type of school is better, but that children should have access to the environment that best suits their personality, learning style, and goals. Some children who move from selective to non-selective schools also find new confidence in being near the top of their set or cohort. This can give them a sense of mastery and encourage them to take on leadership or ambassadorial roles in school life - something that might have been less accessible to them in a more competitive academic hierarchy.

It's not all about grades

Finding the right school for a child is about far more than academic league tables. It's about choosing a place where they can thrive academically and personally, feel valued for who they are, and have the freedom to grow in ways that matter to them.

For some children, that will be in a selective, academically intense environment; for others, it will be in a non-selective setting where diversity of ability is celebrated, and every student is encouraged to reach their own personal best.



Stonework restoration

At the start of the summer holidays, Bolton School began the second phase of its long-term project to restore the stonework of the sandstone buildings across their Chorley New Road site.

Phase one of the project began in 2015 and during the decade since, restoration works have been completed on the masonry of the Boys' Division East Wing, alongside other urgent masonry restoration works across other parts of the estate.

The second phase of the project, which will run between July 2025 and August 2026, will focus on the restoration of stonework across the South Wing of the Boys' Division. Planning for this project has been extensive, undertaken in close collaboration with specialist historic building consultants and architects and with the method

and specification determined upon receiving full Planning and Listed Building Consent.

Scaffolding will be installed along the South Wing for the duration of the project to facilitate its completion. Careful planning has been undertaken by Boys' Division staff to ensure there will be no disruption to teaching and pupil activities during term time, and there will be planned pauses to the works to accommodate examinations as required throughout the year.

The stonework restoration project forms a key part of the Governors' long-term capital investment plan, which will ensure the school's Grade II listed buildings on Chorley New Road remain in good condition for future generations of pupils, as they enter their second century of use by the school.

Pictured: The South Wing of the Boys' Division Photo credit: Bolton School

Outdoor gym



this term.

PE lessons with the new intake

of Year 7s eager to give it a go

The Motiv8 unit is designed

encompasses four different

overall health and wellbeing.

for cardiovascular exercise and

The River School, Worcestershire, has recently opened a new Senior Outdoor Gym.

Funded via a grant from the Tesco Groundworks scheme; a donation from local business, Keltruck Scania; and fundraising events at the school, such as a Go Wild family fun day, the new equipment has already been

truck Scania; and fundraising machines, providing a fun the school, such as a wariety of options for pupils as Wild family fun day, the new part of a focus on fitness for

Pictured: Pupils enjoying the new outdoor gym



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For independent schools, the ultimate goal is to create more than just an educational institution: it is to build a nurturing, supportive, and inspiring 'home away from home'. This requires an estate that prioritises student wellbeing at every turn. A growing number of independent schools are turning to the innovative building solutions offered by TG Escapes, which combine the efficiency of modular timber-frame construction with the profound benefits of biophilic design.

Biophilic design is a philosophy centred on connecting people with nature through the built environment. By utilising natural materials like timber, maximising natural light, and ensuring views of surrounding greenery, these buildings are proven to reduce stress, improve concentration, and enhance overall wellbeing. For students who spend a significant proportion of their time on campus, the impact cannot be overstated.

TG Escapes off-site fabrication means projects are delivered in a fraction of the time of a traditional build, with significantly less disruption, a critical advantage for a busy campus. Furthermore, their timber-frame buildings are inherently sustainable and net



zero in operation, offering cost savings that can be redirected into core educational and pastoral programmes.

Academic excellence at Ratcliffe College

A testament to this approach is the award-winning English Classroom Block at Ratcliffe College. Needing to expand its teaching space, the college chose TG Escapes to deliver a statement facility towards the entrance of their campus that was both functional and inspirational. Large windows flood classrooms with daylight, creating an atmosphere of calm. The project, lauded as 'Project of the Year' at the 2023 Modern Methods of Construction Awards, demonstrates how biophilic design can directly support and elevate the academic experience.

Enhancing pastoral life at Edgeborough School

The impact of biophilic design extends beyond the classroom, as shown by the new changing facilities at Edgeborough School. Often, ancillary buildings are purely functional, yet TG Escapes delivered a space that actively contributes to student wellbeing.



The warm, timber structure creates a welcoming and comfortable environment, transforming a utilitarian space into one that supports the school's pastoral life: a powerful reminder that every part of a school's estate has a role to play in crafting a positive boarding experience. The building was awarded Primary School Project of the Year at the 2025 MMC Awards.

Bursar Sarah Riley says: "The new changing rooms have been met with fantastic feedback from pupils, parents, and staff alike. Pupils are loving the fresh, modern space, which offers a much-improved experience before and after games. Parents have expressed their appreciation for the high-quality

facilities, recognising the investment in enhancing school life. Staff have also praised the design and functionality, highlighting how the upgraded space makes managing sports sessions smoother and more efficient. Overall, they have been a hugely positive addition to the school!"

