



The Lady's
essential guide to
private education.

By Vanessa Berridge

GO INDEPENDENT





St Martha's School in Barnet and (right) some of the boarders



Sports period gets lively at Forest School in London

CHOOSING *the* RIGHT SCHOOL

It's a choice that could change your child's life. So just how do you make the right one?

Choosing a school is an emotional business. It's all too easy to let your aims and aspirations for your child get in the way of clear-sightedness about their actual aptitude and personality. But it is vital to be as objective as possible when making this decision, and also to take professional advice from schools and even independent experts.

The most important thing that parents should do is 'align expectations with abilities', says Stephen Spriggs, managing director of William Clarence Education, a provider of highly qualified tutors and educational advice. 'A lot of parents are sucked into the brand names of big schools, such as Eton, Harrow or Westminster, when a less well-known school, such as Repton or Oakham, may be better for their child. If you decide there is no alternative to the

school of your choice, you're setting yourself up for a fall.'

It can be hard, of course, for parents to appraise the relative abilities of their children, which is why it is worth listening to the advice of your child's current school when considering their next move. It is very much in the school's future interest that their pupils go on to flourish in their senior schools. You could also consider turning to organisations such as Gabbitas or William Clarence Education for a completely impartial academic assessment. William Clarence Education offers a half-day evaluation of a child's competence in maths and English, from which they will draw up a shortlist of schools. 'We try to match the personality of the child to the school,' says Spriggs. 'A happy child will find it far easier to learn.'

Entry to the most academic

schools is now very competitive, so even an able child may need some extra support for the 11+ entry or Common Entrance. Tuition can be seen as hothousing by pushy parents determined to propel their children into a chosen school regardless of their aptitude. But this is not necessarily so: tuition can offer a boost by giving children some one-to-one time to sort out any problems they have with the syllabus that are not being addressed in a large class at school. It may be helpful for children moving from the state to the independent sector at 11 or 13, and needing coaching with the kind of exams set at these ages. A tutor will be able to prepare a child's exam technique and develop effective working methods.

'It's a question,' says Spriggs, 'of making sure children approach papers the right way.' Private tuition may also help to identify whether your



Pupils enjoying their break at Downe House in Berkshire and (right) Forest School



child is in fact applying for the most appropriate school for his needs.

For parents who may not themselves have been to independent schools, the whole enterprise may seem intimidating and baffling. Some schools, too, are better than others at putting parents at their ease: when we went to look at a junior school for our eldest son, the headmistress sat us on tiny chairs, so our noses were on a level with her desk. Talk about power play! Even if schools do their best to make you feel comfortable, you are undoubtedly there as supplicants, hoping that your child will be admitted to this magic circle. To get as wide as possible a view of what's on offer, you might visit the Independent Schools Show, which takes place on 8 and 9 November at Battersea Evolution in London's Battersea Park. Over 200 schools will be exhibiting, so the schools themselves will be selling, with prospective parents buying. There will also be talks from school heads and leading educationalists.

Visit a number of schools to make comparisons and do the groundwork without your children, always going during term time when lessons are in progress. A wet morning break in February is probably as good a test as any as to how well the school is run. As well as the obvious questions about the curricular and extra-curricular activities, ask about pastoral

care, how emotional problems are dealt with, how the children are divided up academically, how the house system works, and how disputes between children and about bullying are dealt with. Look, too, at the notice boards and classroom walls: do they match the school's vaunted clubs and sports' teams? Is it only the rugby First XV who are feted or does the school also flag up the success of the Level 6 netball team? Are the classroom walls covered with vibrant examples of children's work or with mass-produced educational posters? Try also to look

for my own children was a prep where we were taken round by 13-year-olds in their final year. Their enthusiasm was a glowing recommendation.

Once you have visited, write down your impressions a day later, rather than in the heat of the moment when you're overwhelmed by the sales talk of the head and dazzled by the new theatre complex. It is probably best to take your children only to schools you are seriously considering, and do listen to what they say. It is easy for a 10-year-old's views to be overlooked, but they must be taken into account: their sixth sense may be right, while

‘Visit a number of schools to make comparisons, always going during term time when lessons are in progress’

at the pupils' books and essays. Ask for absolute numbers as well as percentages for comparative studies such as league tables. Some schools are inclined to claim, for example, 100 per cent success in A*s in Mandarin when only one (Chinese) child is sitting the exam. If the school is reluctant to give you this breakdown, ask yourself why.

