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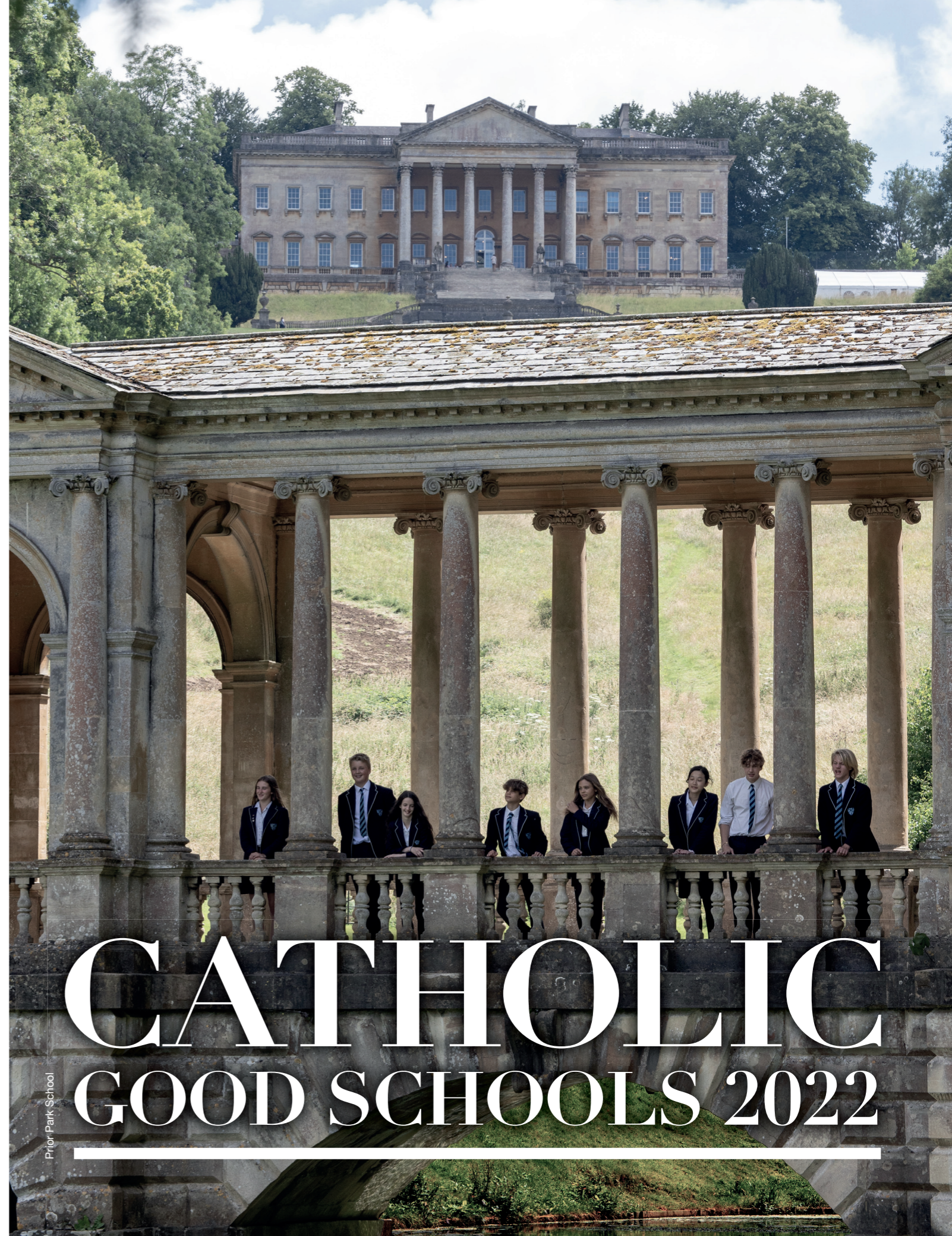
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# CATHOLIC GOOD SCHOOLS 2022

Prior Park School

## From the Editor

Welcome to the *Herald's* first comprehensive guide to the best Catholic independent education in the UK – with over 80 schools. We have tried to give you a feel of each school, while also providing information such as location, ethos, school fees and the inside track on the headmaster or headmistress.