TG Escapes offers independent schools a powerful tool to enhance their estates. By creating buildings that are quick to install, sustainable to operate, and specifically designed to improve student wellbeing, they provide a solution that aligns perfectly with the core mission of a modern independent school: to create the optimal environment for students to live, learn, and thrive.

For more information, visit tgescapes.co.uk, call 0800 917 7726 or email info@tgescapes.co.uk

Why football belongs at the heart of our schools

With demand for football on the rise at independent schools, Head of Football at Loughborough Schools Foundation (LSF), Perry Wild, discusses the changing sporting landscape, what's happening at LSF, and the importance of developing a broader footballing ecosystem.

When I walk onto the pitch at 7.30am and see nearly 50 pupils ready to train, before most of their peers have even started eating breakfast, I'm reminded of why we're doing this.

Football is more than just a sport. For many of our pupils, it's their passion, their outlet, their way of connecting and growing. And in the coming academic year, I'm proud to say that football will be offered as a full Games option from Year 7 at Loughborough Schools Foundation alongside rugby and hockey.

This isn't just a box-ticking exercise. It's about responding to what our pupils are telling us they want, and creating a sporting culture that reflects who we are today, not just who we were 50 years ago.

Historically, our schools have been associated with rugby. That's a proud tradition. But dig a little deeper and you'll find that football has always been part of our DNA at Loughborough. In fact, it was the very first competitive sport played here, at Loughborough Grammar School, as far back as the 1800s, with England international, Harry Linacre, joining our school team in 1895 before representing his country in 1905.

Over time, football was lost from the curriculum, especially after the war when rugby was seen as the more "appropriate" game for independent schools. But those perceptions are changing. Across the country, football is the most played sport in independent schools. And here at Loughborough, we're not just playing catch-up; we're helping to shift the sporting landscape within our region.

That said, football's journey back hasn't been without its moments of resistance. In 1955, a group of Loughborough Grammar School boys held a covert meeting in

bring the sport back. Their quiet rebellion speaks volumes about the passion that's always existed beneath the surface. Football made a return for senior pupils in the mid-2000s, and more recently, we've stepped up our efforts to extend access to younger year groups across the Foundation.

> It reflects a broader cultural shift. Historically, many independent schools prioritised rugby. Football, by contrast, was sometimes viewed with scepticism, often tied to outdated stereotypes from the 1970s and assumptions about the grassroots crowd. But times have changed. Football is now firmly embedded in the independent sector. In fact, according to the Independent Schools Football Association (ISFA), it is the most played sport in independent schools nationwide.

the school library, determined to

We've already seen incredible progress. According to the SOCS school sport portal, Loughborough Grammar School's U15 team is ranked 14th nationally. Our Year 10 boys won the County Cup. Our Prep boys made it to the IAPS final for the first time in recent history. Girls' football is booming too. Our Loughborough High School girls are now training weekly, entering ISFA tournaments, and some are even making it onto national representative teams.

None of this would be possible without the right people behind the scenes. At Loughborough, pupils benefit from staff with elite-level experience. Before joining the Foundation, I worked in international academies in Sweden, coached the U19 and U20 Swedish men's national teams, and held senior performance



roles. That background shapes a lot of what we do here, from our training methods and performance monitoring to the mindset we try to instil in every player who pulls on a shirt.

We're also keen to connect with the wider footballing world. Recently, we brought together Heads of Football from across the independent sector for a regional summit at Nottingham Forest's ground. It was a fantastic opportunity to share best practice, discuss challenges, and explore how we can collectively grow the sport in the Midlands.

Because this isn't just about one school. It's about building a broader footballing ecosystem, one where pupils across the sector have the opportunity to thrive in a sport they love, supported by people who understand what it takes to help them succeed.

But most rewarding of all is the sheer joy and commitment 1 see every day from pupils showing up early, improving every week, and having a genuine passion for the

We're building something special here: a football culture that values effort, opportunity, and growth. We're investing in facilities, in staffing, in fixtures. We're working with other schools to lift the game across the Midlands. And we're doing it in a way that fits the ethos of our schools.

It's about adding to the sporting offer. It's about recognising that our pupils aren't all the same and that their sporting journeys shouldn't be either.

Football is back at the Foundation. And this time, it's here to stay.



Cricket debut

Sixth Form student Alfie A, from Bryanston School, Dorset, has become the youngest player ever to represent Dorset's Men's First team, making his county cricket debut shortly after turning 16.

Alfie, who joined Bryanston in 2022 on the school's High-Performance Sports Programme (HPSP), has been part of Dorset Cricket's Emerging Players Programme (EPP) since the age of 13.