Be suspicious of a school tour that is led entirely by the head or a staff member. The school I was most impressed by when researching schools

a parent may be blinded by the quality of the facilities. Some schools offer half-day, day or overnight placements in the case of boarding schools, to give children an immersive experience. They'll have a chance to eat a meal at the school, take part in a lesson and maybe a sports period, which will give them a better idea of whether they can see themselves there.

Choosing a school is a bit like buying a house – a mixture of gut instinct and hard-headed calculation. But your child's needs are paramount. ■



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LIFE *after* SCHOOL

Choosing the right school is essential, but so is planning for the next stage of your child's life



St Martha's:
pupils are
equipped for
university

If you are choosing a very academic school for your child, there are certain assumptions that the pupils will be thoroughly prepared for their exams and likely to achieve high grades. But how do you look beyond scholastic attainment to find out how well the students will be equipped for life beyond the school room and even university?

Gordon Woods, warden of Glenalmond College in Perthshire, advises parents to look at a school's broader curriculum, beyond the classroom. 'I spend up to 45 minutes with every prospective parent,' he tells me, 'and I stress the importance of developing leadership in our pupils.'

Glenalmond has the advantage of 300 acres of sports pitches, lakes and woodlands in which the mostly boarding pupils can be tested in a variety of ways. These include a lower sixth form leadership exercise, led by staff and external specialists. Pupils camp out on the hills and take part in arduous activities such as being woken at 3am to canoe down the River Tay.

'They have to help each other to complete the programme,' says

Woods, 'and the experience gives them insights into themselves and each other. Pupils have to build a CV, not just write it, and need to learn transferable skills, which employers want.' The careers process starts with Year 10 pupils being encouraged to look at job advertisements and really think about what employers are seeking. 'We steer them to ask these questions of themselves.'

Alice Phillips, headmistress of St Catherine's School in Bramley, Surrey, and current president of the Girls' Schools Association (GSA), starts her pupils thinking about working life as young as Year 9. Mothers are invited to come in to talk about their careers and are introduced to the class by their own daughters. The following year, girls prepare their first CVs, which they can use to get temporary jobs such as babysitting. A big careers fair is held at the school biennially, and at the end of term, an alumna from the last decade lectures to the whole school. 'Our alumnae register is enormously important,' says Phillips. 'We use it all the time to put girls in touch with a range of careers.'

At Eastbourne College there's ▷



A St Catherine's pupil meets the Duchess of Cornwall

an extensive careers programme from Year 10, including careers-interest questionnaires, visits from key professions, and a careers convention supported by 50 Old Eastbournians. Sixth-formers receive guidance in course and institution choice, including overseas and vocational courses. An outside organisation provides interview practice with feedback.

Matthew Burke, headmaster of all-girls' St Martha's School, Barnet, uses former pupils as mentors, and also buys in advice from outside experts on time management and study skills. 'The girls need to be equipped for university, when they won't have a form tutor on their back chivvying them,' Burke says.

All St Martha's sixth-formers do the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which requires the girls to do individual research and make presentations. The school's sixth-form 'enrichment' programme introduces the girls to outsiders who will talk about careers, gap years and even alternatives to university. 'It's not necessary, for instance, to have a degree for accountancy,' Burke points out. All pupils do religious education up to GCSE, so they are confronted by the ethical questions that a profession such as medicine throws up. The school's denominational status is crucial, he says. 'The fact that St Martha's is a Catholic school ensures that the girls are not just given paper qualifications but also a moral compass - to do the right thing and show it by the way they live their lives.'

Canford, a co-educational boarding and day school in Dorset, provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn new skills beyond the academic curriculum and to gain independence. As at St Martha's, pupils take the EPQ, as well as selecting a series of classes on non-A-level subjects such as law, archaeology and the classical world. Community service

is another pillar in the Canford programme, with pupils visiting the elderly, teaching in primary schools, working in a hospice, and providing ground-force assistance at local sites. All this gives pupils insight into themselves and others to help them make the right life choices. Assistance is given on the structure and content of a generic CV, with advice on how to deal with demanding online application forms. The school's alumni mentoring programme is 'where they learn the importance of networking, building relationships and getting practical experience in a career area that interests them'.