We have also designated our Top Ten senior schools by taking into account a variety of factors including academic performance and pastoral care, as well as to what extent the schools turn out well-rounded Catholics as opposed to just high exam achievers. Whereas in the past Catholic independent schools did not always do well academically compared to others, this is slowly changing. Ten per cent of 2022 leavers from Mayfield School, for example, have won places at Cambridge University this year. Another school notably on the up (though not in the Top Ten) is Our Lady's Abingdon in Oxfordshire which also gets excellent results, thanks to new headmaster Daniel Gibbons, previously deputy head of Downside, who is emerging as a leading headmaster to watch who delivers both academically and spiritually. Certainly academic excellence is not everything and too much focus on exam success can mean pupils find it difficult to cope. Mental wellbeing must also be a priority.

The numbers of Catholics at our profiled schools is going down. The average is now only between 20 to 30 per cent Catholic. St Mary's Ascot still has one of the highest percentages of Catholic pupils (at 95 per cent). In second place is Ampleforth (which has not made the Top Ten this year because of ongoing uncertainty around its future) with 70 per cent Catholic pupils. Worth and Stonyhurst come in third with 60 per cent of pupils being Catholic.

Other schools have fewer than 50 per cent, such as Woldingham in Surrey which has a Catholic contingent of only 25 per cent. Due to its strong academic performance, however, and the arrival of new headmaster and Stonyhurst alumnus Dr James Whitehead who is taking the school in a more religious direction, it has made the top ten this year. We have also included the less-well-known St John's College Cardiff, which not only provides the choir for Cardiff Metropolitan Cathedral, but also regularly beats all the big names in the academic league tables, coming 9th in the UK last year and top in Wales for a number of years now. St George's Weybridge is another school which does brilliantly academically while taking its Josephite tradition so seriously that it has been known to put non-Catholics off sending their children there.

Prep schools which have impressed us stand out for their independence and old-fashioned values and belief in boarding as a preparation for life. Westminster Cathedral Choir School is especially impressive academically, while we like All Hallows for its bent on the creative arts and on turning out happy, well-adjusted pupils thanks to its psychologist headmaster. The other three – Moor Park, Winterfold House and the Oratory prep school – are all well established bastions of Catholic primary education which have for decades been sending children to the best schools in the country.

The issue also includes four articles from our experts covering a broad range of educational issues from the tragic closure of St Benet's Hall to the importance of teaching children about the miracle that is the natural world by a teacher from Woldingham. We hope you enjoy it.

*Olenka Hamilton*



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## Telling children the whole story of the Bible

These timeless tales should be simplified but not diluted for younger readers. By **Flora Neville**

Is there any story so perfect as Cain and Abel? In a few lines, we read of two brothers competing against one another for the love of their father. Murder, a curse and the division of a family ensue, followed by the wonderful line that God delivers to Cain as he is considering his revenge: "Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you. You can still master him." Hemingway wept.

The novelist Sebastian Faulks once said: "Of the 100 greatest stories ever told, 99 are probably in the Old Testament." The other was in Homer. I have been reading the Old Testament while on maternity leave, and I concur with Faulks, as does my baby who, at six months old, has a thirst for the narrative as well as for the sound of thin paper pages scrunching in fat fists.

But these stories, when diluted into the PG versions of a children's translation, often become nothing more than a cautionary tale, a few rapid lines of naughty and nice little girls and boys and a very cross God.

The DK children's edition of the Bible has it that "Cain and Abel were like most siblings – they didn't always get along." The line about sin crouching at the door is absent. And yet, isn't this the point of the story that crosses cultures and generations? I picture Cain working the alluvial plains somewhere in the fertile crescent, wrestling with the nefarious temptations that arise from the sense of "it's not fair", three words that are laced with latent sin, crouching and hungry.