Building on his debut, Alfie will travel to Australia in January as part of a student exchange to Toowoomba Grammar School, Queensland, where he will spend

Pictured: Head Coach of Dorset's Men's First team, Paul Lawrence, handing Alfie his cap



four months further developing his cricket during the Spring Term.

Alfie's debut broke the previous Dorset record set by Scott Currie, who has since gone on to play in The Hundred and for Hampshire CCC.

2024/25 round-up



St Nicholas' School, Hampshire, is celebrating after a year of success across netball, hockey, football, cricket, basketball, rounders, cross country, athletics, and more for the 2024/25 academic period.

In particular, the success of the U17 district athletics team in May marked a historical milestone, as they were crowned District Champions at the Aldershot & District Athletic Association meet. This achievement followed a string of results across multiple sports, including the U16 basketball team's clean sweep of the District Cup, Division 1 League title, and County Cup. The U16 netball team also triumphed, finishing first and

claiming the 1st League Winners title. The cricket team was crowned U15 League Champions, and the rounders team claimed the U15 District Championship, with several other teams also posting podium finishes.

The academic year concluded with St Nicholas' annual Sports Awards in July, with guest speaker Katie Cox, a dual-sport athlete who has represented both England and Great Britain in basketball and football. Katie shared her journey and experiences as an elite athlete, inspiring pupils to pursue excellence and balance academics with athletic ambitions.

Pictured: Girls' athletics at St Nicholas' School

Sports Day for Ukrainian families



Ukrainian families who have settled in Worcestershire have enjoyed a day of sport and friendship, courtesy of Malvern College.

The school gave the Malvern branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) free use of its playing fields to hold a 'sports day' for children and adults. It is the first time the branch has put on an event for whole families.

Malvern College has also donated £2,000 to the branch, which has established a weekend school for children of Ukrainian descent to help them learn about their country and their native language.

AUGB is the largest representative body for Ukrainians and those of Ukrainian descent in the UK.

Malvern College pupils raised the money through donations from non-uniform days and proceeds from the Sixth Form Charity Ball. Headmaster at Malvern College, Keith Metcalfe, said: "It was a delight to welcome Ukrainian families to our school to use our sports field and we are delighted they had such a good day.

"We're also very proud of our pupils for raising an amazing sum which will help Ukrainian children retain their cultural identity while living in Malvern and the surrounding area."



Pictured: The Sports Day at Malvern College

Athletics

Towards the end of last term, five pupils from St Michael's Prep School, Kent, made the journey to Birmingham's Alexander Stadium to compete in the National Athletics Championships, having earned their spots as Kent Champions and runners-up.

First up to compete was Finlay S in the U13 Boys' long jump. With a strong jump of 4.35m putting him in the final eight, he eventually finished 6th in the country. Next came Hugo M in the U12 Boys' 1500m final where he claimed 7th place in a time of 5:16.

Jamie D then stepped into the ring for the U14 Boys' shot put, launching the 4kg shot 8.55m, finishing 16th nationally.

Pictured: Pupils with St Michael's Prep Director of Sport Steve Brightman



Grace P took on the U12 Girls' long jump where she achieved a personal best of 4.14m to finish 5th.

Finally, Zach R-B lined up for the U12 Boys' 800m final, running a year above his age group, sprinting home to hang on to finish 3rd in his heat. Across both heats, he placed 11th overall in the country.



Pictured: Jack Pidgeon bowling

U18 National Cricket Finals

Both the Girls' and Boys' 1st XI teams from Rugby School, Warwickshire, have been crowned U18 National Cup Cricket Champions at Lord's Cricket Ground.

In the U18 Girls' 100-ball final, Rugby won against Barton Peveril Sixth Form College, Hampshire, with student Amu Surenkumar scoring 51 off 41 balls and taking four wickets for just 16 runs.

While the girls were receiving their trophy in the historic Long Room in the Pavilion, the boys began their T20 final against Clifton College, Bristol. Bowling first, Harry Thompson struck in his opening over to give Rugby an early breakthrough. Jack Pidgeon followed, taking four for 16 from his full quota of four overs – an effort that

dismantled Clifton's top order.

Player of the Match, Rory Grant, batted with the same cool head that had seen Rugby through the semi-final against reigning champions, St Peter's York, striking 65 from 43 balls including five sixes. Captain Jordan Strydom wrapped up the game with three sixes to seal an eight-wicket victory.

On the eve of both matches, the Rugby School teams were presented with Finals shirts by Rugbeian Jacob Bethell, now playing for Warwickshire, Royal Challengers Bangalore and England. A video message from fellow Rugbeian Maia Bouchier, currently representing Hampshire, Southern Brave and England, added further inspiration.