Education is, in the end, about more than academic success, as Dominic Oliver, headmaster at Lancing College in West Sussex, stresses. 'A successful school will nurture and grow a child's sense of themselves but also a sense of the importance of

activities, and which offer a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Independence of learning is valued above all else. We avoid the "teach to test" mentality and league-table culture that exists in some schools, and have adopted the rigorous IGCSE exams. We don't want our pupils to get to university simply by passing exams to meet an offer; we want them to get through university with a good degree, achieved by thinking and learning for themselves.'

Similarly, Eastbourne College encourages pupils to work independently outside of lessons, with older pupils required to set aside time to complete their work. Its extensive co-curricular programmes help, says headmaster Simon Davies, 'to nurture children to be remarkable young people. We want to enable our pupils to stand out because of who they are, not simply for what they achieve.'

'Most independent schools will provide a wide range of experiences for pupils across the term'

others. Such a school will produce confident individuals, who will trust key adults around them, and will know their perspective is noted and heard. They will also recognise that this needs to be balanced against the perspective of others and the needs of the whole community.'

Daniel Connolly, the college's registrar, advises parents to 'look for schools with opportunities for leadership and representation, in houses, sport, music, drama and community

The independent sector's big advantage is that the majority of schools, day and boarding, don't have a 'nine to five' attitude, so allow pupils a wide range of experiences across the term. Alice Phillips's advice to prospective parents is to talk to sixth-formers and ask them about their decisions. 'Ask, for instance, how and why they chose their universities. They are your best guide as to whether the school truly offers its students choice and the opportunity to learn independence.' ■



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NEW TECHNOLOGY – FRIEND *or* FOE?

Schools are changing with the times... but how will technology affect your child's education?

New technology is transforming school life and learning, and is a powerful tool if harnessed the right way. We cover some of the issues raised by new technology over the last decade or so.

Jane Prescott, headmistress of all-girls Portsmouth High School, is on the Independent Schools Council's (ISC) information and computer technology (ICT) committee. 'New technology is a huge help with teaching,' she tells me. 'It promotes engagement, provides different ways of learning

and gives greater access for pupils to lesson material. For instance, staff can record lessons to be rerun later for revision. It's particularly helpful in maths where children can go back over problems they have struggled with earlier in the year.'

Portsmouth High School is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), which enables the sharing of best teaching practice across its 24 independent schools and two academies. Cat Scutt, head of creative teaching and learning at the trust, says that ICT is a very powerful tool.

'We have developed a teacher collaboration site, organised by subject. It offers teachers the opportunity to have vigorous discussions across the geographically dispersed schools. Not every school has an ICT expert, so we can help with expertise from other schools.'

There are tricky decisions to be made about how schools implement new technology, says Jeremy Bloomfield, head of IT at Moor Park School,

a co-ed day and boarding school for children from two-and-a-half to 13, in Shropshire. 'There are two approaches that schools may take with regard to wireless devices,' he says. 'You can go for school owned and administered or bring your own device (BYOD).'

'The problem with the latter, cheaper option, is of having a multitude of different sorts of devices in the classroom. There is absolutely no escaping the fact that we shall have to install a managed Wi-Fi system ▽



Google-eyed:
Canford School
pupils

in the near future. Very expensive, but no choice...'

Moreton Hall School in Shropshire, however, has chosen to allow its girls to use their own devices in class to access resources, share work with their teacher and for the teacher to show work from a student's device through the Cloud, as well as for independent research and learning.

'Using a Cloud-based system allows for cross-platform compatibility,' says Sona Champion, IT co-ordinator at Moreton Hall School, 'and so gives parents the choice of device to buy for their daughters, rather than imposing only a certain type to be provided for school at an ever-increasing cost.'

Sybil Cary, head of ICT at co-ed pre-prep and prep Milbourne Lodge School in Surrey, formerly worked in the computer industry and in broadcasting, and so is familiar with a range of IT systems. 'IT frees teachers up from the traditional classroom and



IT should enhance teaching rather than be used to replace it

nothing to beat the interaction between teachers and pupils: IT should enhance teaching rather than be used to replace it. There are some disadvantages to IT, says Prescott of Portsmouth High. 'Pupils and teachers can become over-reliant - and it doesn't always work. Children are so fast and savvy that they sometimes know more than a teacher, which can be threatening.'