Hannah Thomson, a seasoned Sunday school teacher and mother of two, says, "Sin is hard to talk about. I always worry I am diluting it but don't want fear of sin to outweigh the joy of salvation." It's a struggle that all parents will face from very early on, but it certainly won't get easier and sin won't

stop crouching if ignored.

Another lesser-known Old Testament classic is that of Balaam and his talking donkey in the book of Numbers. The donkey verbally challenges Balaam's aggressive behaviour, causing his master to see what is right in front of him: the Angel of the Lord with sword drawn, and Balaam's own sin in ignoring God and, stubborn as an ass, pressing on along the path that leads to the precipice.

The difficulty in teaching this story, says Thomson, is that children see talking donkeys on TV all the time, so how do you distinguish this one in the Bible? Told badly, this becomes a silly story, a sort of Disney-biblical soup. Told true to the original, the donkey first breaks off the path into a field, then mashes his master's foot against a wall to avoid the path before finally lying down and pleading, "Am I not your donkey who you have ridden to this day? Am I in the habit of doing so with you?" There is a humbling, sober lesson in this. God is not above talking donkeys if a talking donkey is what it takes to bring someone back to the right path, which leads away from the precipice. Balaam learns to "only say what God puts in my mouth,

nothing more".

My mother read Bible stories to me and my three siblings. She teaches at a Sunday School at a church in London. Her view is: "If you don't have the element of every story whispering His [Jesus Christ's] name, it's a lost cause."

Take the story of Abraham and Isaac, for example, one that is hard to teach and to tell children. Its titular character is commanded by God to sacrifice his one and only son – not exactly a situation you want your child to imagine themselves in. However, it is a command that a thousand or so years later God would turn on himself and this time follow through. A brutal story, but how exciting for children to see the whole picture, and to go back to the start to piece it together.

Not all children's translations are the work of the Devil. Father Rupert McHardy, a priest at the Brompton Oratory, recalls the illustrations in Hamlyn's all-colour children's Bible from his childhood. "A child's version can be in simpler language but it should tell the whole story," he says, "and have good pictures." A modern offering, also with very good pictures, is the *Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. Though more of a spin-off than a translation, it focuses on the idea that all the stories underlie the central story "of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them". It begins with "Love" and ends with "to be continued..." which is clever, but still not a patch on, nor a fragment so stirring as: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'"



# Stop this erosion of faith in education

The closure of St Benet's Hall, Oxford, demands determined action, says **Alexander Stafford MP**

As the start of Oxford term approaches, I have had to accept that my alma mater has closed its doors for the last time. St Benet's Hall, Oxford, had been educating students since 1897 and was celebrating its 125th anniversary as a bastion of free thought and academic investigation. However, the hall's planned joyful birthday celebrations abruptly morphed into its funeral oration, following a shock decision by the university council not to renew the institution's licence.

To the casual observer, Benet's – as it was always known – operated much like any other Oxford college. Yet it occupied a special place within the university's history and governance structure. Established by the Benedictine monks of Ampleforth Abbey, who were seeking a hall of studies in Oxford for the purpose of enabling monks to read for degrees at Oxford, it was not technically a college, but a permanent private hall (PPH).

There are now only five left: two Roman Catholic, two Anglican and one Baptist. The main – and imperceptible – difference between a PPH and a college is that a PPH is governed, at least in part, by representatives of the corresponding denomination, rather than by the fellows of the college.

It was this quirk of governance that proved to be Benet's' greatest strength, but also its fatal weakness. It was governed by the trustees of the St Benet's Hall Education Trust, itself a subsidiary of the Ampleforth Abbey Trust (AAT). Benet's was, in fact, seeking to separate itself from the AAT, with the separation planned to lead to full college status. However, the failure to convince the university that Benet's was financially viable resulted in the suspension of its student admissions and the rescinding of its licence.