Pictured: Amu Surenkumar Photo credit: Nick Browning

Sporting success

Year 7 twins, Hari and Jai Vijh, from Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire, are celebrating following sporting successes both within the school and on the national stage.

At the National Prep Schools Athletics Finals, Hari made history by becoming the first Bromsgrove pupil ever to win a maximum three gold medals at the event. He claimed top honours in the high jump, long jump and the 4x100m relay – with two of those performances setting new national records. Hari's high jump result also saw him ranked equal 1st in the UK for his age group.

Jai secured gold in the 75m hurdles, breaking the national record in the process, and joined Hari in the victorious 4x100m relay team. He also won silver in the long jump – a contest in which he was narrowly edged out by his brother. Jai is currently ranked 2nd in the UK for 75m hurdles on the Power of 10 rankings, and also holds

Pictured: Hari and Jai Vijh



the fastest wind-assisted time nationally.

In addition to their athletics achievements, both boys have also recently signed two-year contracts with Category One Academy Stoke City FC.



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Sport Advertorial Feature

Screens off. Masks on. Swords up.

Helping children find their edge in an ever-changing world.

In a world filled with constant digital stimulation, today's children often find themselves overwhelmed, overstimulated, and less inquisitive. Their attention spans shrink, their curiosity dulls, and they struggle to concentrate amidst the noise of screens and social media. Amongst these challenges, Paul Davis Fencing Academy offers a sanctuary: a safe space where children can live in the moment, free their creativity, and discover their warrior within.

The Olympic sport of sword fighting, fencing, is much more than just a sport. It's a discipline rooted in history and tradition, but also perfectly suited to meet the needs of the modern child. Combining valour, resilience, and strategic thinking, fencing helps young people find their edge and raise their thresholds. While technology and Al drive rapid changes in the world around us, fencing remains a timeless craft that can develop life skills vital to living in this modern world, such as data processing, pattern recognition, and critical thinking. It connects students to a rich heritage while providing a space to unplug, imagine, and authentically connect with others.

A safe space for living in the moment

Our Academy provides children from Reception to Year 13, boys and girls, with a unique environment to step back from the digital onslaught. Here, they're encouraged to set limits, maintain

balance, enjoy the thrill of genuine human connection, have fun, and enjoy hitting each other on the head with swords. It's a place where curiosity is welcomed, imagination is ignited, and students can truly be themselves.

The Academy sessions foster not only physical agility but also develop soft skills: dexterity, handeye co-ordination, and strategic thinking, that give students a clear edge in academics and life. It teaches them to live in the moment, trust their instincts, and develop resilience. Our Shield of Endeavour Syllabus emphasises accountability, perseverance, and sportsmanship, helping students set ambitious goals, work diligently towards them, and handle setbacks with dignity.

Transforming lives and powering potential

At Paul Davis Fencing Academy, we believe every young person should have the opportunity to unlock their full potential both on and off the piste. As proud recipients of the British Fencing Club of the Year award for two consecutive years, 2022/23 & 2023/24, we understand the pathway from grass roots to international success. Our Academy Pathway Scheme helps student navigate their own journey from day one to competing at Youth, U14, U17, U20 and Senior

levels for their home nations, achieving success on the world stage, and realising their dreams.

Our school network consists of 52 schools from across Hertfordshire and North London and continues to grow across the South East of England. Our experienced coaching team demonstrate how fencing can be a powerful tool for raising standards, inspiring leadership, and igniting authentic human connection. When children are empowered in this discipline, the valued added reaches far beyond the sport itself, enriching their academic journeys and personal growth.

Enriching education with expertise, imagination and balance

Partnering with Paul Davis Fencing Academy offers access to our industry-leading Pathway Scheme and a comprehensive package that meets the needs of the schools, families and children, ensuring smooth programme delivery and measurable progress. Our School package includes: coaching, equipment, gradings, intraschool competitions, inter-school championships, captain and much more, with scholarships to our state-of-the-art training centre in St Albans, Hertfordshire.

Fencing is more than a sport, it's a journey of self-discovery, resilience,



and connection. It provides children with the mental armour to face the challenges of tomorrow while inspiring creativity and a love for life's endless possibilities. As they learn to live with valour and steel, they also learn the importance of balance, limits, and authentic human interaction.

A call to schools and parents: help your children find their edge

We are eager for more schools to join us in this transformative journey. Together, let's help children find their edge in an ever-changing world, fostering resilience, igniting curiosity, and empowering them to live in the moment. With Paul Davis Fencing Academy, 'It is not just what you get but who you become.'



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Levelling the playing field

Hereford Cathedral School has launched a sports festival which aims to offer smaller schools the chance to compete against each other as well as create connections between likeminded colleagues to share ideas, facilities, and worries in uncertain times. Director of Sport at the school, Charles Lewis-Gardiner, outlines what it is all about and how schools can get involved.