As Sybil Cary of Milbourne Lodge

there has been a breach, such as writing unpleasantly about another girl, or posting an unflattering picture of someone else. They have to realise that such actions are hurtful and that it's not in their gift to post other people's photos.'

Maurice Walters, head of academic enrichment at Canford School, says: 'What pupils tend to lack is the ability to filter and funnel information and to discern what is relevant and what is not. There is an interesting schizophrenia in attitude to what is written online. When they post something about one of their friends on Twitter or Facebook, they are happy to write what is fictitious, whereas when they read something posted by someone else, they accept it as incontrovertible truth without question.'

E-safety and cyber-bullying are not problems that are unique to technology, says Scutt of the GDST. 'It's no different from face-to-face bullying and you need to teach the students responsibility and how to keep themselves safe. They need good models of education for technology just as they do for other aspects of their personal life at school.'

Most schools don't attempt to take mobiles and other devices away from pupils at school. 'We believe in teaching them how and when to use them,' says Prescott. At Moreton Hall, says Champion, 'there are no restrictions to social media sites during the day (the girls would be able to access them through 3G, which we don't have control over), but there are restrictions in the evening. Access cut-off times are different, depending on the age of the pupils. Social media is an important part of a boarder's life, so they don't feel cut off from friends and family, which is an important element for their continued happiness.' ■

'The very speed of the evolution of new technology is in itself an extraordinary challenge for today's schools'

enables them to engage children who learn in different ways. Imagination is the only limitation,' she says. Pupils at the school record their activities and also blog about what they have been doing. 'Technology makes lessons so much broader - and there is a massive amount out there which is free.'

All the teachers I spoke to are agreed that ultimately there is

points out, new technology can also make teachers lazy. 'Some of the best teaching is still done using books and through the personal experiences of staff. Nothing beats a good raconteur for capturing the imagination of the class.'

The very speed of the evolution of new technology is in itself an extraordinary challenge for schools. 'Within a decade, we have gone from zero to hero, and there's no benchmark,' says Cary. 'There are no handed-down models, so schools are making up rules and boundaries about social media and internet use as they go along.'

Because of the age of the children, Facebook and Twitter are not used in school at Milbourne Lodge. 'But we are teaching them how to blog safely,' says Cary. 'Parents and children here sign up to our safe-use policy. We teach children to remember not to leave a trail, not to leave images that their parents wouldn't like, and to tell an adult if they see something inappropriate during their internet use.'

Prescott says that it is important to keep reminding the older girls of what is suitable. 'We act swiftly if



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MANNERS MAKETH BOYS *and* GIRLS

Just how do schools go about ensuring good manners and thoughtfulness?

Manners makyth man' is the famous motto of Winchester College, founded by William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England in the late 14th century. It may seem rather an outdated concept in the pell-mell of 21st-century life, but it was an adage that struck a chord with 13-year-old Freddie Wootton, a pupil at Felsted Preparatory School in north Essex. A member of the school council, he decided to establish his own code of conduct for mealtimes, introducing his own little mnemonic: 'Clean hands and go to the loo, Open mouths to chat, not to chew, Use 'please and thank you' to get what you wish, Remember - place knife and fork side by side on the dish, Try to use your napkin if you're able,

Elbows by your side and off the table, Only eat the food on your plate, Use your knife AND fork - that's great, Superb manners go down well!'

Freddie's Courteous Code has now been enforced across the school, and those pupils falling below the required standard are sent on a manners awareness course. It may sound a bit prissy, but headmistress Jenny Burrett says that Freddie's resourcefulness has worked, and the children, although amused at first, have responded well. 'It has been very much child-led. Teaching students life skills, such as good table manners, is important preparation for their future social interactions. As a school, it's our duty to teach that.'

Other schools are also using mealtimes as a springboard for raising wider questions about respect for ▷

Courtesy makes a school a happier place



others. Downe House, a girls' boarding school in Berkshire, has replaced long refectory tables with round ones, which have cloths, fresh flowers and proper cutlery. 'It's an opportunity for girls to eat in a more traditional way, at a time when families don't sit down together and good table manners are not being picked up,' says Teresa MacColl, boarding deputy at the school. 'The girls will also eat breakfast with the headmistress on certain days and will be expected to carry on a conversation.'