It was a decision that the Ampleforth

trustees claimed to present an “unacceptable level of risk”; as a result, the AAT put the buildings on the market, stating that the hall had not “produced the desired [funding] results within the necessary timescale” to become independent. It is clear to me that the hall's closure could have been averted, and that some of the circumstances and events were outside its control; it had long been buffeted by the winds of fate, at the mercy of tempests driven by external agendas and priorities.

Oxford has taken a dim view of PPHs for years, fearing their distinctive character and the influence of religious denominations at the expense of university control. There is no reason why Benet's could not have operated on a provisional licence while it looked for financial support, particularly as its transformation into a college would have given the university the sort of control that it desires. Other PPHs have become colleges in the past, and there is no reason why Benet's shouldn't have followed suit.

Equally, the AAT has in the past provided funds to allow the hall to remain a going concern. Why then, as Benet's searched for new financial support, did the Ampleforth trustees allow one of the greatest Benedictine legacies to disappear forever? Where, too, were the Jesuits and the Dominicans, who run the other Catholic halls? The loss of one leading Catholic educational institution is a loss for them too, for their destinies are all linked. Our heritage is crumbling before our eyes, and the silence in the Catholic community at large has been astonishing.

My recollections of Benet's are of a home and a family; it was unique and special, totally unlike anything else. Tutors, students and monks all lived and learned under the same roof, breaking bread and sharing knowledge together as equals. There was



no hierarchy, and I particularly enjoyed our famous guest dinners. Everyone knew everyone, and supported each other through thick and thin; student surveys consistently showed that Benet's had the highest levels of student satisfaction in the university.

Benet's was also looking to the future. Great changes had been made in recent years: the admission of women; the appointment of the first lay Master; the move towards independence from Ampleforth; the looked-for transition to college status; a satellite site in Norham Gardens, a few minutes away.

The hall was proud of its Catholic heritage and traditions but was open and welcoming to those of all faiths and none. It could hardly be accused of standing still or of lacking ambition.

This is why its passing is so deeply tragic. The hall's demise was unnecessary and born out of neglect and antipathy rather than misfortune or inevitability. Benet's was not a moribund, regressive, failing

institution, but a living, breathing, thriving community. It was an intrinsic part of the rich cultural tapestry of Oxford, higher education, Catholicism and British society. The hall was a paragon of strength in diversity, with its difference standing out in an increasingly homogeneous educational and societal landscape.

An extinct college or PPH cannot be brought back; once it is gone, it is gone. During my time at Oxford, I witnessed the closure of Greyfriars, the Capuchins' PPH, and the sense of *déjà vu* is unmistakable. But this is also about more than just Benet's; there is a wider struggle here.

We are witnessing the slow death of Catholic education in Oxford and also of faith's place in education and society. There is a sustained campaign underway to undermine Catholic institutions and influence, and we must realise that we are at risk of losing our precious traditions.

In its time Benet's produced some of the brightest leading Catholic and secular

“ Benet's was unique and special, totally unlike anything else. Tutors, students and monks all lived and learned under the same roof, breaking bread and sharing knowledge together as equals

minds, and even the occasional Member of Parliament. It imbued me with an appreciation of history and of Catholic and community values; it instilled in me a sense of academic rigour and intellectual inquiry; it gifted me lifelong friends; and it nourished me, forming who I am as a person. It is hard to believe that Benet's will no longer be there waiting for me on trips to Oxford, and its closure feels akin to losing a friend.

Exceedingly few other institutions in Britain or in the world could have boasted of its unique identity as a Catholic house of studies within a world-class university. This was mutually beneficial for the University of Oxford and for the Catholic Church, and I firmly believe that British higher education is poorer without it. What has happened to Benet's was against its will, and not part of its plan for the future. My heart goes out to the students who have been dispersed among the other colleges (what a horrid thing that is), and also to the tutors and the ancillary staff – who were also such a part of the family – now looking for other work.