At Hereford Cathedral School (HCS), sport is so much more than a fixture list or a final score. It is a vital part of a school's culture, helping to develop young people through teamwork, resilience, character, and shared values. At HCS it is about showing up, playing fair, and wearing the Blue & Gold with pride, living up to the values of those who have previously worn it.

But as the world of education shifts and the landscape of school sport becomes increasingly complex, so too must our approach evolve. In 2025, it is no longer HCS versus everyone else, it is HCS with everyone else. This change in mindset reflects the need for similar schools to unite, support one another, and create fair, meaningful sporting opportunities for all students, regardless of the size of their school.

National tournaments offer wonderful moments and memories, but it is no secret that they tend to have familiar winners, often those with greater funding, deeper squads, and larger facilities.

We are not here to criticise those competitions; they absolutely have a place and offer valuable experiences and memories for many pupils and we still value attending them ourselves. Last year alone saw our U18 Girls' Hockey team reached the national finals once again and many boats in our fleet regularly compete and excel on the national stage, including National Schools and the Henley Royal Regatta. But at HCS, we also felt there was space for something new. So, we have decided to create it.

This academic year, we are launching a new initiative for schools like ours: those with fewer than 100 pupils per year group. The idea is simple: to bring likeminded schools together to compete in an environment where values, enjoyment, and connection matter more than league tables and silverware.

Our first event will take place on Sunday 8 March 2026, with a Rugby 7s festival, hosted at Hereford Cathedral School and called the Marches Centurion 7s – a homage to the former Marches 7s festival from the 1970s. This is not just another tournament: it is the start of a wider network. It is a space where fixtures are realistic, the competition is balanced, and the goal is to reconnect with the joy of school sport.

We are inviting colleagues from other schools to join us. We know how tough it can be to keep sport thriving in a school setting. Fixtures can fall through due to mismatched teams. Teachers juggle multiple roles. Time, energy, and budgets are tighter than ever. Pupils take on multiple sports across a term just to make squads viable. Yet, despite all this, schools like ours continue to champion sport because we see the impact it has on our pupils.

Sport remains one of the most powerful tools in education. It builds confidence, teaches discipline, and fosters friendships that last well beyond school gates. It aligns with our commitment to ensuring pupils are real-world ready. We believe it deserves to be protected, promoted, and reimagined.

We are under no illusion that this may not become a national movement. It might stay small and local. But if it helps even a few schools find renewed energy, boost morale, or feel less isolated, then it will have been worthwhile, and I encourage them to reach out. We believe smaller forums can be just as powerful. They give space for honest conversation about wellbeing, staffing, finance, and



the role of sport in whole-school development.

In time, we hope this model will grow into more than just an annual rugby tournament. We imagine it developing into coaching workshops, shared training resources, online discussion groups, and regional festivals across different sports.

We also want to celebrate the unsung values that sport instils: effort, teamwork, humility, and perseverance. These are lessons our pupils carry with them for life, and they are often the same lessons taught in muddy boots on school fields, with borrowed kit and one or two subs on the bench.

At Hereford Cathedral School, we are delighted to take the first step. Not just for us, but for every school striving to make sport a central and meaningful part of education, regardless of size or circumstance.

You can contact us at sport@ herefordcs.com to learn more about how to get involved.

Because in the end, the best teams are not always the biggest, but the ones that show up, stand together, and support each other every step of the way.

New training facility

Haberdashers' Monmouth School has opened a new high performance training facility, the Eddie Butler Centre, which has been designed to support both student athletes and the wider school community.

The Centre stands as a tribute to the life and values of Eddie Butler, an alumnus of the school and celebrated broadcaster and rugby international. It officially opened to members in August 2025 and returning students in September. It includes a Performance Room for strength development, a Functional Room for conditioning and cardio training, and a dedicated Row Room to support the school's rowing programme.

And the centre has already generated interest from the wider sporting world, with Dragons Rugby confirming a pre-season training camp at the site. Director of HMS Sports Academy and Rugby, Richie Rees, commented:

"The Eddie Butler Performance Centre is central to our sports strategy and reflects our commitment to opportunity for all. It provides a welcoming, high-quality environment that supports every student, from participation to high-level performance – while reinforcing sport as a core pillar of school life. Honouring Eddie Butler's legacy, it represents our belief in the power of sport to build confidence, wellbeing and personal growth."



Pictured: The Eddie Butler Performance Centre Photo credit: Haberdashers' Monmouth School



Athletics Champions

Thirty children from Junior Classes at Ursuline Prep School, Warley, Essex, have attended the Small Schools District Athletics Championships, which was hosted by Ursuline Prep at Brentwood School.

There were numerous events throughout the morning on both

Pictured: Pupils with the trophy

the track and field, which saw lots of PBs, with two Ursuline Prep pupils breaking two district records in two events.