Similarly, at the co-ed St James Junior School in west London, food is brought to the table, which is correctly set, and the teachers sit with the children. 'We teach them to serve others before themselves, encourage them to pass food, and to thank the dinner ladies as well,' explains headmistress Catherine Thomlinson. 'This induces an atmosphere of service, kindness and care, which goes beyond physical table manners.'

For this is really the essence of such initiatives at these schools. It may seem relatively trivial how



Sidcot, a Quaker school in Somerset

is at the heart of the school's ethos. We have four school rules: speak the truth; be generous; be kind; and never be careless, but be your best. It's a living, breathing philosophy: if you are not kind to others, you don't get on in life.'

It is important, too, stresses Tomlinson, that the teachers also embody the school's philosophy in their behaviour to each other and to the children: children should stand up when teachers come into the room, and teachers should respond by thanking them.

Timothy Hobbs, headmaster and founder of the co-ed Hall School in Wimbledon, agrees: 'Consideration

the sixth form. 'We serve an ethnically diverse area of London,' says the warden, Sarah Kerr-Dineen. 'The pupils come from many different walks of life and backgrounds, but they are all fellow pupils in the school, where diversity is celebrated.'

One of the school's values is community, with pupils expected to sign up for its code of conduct on arrival. 'They have a part to play in making the school a nice place to be,' adds Kerr-Dineen. 'The obvious manifestations are letting people pass and not slamming doors, but the pupils also seem naturally to look out for one another and will seek help if they can see that a fellow student is distressed. They realise that they have the power to make people happy or unhappy.'

'Manners are a way of life here,' says Jackie Bagnall, director of the Centre for Peace and Global Studies, at Sidcot, a Quaker school in north Somerset. 'In Quaker practice, when others speak we need to find the discipline to sit quietly and listen to what they say, to hold back our immediate response to take time to really listen. This is the respect that is needed to build and develop relationships.' ■

'Our school rules form a living, breathing philosophy: if you are not kind to others, you don't get on in life'

children hold their forks, but what good table manners signify is important, for so much of social intercourse is carried out over meals of one kind or another. It's something of a cultural battle, believes MacColl of Downe House.

'My colleagues complain that the girls have become ruder in the past five years. I hesitate to blame parents, but they are undoubtedly more liberal and less rigorous. If parents don't insist on good manners, the girls start at a lower level when they come to the school and it is a challenge for us. We have to teach them to value themselves and those they come into contact with. We are looking to the future beyond our sheltered bubble, because employers are saying that young people don't fit into their organisations because they don't know how to behave with others.'

Such training needs to start young. Thomlinson of St James echoes MacColl: 'Looking after one another

and kindness are the foundation of good manners. At school, a child who is treated with courtesy and respect, and who feels safe and appreciated, will respond in like manner. Being polite in a hostile situation can often be your most powerful weapon. At the heart of it all is the need for a child to be aware of those with whom he or she spends time, to notice their feelings and understand their differences and shared interests.'

Respect for difference is significant, as Burrett of Felsted explains. 'We have a number of international children in the school, and we encourage them to talk about their lives and their homes. In the sixth form, we run an etiquette course about understanding different cultural conventions and having respect for others.' This is true, too, of Forest School, at Snaresbrook in southeast London, which teaches boys and girls in separate classes until



Pupils need a code of conduct



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Independent schools aren't cheap. But there are many ways to make them more affordable

Independent school fees have more than quadrupled over the past 20 years, according to a recent study. Figures suggest that an infant enrolled at a private day school this year will eventually cost their parents £271,000 in fees and associated extras by the time they take their A-levels. Does this mean that these schools will become the preserve of the super-rich, or an international export, pricing out the children of doctors, lawyers and civil servants? And if you're not super-rich, how do you contemplate paying for 13 years of independent education?

A number of financial pressures drive the rise in fees, says Mark Taylor, bursar at the King's School, Canterbury, and current chairman of the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA). 'The cost of utilities and teachers' pay are both big drivers,' he explains. 'But schools are doing

their best to control costs and stop fees increasing. Many are letting out their facilities in holidays for conferences and summer schools. And the independent sector is bringing money into the overall British economy.'

Taylor's advice is that 'it is crucial to prepare for the commitment of paying fees as early as possible, and to have in place a strategy to meet fees in the event of death, illness or loss of income'. He also advocates taking professional advice at the outset.

Keren Bobker, senior associate at Holborn Assets, adds that different education plans are available from a range of well-respected providers.