Amid my disbelief, sadness and anger about the events that led to this, I have raised the matter of the hall's closure in parliament; I hope to start a conversation about the way forward. It may be too late for Benet's, but we urgently need a no-holds-barred postmortem to find out exactly how this disaster for Catholic education came to pass, and to ensure such a thing never happens to a Catholic higher-education institution again.

St Benet's Hall was – is – an undimmed jewel in the crown of British education, and we must not allow this heinous heist to stand unchallenged.

*Alexander Stafford is Conservative MP for the Rother Valley. He read History at St Benet's Hall between 2005 and 2008.*

# Awe, wonder and a new GCSE

Children should learn to love the natural world before studying it for an exam, says **Roy Peachey**

In 2013 and 2014, biology undergraduates at the University of Oxford were asked to name five species of birds, trees, mammals, butterflies and flowers found wild in the British Isles. That's biology undergraduates. At Oxford University. Needing to identify only five species. No problem.

Except, of course, it was a big problem. Only 56 per cent of the students could name five species of birds, 54 per cent five species of mammals, 25 per cent five species of wildflowers, 24 per cent five species of trees, and 13 per cent five species of butterflies.

Something is clearly going badly wrong if science undergrads at one of the best universities in the world have such an impoverished knowledge of the natural history on their own doorstep.

Of course, Oxford academics aren't the only people to have noticed the problem. In his influential book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv reminisced about his childhood in the 1950s, writing that "I knew my woods and my fields; I knew every bend in the creek and dip in the beaten dirt paths. I wandered those woods even in my dreams. A kid today can likely tell you about the Amazon rain forest – but not about the last time he or she explored the woods in solitude, or lay in a field listening to the wind and watching the clouds move."

It is now widely accepted that children are increasingly suffering from what Louv called Nature Deficit Disorder and what others have called the extinction of experience. This is bad for children and bad for the environment too because, as Sir David Attenborough has said, "no one will

protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced."

So what is the solution?

Step forward the new GCSE in Natural History, announced earlier this year with a great fanfare by Nadhim Zahawi, then education secretary, with vocal support from the Natural History Museum, the Zoological Society of London and many other organisations. "One of the most exciting things that has happened in education in the last 30 years" is how Sir Tim Smit, co-founder of the Eden Project, described it.

The introduction of a GCSE in Natural History is very much to be welcomed, but we should not overplay its significance. If environmental science has struggled to establish a foothold in schools, there is no particular reason why Natural History GCSE should fare any better. With the Key Stage 4 curriculum already overcrowded, it is unlikely that many students or schools will sign up for yet another GCSE.

So should we just throw up our hands and accept that our children are doomed to ecological ignorance?

Absolutely not. But we should acknowledge that the answer to our natural history woes lies only partially in the

classroom. Andrew Gosler and Stephen Tilling, with whose work at Oxford I began, point out that when asked to name five species of birds, trees, mammals, butterflies and wildflowers, "students who reported teachers as a source of knowledge performed slightly worse than those who did not, but students who reported teachers as their principal

source of [natural history knowledge] performed significantly worse."

Much more significant than teachers was the influence of parents and grandparents. What really matters, Gosler and Tilling suggest, are adults who can spark an interest in the natural world and "continuing interventions" that ensure the spark doesn't die out when the busyness of life sets in.

That has certainly been my experience. In my early twenties, I lived, taught and studied in the Lake District. Regular field trips in and around the National Park sparked a love of trees, plants and many other aspects of natural history. However, when I moved first to Oxford and then to London, my love of nature faded and all but disappeared. It was my children's awe and wonder in the face of the world around them that later brought it back to life.

At that moment, I learned, as Rachel Carson had learned before me, that a child's sense of wonder requires "the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in". As a Catholic parent and educator, I recovered my own sense of wonder at God's creation by enjoying it with my children

In recent years I have thrown myself into nature journalling and subsequently set up a school nature journalling club. During this last year I have also been able to incorporate a certain amount of outdoor learning into our sixth-form enrichment programme. We look at the local geology. We go in search of and identify wildflowers. I try to spark an interest so that others can fan the flames.