Overall, the school won the tournament to become Small Schools District Athletics Champions for the 8th year running.

Making waves!

15-year-old student, Toby Sutcliffe, from St Gerard's School, Gwynedd, is finding success in the world of canoe slalom.

Currently ranked among the top five C1 slalom athletes in the UK for his age group, Toby trains on Llyn Padarn and at the National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham, and has competed in the Junior Slalom European Cup in France and Germany as part of the Welsh Performance Team.

Toby's passion for paddling began during the pandemic, after his previous interest in ski slalom was put on hold.

Toby is also achieving success in kayak cross, a fast, contact-heavy race discipline that debuted at the 2024 Paris Olympics. He reached the semi-finals in Augsburg, Germany, and came third in a recent open event in Nottingham.

Performance Manager at Paddle Cymru, Sid Sinfield, said: "With a

Pictured: Toby Sutcliffe

strong work ethic and a passion for canoe slalom, Toby is not only competing at a high level for his age but is also on a clear trajectory toward national and international success.

"As he continues to train, travel, and compete, support and sponsorship play a vital role in helping him reach his full potential.

"St Gerard's School's backing of Toby is an opportunity to invest in the future of British canoeing and to support a driven young athlete with the talent and determination to go far."





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Mini Youth Games

Pupils at St. Andrew's School, Rochester, Kent, have been crowned the Medway Mini Youth Games (MYG) 2024–25 Series Champions.

Over 50 pupils from St. Andrew's represented the school across a range of sports, including hockey, basketball, badminton, table tennis, swimming, netball, tag rugby, football, cricket, and athletics. Their efforts paid off,

with the school securing victories in six out of the ten MYG competitions and placing in the top four in remaining events.

Adding to the celebrations, Year 6 pupil Charlotte made history at the MYG Athletics event, by breaking the 100m sprint record with a time of 14.32 seconds. The previous record, set in 2023, was held by another St. Andrew's pupil, Arianna.

Pictured: Pupils with the MYG Championship Cup



Marlborough Cup win

PE teacher and alumnus from Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire, Martyn Gidley, has led the England Over-50 Cricket team to a 50-run victory over the USA in his debut as captain, going on to secure the Marlborough Cup title with a clean sweep of three wins.

The Marlborough Cup Quadrangular Tournament, hosted at Marlborough College in July, featured Over-50s international sides from England, Pictured: Martyn Gidley Wales, India, and the USA.

Speaking after the tournament, Gidley said: "To captain England and start with a win is a huge privilege, and I'm proud of how the team played across all three matches. Personally, it's been very special to contribute, and I hope it sends a message to the boys I teach back at Loughborough Grammar School: if you love the game, keep playing. You never know where cricket might take you."

Advertorial Feature

Why your school needs padel courts

Padel is the UK's fastest growing sport. Give your students more variety: add an outstanding sports facility with potentially no financial outlay from your school.*

What is padel?

Padel is a doubles racket sport combining elements of tennis and squash. Played on a smaller, enclosed court, the game allows the ball to bounce off glass walls which creates longer rallies, adding an extra fun dynamic for players and spectators.

For students

Physical activity is a vital component of a balanced school day. Padel offers a range of benefits for students, both physically and mentally. It encourages agility, co-ordination, and cardiovascular health, helping students stay fit. Played primarily as doubles, it fosters teamwork, positive group interaction and creates a vibrant atmosphere that gets students excited to be active. *Subject to feasibility study

Padel is easy to learn, making it accessible and suitable for girls and boys across all fitness levels and abilities. Crucially, this reduces participation gaps and makes it less intimidating than many traditional sports. In addition, padel supports health and wellbeing by providing sociable activity during or after school, while also inspiring confidence and discipline through structured play.

For schools

Adding padel to your school demonstrates a commitment to innovative and forward-thinking sports development. This increasingly popular sport will enrich your curriculum as well as enhance your students' extracurricular options, and add



much needed variety to interhouse tournaments and after school clubs. Furthermore, padel will appeal to families looking for diverse sporting opportunities for their children.

We understand that schools are navigating real financial pressures. Some of our flexible business models are specifically designed to address this. Contact us to learn how your school and students can gain all the advantages of Padel, while at the same time generating revenue, all potentially without the need for any financial outlay from your school.

For more information contact Ace Padel Courts: info@acepadelcourts.com | 0207 689 7500 | www.acepadelcourts.com

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Indoor or outdoor, Laser Tag 2U provides year-round fun with events to suit any group and venue size. Turn your sports hall, playing field, or school grounds into the perfect battleground for teamwork!

Our flexible set-up can be tailored to your needs. We bring the obstacles, inflatables and even extras like music, lights and smoke to add to the excitement.