'Not all school fees are the same. There can be a 50 per cent difference in cost, so do shop around'

Bespoke advice is important as one size will not fit all. Aspects to consider include family circumstances (are grandparents likely to want/be able to contribute?); the time frame (will you be paying for a child's tuition starting from when they are three, or from the age of 13?) and the amount of initial investment available.

The purpose of these payment plans is to spread the cost of schooling over a longer period and thus make the fees more affordable. ISAs are

one method of tax-free saving for the longer term, but there are other shorter-term plans if the more immediate future is a problem.

Ideally, parents likely to choose private education should start investing as soon as the child is born. If you can afford to put £10,000 away at that point, you'll find things easier later on, but even £200 a month will help if invested in the right interest-earning scheme. Bobker recommends starting 'with a small amount that's comfortable to you and increase it as you can'.

My sons' school used to encourage parents to pay by direct debit, suggesting, to our derision, that it would

avoid the cost of a stamp for our cheque. On a more serious note, many schools, including St Catherine's, Bramley, offer a fee composition package. 'Parents buy a number of years' fees at a discount,' explains headmistress Alice Phillips, 'and invest with us rather than a bank. They don't get interest, but they get, say, a three per cent discount. These are ideal for grandparents who may be downsizing and "want to give with a warm hand".'

According to Janette Wallis, senior



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'A more forward-thinking, flexible education to equip girls better for life beyond school.' *Tatler Schools Guide 2014*

An Independent Boarding School for girls aged 11-18.
Open Days: 22 Nov 2014, 17 Jan 2015 and 21 Mar 2015.

Please contact registrar@downehouse.net to book an appointment.
t. 01635 200286 www.downehouse.net



CRANLEIGH
EX CULTU ROBUR

Independent, co-educational, weekly boarding school for students aged 13 to 18, with an impressive academic record and wide variety of co-curricular activities. Set in a stunning rural location on the edge of the Surrey Hills, Cranleigh prides itself in helping every student to broaden their horizons and exceed their expectations.



For more information, or to arrange a visit, call **01483 273666**
or e-mail admissions@cranleigh.org



St Martha's

"This is where I belong"

We are North London and Hertfordshire's leading Independent Catholic School for Girls aged 11-18. We accept girls from all faiths and traditions.

Open Morning

27 September 2014
10.00am to 1.00pm

Sixth Form Open Evening

16th October 2014
6pm to 8pm

Tel: 020 8449 6889
admissions@saint-marthas.org.uk

St Martha's School
Independent Catholic Girls' School
Camlet Way Hadley Wood
Barnet Hertfordshire EN4 0NJ

st-marthas.co.uk



CURIOUS PARENTS WANTED

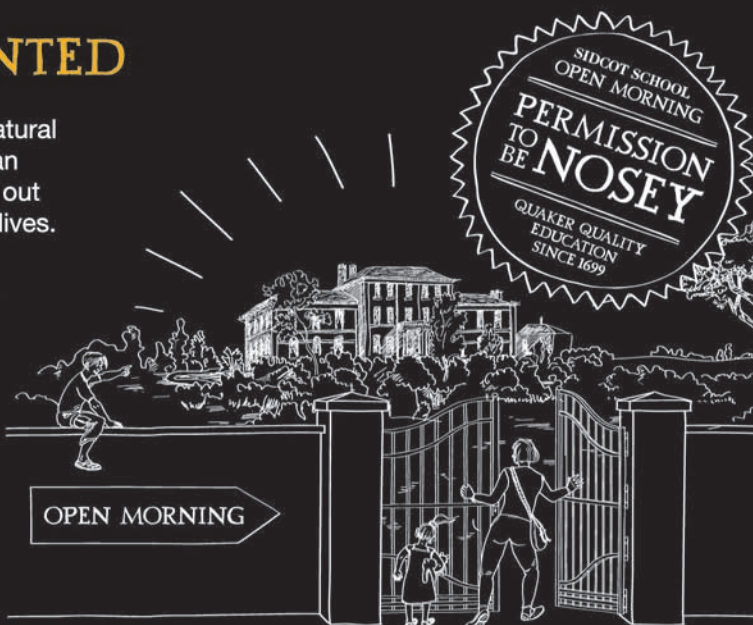
At Sidcot School we set out to develop students' natural curiosity and creativity. We educate them, rather than simply train them to pass tests, so that they can go out into the world and live purposeful and adventurous lives.