If our children learn to love the natural world, and if we help them sustain that love throughout their secondary education, everything else will fall into place. They will want to preserve the world. They will sign up for the new GCSE in Natural History. You never know, they might even learn to identify five species of birds, trees, mammals, butterflies and wildflowers.

*Roy Peachey is an author, a teacher at Woldingham School, and a home educator. His most recent book is A Little Book of British Saints (Isaiah Books, 2022)*



*"No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced"*



## Thriving on theology back in the classroom

How an in-school teacher-training placement inspired **Serenhedd James**

"Have you prayed the Angelus today?" Silence followed, save the noise of shuffling feet. "I'll try again, Year 9. Have you prayed the Angelus today?" More shuffling, with added mumbling. Then, only just discernibly: "No, Miss." "Right! On your feet." Loud scraping of chairs and pushing of tables. "The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary." Thirty teenage voices: smiling, sulking, shouting, grunting: "And she conceived by the Holy Spirit!"

And so it went on, while I pondered the twists and turns that had brought me to this overcrowded classroom in an enormous secondary school in North Oxfordshire. I had not meant to spend the academic year 2020-2021 doing a formal teacher-training qualification; nevertheless, it seemed a good way to ride out the uncertainty of the international situation, and also of spending it with more in-person human interaction than the preceding six months.

Setting out on this new journey was not without its challenges. It was not quite the depths of the coronavirus pandemic because

the schools were once again open, but there seemed to be a mountain of forms to fill in, many of inscrutable intent and purpose. If I had hated the online teaching of the previous two terms, then being on the other side of the camera was infinitely worse. It is not easy to form lasting relationships in a WhatsApp group.

I knew that much of the year would hinge on an all-important school placement, at a time when life was still very far from normal and every attempt being made to minimise the numbers of pupils who would need to isolate should one of their peers test positive. The constant testing – for everyone, twice a week – became an irksome rhythm.

Meanwhile, free movement and interaction had gone to the wall to try to mitigate the worst effects of an outbreak; the arrangements were not ideal, but they were the best that could be done. A one-way system around the buildings, strict segregation of year groups, masks, bacterial handwash, and freezing classrooms in the winter with doors and windows propped wide open to allow the circulation of air.

However frustrating, it was better than the alternative. At the end of one Year 10 lesson, the head looked in and asked to make an announcement. A child in another form had tested positive, she told them, which meant that their whole bubble had been compromised and would need to isolate for

the next ten days. Several of the boys crossed their arms and stared angrily at the floor; three girls rushed to comfort a fourth, who had burst into tears.

For all the old-fashioned tropes, you see, school is where children grow in stature; it is where they are meant to be, at least most of the time, and plenty of them know it. For all the safeguarding training and liaison work, one never quite knows exactly what is going on at home. There are plenty of children for whom schools provide stability and purpose that they lack elsewhere; the final fruits of their closure during lockdown will surely be bitter. The teachers at the school in which I found myself understood that perfectly; the restrictions in place were necessary evils in the hope of better days to come. Faith-focused and prayer-driven, the place wore its Catholicism like an old jumper, led by the endlessly optimistic head of RE who endured with courage and dignity the pain and treatment of the cancer that killed her a year later. She let me teach St John's Gospel to her sixth-formers: a high honour indeed.

It must have been Providence, for I thrived in that environment in a way that I might not have elsewhere, thanks to the love and care of those who were responsible for my progress. Give thanks, then, for Blessed George Napier School in Banbury, where no one was ever allowed to forget that each child was made in the image and likeness of God, nor beyond the reach of his transfiguring power. Pray, too, for the repose of the soul of Rachel Smith.

Catholic education, while keeping an eye on developments in pedagogy, begins with theology; in its turn theology revolves around the Incarnation, and the Incarnation focuses on a child. The syllabuses approved by the bishops are robust, and provide a solid and cohesive framework within which students can engage with the questions that are inevitably presented by a world that calls to them with beguiling alternatives.