Whether you're running a fundraiser, offering a student rewards day, or just looking for a new class activity – laser tag is easy to play and fun for all skill levels! We cater to groups of any size, ages 8+, and can even



offer tournament-style sessions for inter-class or inter-house competition.

Our sessions range from one hour to a full school day, and our pricing runs by number of laser guns used, rather than number of players using them; if you have several classes wanting to give it a go, we can run back-to-back groups in a single booking, so that everyone gets a chance to join in the fun!

We have run events in schools and universities all across the country, with the majority of our school clients becoming repeat bookings. Our equipment is entirely safe and mess-free, and our expert staff will handle the event from start to finish, running

the games and keeping your students entertained.

Currently offering discounts for school bookings from November to March – get in touch to book your event today!

"Your fabulous staff provided our students with the most fantastic experience. They were organised, friendly, and provided clear instruction to the children while still being encouraging and focused on fun. We cannot wait until our next event."

- ACS Hillingdon School



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CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



The Governors of Burgess Hill Girls, West Sussex, have announced the permanent

appointment of Heather Cavanagh as Head of Burgess Hill Girls, following a year as Interim Head.

Speaking about her appointment, Mrs Cavanagh said: "It is a

tremendous honour to be appointed Head of Burgess Hill Girls. Over the past year, I have seen firsthand what a special and dynamic community this is. I firmly believe that an all-girls education offers something truly unique - it gives girls the freedom to be themselves, to speak up, to lead, and to grow without limitation."



Holme Grange, Berkshire, has welcomed Mrs Pippa Adams as its new Headteacher.

Previously at Farlington School, West Sussex, where she served as Deputy Head for four years, she took up her post as of 1st September.

Mrs Adams, who was earlier Deputy Head (Senior Academic) at St

Edmund's School, Hindhead, Surrey, holds a Master's in Educational Leadership and Management and is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching. She is also currently completing her training as an ISI Inspector.

Married with two sons, she enjoys the great outdoors, especially with her cocker spaniel, Digby, by her



Elizabeth Knight has been appointed as the new Head of Wycliffe College Prep, Gloucestershire.

She took up her post at the start of the new school year.

Mrs Knight joins Wycliffe from her

role as Head of Strategy at IAPS, where she has led key initiatives across the sector.

She has also held senior leadership roles, including Vice Principal, Deputy Head Pastoral, and Director of Boarding, across several HMC allthrough schools.



Dorset House Prep School, West Sussex, part of the Lancing College family of schools,

has announced the appointment of its new Head, Sarah Sutherland-Booth, from January 2026.

Sarah is currently the Senior Deputy Head at Windlesham House School, a role she has held since 2022. She joined Windlesham House in 2012 and has held several

other leadership roles in that time, including Head of Day Pupils, Junior Prep and Curriculum Coordinator, and Head of Pre-Prep.

Sarah is also an Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Reporting and Team Inspector and an Apple Distinguished Educator.

Current head at Dorset House, Matt Thomas, will be moving to the Isle of Wight to take up the post of Head of Prep at Ryde



Dr Adrian Rainbow has been appointed the next Head of Exeter School, Devon, starting in

September 2026.

He is currently Head of London Park School Mayfair (previously Eaton Square Senior School) and prior to that was Headmaster at Hampton Court House School, all part of the Dukes Education group. Prior to these roles, he served as Deputy Head at Sevenoaks School, Kent.

Dr Rainbow holds a PhD in English, an MA in English, and a PGCE in English and Drama from the University of Exeter; an MA in Educational Leadership and Management from the University of Bath; and a BA in English and Philosophy from The University of British Columbia.

Originally from Canada, Dr Rainbow played American football at a competitive level before he embarked on his career in education and remains passionate about sport and physical activity. In his spare time, he enjoys running, cooking, reading widely, and exploring the arts.



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Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic pupils



King's Worcester has welcomed its new Head of Foundation, Mr Ben Charles, and

his family, to its community. Mr Charles will oversee the three schools within the King's Worcester Foundation: King's Senior and Sixth Form, King's St Alban's and King's Hawford.

Mr Charles joins from King's Rochester, Kent, where he had been Principal and Head of the Senior School since 2019. Prior to that, he was Second Master (Senior Deputy Head) at Portsmouth Grammar School, Hampshire, as well as holding previous roles at King's Peterborough, Cambridgeshire; Chiqwell School, Essex; and Millfield School, Somerset.

In addition, Mr Charles is a committee member of the Choir Schools' Association and a prep school Governor. He is an experienced choral conductor and singer and is also a huge sports



Mr Chris Townsend, current Head at Felsted School, Essex, has been announced

as the new Head of College at Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire, from April 2026.