Curious to know more? Come to our Open Morning and find out what makes Sidcot different.

Friday 26 September 9am – noon

RSVP to Sidcot at www.sidcot.org.uk/contact or 01934 845236.

Scholarships & flexi-boarding available.



Sidcot School is an independent day and boarding school set in glorious Somerset countryside, for boys and girls aged 3 to 18.

Charity number 296491



The Duchess of Cornwall visits St Catherine's



Dulwich College musicians (above) and King's College School, Wimbledon



editor at The Good Schools Guide, 'some parents plan excessively, while others will just have one term's fees in their hands'. She adds that parents should shop around: 'Not all school fees are the same. There can be a 50 per cent difference in cost.'

It is worth parents looking at The Good Schools Guide's Scholarship and Bursary Service, which is a comprehensive database of schools offering bursaries and scholarships: a third of pupils receive financial help of some sort, according to figures from the Independent Schools Council (ISC), which represents schools educating four out of five children in the independent sector. In recent years, the targeting of funds has changed from scholarships being awarded on academic, sporting or musical merit, regardless of parental income, to means-tested bursaries.

Many independent schools began life as charitable foundations, so the greater recent emphasis on bursaries is very much in the original spirit of the schools. That is true of Dulwich College, founded in 1619 by the actor Edward Alleyn, who stated that the college would be for 'poor scholars'. Dulwich has sought to maintain this tradition by providing bursaries for boys whose parents are unable to meet the school's fees.

So the advice is, get saving early, take financial advice, shop around - and find out whether your child might be eligible for a bursary at the school of your choice. Independent education is costly, but it may not be as far beyond your means as it first appears. ■

ADDRESS BOOK

SCHOOLS

Brighton & Hove High School
01273-280280, www.bhhs.gdst.net

Canford School, Dorset
01202-841254, www.canford.com

Downe House, Berkshire 01635-200286, www.downehouse.net

Dulwich College, London 020-8693 3601, www.dulwich.org.uk

Eastbourne College 01323-452300, www.eastbourne-college.co.uk

Edgeborough, Surrey 01252-792495, www.edgeborough.co.uk

Felsted School, Essex 01371-822600, www.felsted.org

Forest School, Snaresbrook, London 020-8520 1744, www.forest.org.uk

Friends' School, Saffron Walden 01799-525351, www.friends.org.uk

Glenalmond College, Perthshire 01738-842000, www.glenalmondcollege.co.uk

Gresham's School, Holt, Norfolk 01263-714500, www.greshams.com

Hall School Wimbledon 020-8394 6144 (admissions), hsw.co.uk

King's College School, Wimbledon 020-8255 5300, www.kcs.org.uk

Lancing College, West Sussex 01273-452213, www.lancingcollege.co.uk

Milbourne Lodge School, Surrey 01372-462737, www.milbournelodge.co.uk

Moor Park, Shropshire 01584-876061, www.moorpark.org.uk

Moreton Hall School, Shropshire 01691-773671, www.moretonhallschool.com

St Benedict's School, Ealing,

London 020-8862 2254, www.stbenedicts.org.uk

St Catherine's, Bramley, Surrey 01483-893363, www.stcatherines.info

St James Junior School, London 020-7348 1793, www.stjamesschools.co.uk

St Martha's, Barnet 020-8449 6889, st-marthas.co.uk

Sidcot School, North Somerset 01934-843102, www.sidcot.org.uk

The Dragon School, Oxford 01865-315400, www.dragonschool.org

The King's School, Canterbury 01227-595501, www.kings-school.co.uk

Woodcote House School, Windlesham, Surrey 01276-472115, www.woodcotehouseschool.co.uk

ORGANISATIONS

Gabbitas Educational Consultants 020-7734 0161, www.gabbitas.co.uk

Girls' Days Schools Trust 020-7393 6666, www.gdst.net

Independent Schools' Bursars Association 01256-330369, www.theisba.org.uk

Independent Schools Council 020-7766 7070, www.isc.co.uk

Independent Schools Show 020-3301 0299, www.schoolsshow.co.uk

The Good Schools Guide 020-7193 1167, www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk

The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference 01858-469059, www.hmc.org.uk

William Clarence of London 020-7412 8988, williamclarence.com