There are some things that cannot be learned by study alone. *Cor ad cor loquitur*, as Newman's motto has it – "heart speaks to heart" – lifted from St Francis de Sales. Even a single teacher has the potential to change a young life for ever, and it's all incarnational in the end. With that in mind, perhaps the best question that any teacher in a Catholic school can ask of their pupils or of themselves is the one with which this story began.

"Have you prayed the Angelus today?"

# ‘We know each of our students well’

**Margaret Giblin**, head of Marymount International School London, on the role faith plays in the daily life of the school



living-out of the mission and the ethos of the school.

### What kind of child thrives at Marymount – is the school selective?

Students who thrive at Marymount are curious, open-minded and are typical to the IB learner profiles: those who want to grow as individuals and embrace all life at Marymount has to offer. We are selective in that we only want the very best for our students. We make sure that those offered a place are going to flourish within the rigorous curriculum the IB challenges them with.

### What makes Marymount different and sets it apart from others in the area?

We are the first all-girls IB school in the UK and this experience of the curriculum sets us apart. Combined with the RSHM [Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary] mission, we have a potent recipe for holistic development. We are a genuinely internationally-minded community with real unity through diversity binding us together.

### What pastoral care do you offer?

Knowing our students is key and as a small school we know each of them very well. Led by one of our deputy heads, our pastoral care is exceptional. Students are known and loved as individuals and we have small adviser or class groups which support this. We have a school counsellor, two exceptional nurses, a boarding staff team which is second to none, and key staff have MHFA [Mental Health First Aid] training. Overall, the ratio of adults to students is high, so even the smallest problems can be identified and addressed.

### What enrichment opportunities are there for all students?

We are fortunate to offer a vast variety of extracurricular, service and leadership opportunities to our students. Growth-mindset and the power of being involved and participating in these only aids in the overall student development. From Model UN, National Honor Society and Campus Ministry group to tennis, volleyball, Girls Who Code and Fashion Society, the list is endless with possibilities. Our programme changes on a termly basis, and we encourage our girls to embrace these opportunities.

### What did you do before becoming head of Marymount, and how long have you been in the role?

Before starting at Marymount in January 2021, I was senior deputy head at Woldingham School. During my eight years there I was also head of department and then head of lower school. During my teaching career, I have held various roles including the middle leader roles of head of year and head of department. I trained in Ireland and have taught there and in England, both in the maintained and independent sector.

### What is your subject and do you still teach at all?

My subjects are Theology and English. These were my subject choices for my initial joint honours degree. I taught RE in my first year at Marymount. Now, I step in when needed and I am always delighted to be back in the classroom as a “super sub”.

### What attracted you to the school?

I felt a sincere alignment to the ethos, mission and educational philosophy of the school, one which holds a genuine commitment to human flourishing in the broadest sense, as well as the holistic development of the individuals within our school community. The vision “That all may have life and have it to the full” is at the heart of what we do. I was also attracted to the overall community: the staff, students, parents and governors with whom I met. They are so invested in the school, which contributes to the provision of a wonderful education for our students.

### What achievement are you proudest of since joining the school?

We went into remote learning two days before I started my role at Marymount. While challenging, I enjoyed making connections and getting to know the community throughout lockdown. We had

“The vision ‘That all may have life and have it to the full’ is at the heart of what we do

a phrase, “Together yet apart”, and this was lived out during the pandemic disruption. I am also incredibly proud of formulating the strategic plan in a consultative and thorough approach with all the school’s constituents. This is providing us with a clear vision and plan that we are collectively working towards in terms of living out the goals of the school and realising our strategic objectives.

### What are the school’s key values, ethos and vision?

- “That all may have life; and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)
- The value of each and every individual and a commitment to realising potential not just for the individuals’ betterment but for the betterment of the world.
- We encourage international-mindedness and global citizenship.
- We hope our students will be “firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love and one in service”, as Mother Marie-Joseph Butler, who founded the Marymount schools, desired.
- We embrace the IB learner profile, developing each student as a learner.