Following a degree in Classics from Brasenose College, Oxford, Chris Townsend has been an educator in the independent school sector for 30 years, the last 15 of which have been as Deputy Head (2010-2015) and then Head (2015-2025) at

Felsted School. He has also held several other trustee positions in schools, both within other educational and non-educational bodies.

He will be taking up the position of Head at Cheltenham College, following the departure of current Head, Mrs Nicola Huggett, at the end of the Spring Term 2026. Mrs Huggett has been Head of Cheltenham since 2018, and is moving into a new role overseas.



Sharon Boccaccini has been appointed as the new Head of Ratcliffe College Preparatory School,

Leicestershire, commencing January 2026.

She currently leads the Preparatory School at St Joseph's College, Reading, Berkshire, and has held a variety of senior roles in independent schools, including Head of Academic

Outside of school, Mrs Boccaccini is a keen hockey player, currently managing the Reading Ladies 1st XI and winning European and World Cup medals as Manager of the

Studies and Director of Sport.

England Women's Over 35s Hockey

She will assume the role in the new year, following the departure of Mrs Siobhan Minford, who has been at the school for the past three years.



S. Anselm's School, Derbyshire, has appointed Mr Peter Cook as Interim Head, following news

that the Prep School in the Peak District is to remain open as result of a fundraising and restructure programme led by parents.

Mr Cook takes up his role in September from Mrs Lisa Donnelly, who retired after 30 years at the end of the last academic year – and will

lead S. Anselm's into its next chapter as the school returns to independent

Previously Head of Maths and Rugby at S. Anselm's in the 1980s and 1990s, Mr Cook has since taught at Kimbolton boarding school in Cambridgeshire, where he was deputy head at the Preparatory School, and rejoins S. Anselm's from Wellow House School, Nottinghamshire, where he was Headmaster for 12 years.



During its 150th year, The Leys, Cambridgeshire, has welcomed Clare Ives as its new

Head, succeeding Martin Priestley following his 12 years of leadership.

Dr Ives joins The Leys from Sevenoaks School, Kent, where she served as Senior Deputy Head. Prior to Sevenoaks, she held a variety of roles at Canford School, Dorset, including Boarding Housemistress, Head of

History, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead.

Educated at the University of St Andrews, she earned a firstclass degree in Modern History and completed a PhD on Robert Kennedy's Civil Rights Record. Her professional journey also includes eight years as a civil servant.

She is joined in Cambridge by her partner Emma. She has two children, Adam and Ellie, who are at university.



New chapter

Downside School, Somerset, has announced that it is to embark on a new chapter with a new Head and proposed purchase of the school and monastery site.

After seven years as Head, and ten years previously as Deputy, Andrew Hobbs retired from the school at the end of August, with Deputy Head of seven years, Mike Randall, taking on the role of Interim Head at the start of this academic year. A selection process will take place in the Michaelmas Term for a permanent appointment of Head from September 2026.

Looking to the future, in order to unlock the potential of the school and wider site and to strengthen long-term financial resilience, the school is also in the process of raising money to purchase its site and the former monastery from Downside Abbey. The Community of St Gregory the Great and the Downside Abbey General Trust (DAGT) will continue to own and care for the Grade 1 listed basilica church, the heritage assets and library, and remain Pictured: Downside School

committed to sharing these important resources with the school, visitors, academics and the wider Catholic Church.

Opportunities to expand the educational offering and diversifying income are similarly being explored by the Senior Leadership Team and governors. These includes a potential programme of courses for international pupils, both short and long term, a partnership with a Catholic school seeking to establish a special educational needs (SEN) unit, and a nursery.

Further projects are under consideration that will see other parts of the site used to generate revenue for the longterm benefit of the school and Abbey without compromising the setting or pupils' enjoyment of the extensive grounds.

The school's ambition is for the former monastery to become a new boarding house as pupil numbers grow, or to serve as a retreat centre, heritage hotel or other appropriate accommodation.

Heads Hunted

Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

Luckley House School Berkshire Papplewick School Berkshire St George's College, Weybridge Surrey St Teresa's, Effingham Surrey Cumbria Sedbergh Senior School **Talbot Heath School** Dorset Thomas's Battersea Prep 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

Chair of HMC

After a year as Chair Elect, Bolton School's Head of Foundation Philip Britton has taken over as Chair of HMC from the beginning of September.

HMC is the professional organisation for heads of leading independent schools in the UK and internationally.

In the year ahead, Mr Britton's priorities as Chair of HMC are to support, nurture and develop members, as they do in turn for their school communities; to remind all those engaged in education policy that it is all about the children; to look beyond



political horizons towards the long game of the HMC's 2030 strategy; and to engage in dialogue and partnership as an essential part of creating a future educational landscape where all children in all schools can thrive.

Pictured: Philip Britton Photo credit: Bolton School







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