### How do you incorporate the Catholic faith into school life?

The Catholic faith is very much woven into the fabric of school life. Key school events are marked by gathering as a community to celebrate Mass. Preparation for the Sacraments happens in school. Prayer is part of daily life here. Through our service and outreach we strive to embody Catholic social teaching. Our director of spiritual life ably supports our community in the

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Mayfield School

## Independent Catholic Schools 2022

The *Herald's* comprehensive guide to preparatory and senior Catholic schools in the UK

### Top Ten Senior Schools

Alphabetical

#### Downside School Somerset

**Headmaster:** Andrew Hobbs  
**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 13-18

Approximately three-quarters of the pupils at Downside are boarders and more than 70 per cent are Catholic. Art, drama, design and technology as well as music are popular; concerts take place in Downside Abbey Church while pupils act in plays in a 450-seat theatre. Now the monks have left for Buckfast, the Chaplaincy team is assisted by a lay Benedictine community, the Manquehue community, who are based close to the school and offer support by leading Lectio Divina groups and assisting with the pastoral side of things.

**Boarding fees:** £9,415 to £12,635 per term  
**Day fees:** £6,235 to £7,400 per term.

#### Mayfield West Sussex

**Headmistress:** Antonia Beary  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

Mayfield is a vibrant and successful independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11 to 18, based in the West Sussex countryside, just an hour from central London. It was established in 1872 by Mother Cornelia Connelly, who founded the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. Historically one of the top all-girls Catholic schools in the UK, though less high profile than the likes of St Mary's Ascot, Mayfield thrives, without being too pushy. "They will get the academic child to Oxbridge if that is where they should go," says a parent, "but without neglecting the others with different talents and abilities." Girls study a wide range of subjects, including engineering, medicine, law, economics and architecture. While maths and science are among the most popular and successful subjects taken at A-level, pupils also excel in the creative and performing arts. The school has an expansive range of co-curricular activities on offer including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, as well as a full programme of sporting opportunities for all

abilities and interests, including cricket and hockey. It particularly stands out for its top-class equestrian facilities which are on campus.

Mayfield is proud of its ethos which "reflects its Catholic heritage and encourages integrity, generosity, compassion and courage within an inclusive community which welcomes all".

Once every half-term the whole school gathers to celebrate Mass, alongside the regular Sunday Mass, and there is also daily morning prayer, a weekly liturgy, and an annual day of recollection for each year group. The school's "Actions not Words" programme provides opportunities to be involved in service both in the local community and further afield, ensuring that faith in action continues to be an important part of Mayfield life.

"Just as important as academic success, girls leave Mayfield with enduring friendships, open minds, strength of character and the lifelong support of a global community," the school explains. "The aspiration, resilience, values and skills we instil in the girls prepare them to respond to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century and to make a positive difference to the society in which they live."

**Day fees:** £7,950 to £8,375 per term  
**Boarding fees:** £12,975 per term

**New Hall School**  
Boreham, Chelmsford

**Headmistress:** Katherine Jeffrey  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 1-18

New Hall School is a large day and boarding school for students aged one to 18. It is housed in Henry VIII's Palace of Beaulieu and set in 70 acres. There are five divisions within New Hall's 1,300+ student community: nursery, pre-preparatory, preparatory, girls' and boys', and sixth form. This ensures that students quickly feel at home in their smaller community while being an integral part of the whole school. The 2018 Brentwood Diocesan Inspection report stated: "The school provides students with an outstanding Catholic education. Its clear ethos, Christian values and rich history are a beacon which is highly regarded by the school and its neighbouring community."

Students meet every week in the historic and beautiful chapel, which has been a place for daily prayer for over 200 years. They participate in planning liturgies and take an active role in various ministries as servers, readers and musicians. In addition, the chaplaincy team holds Masses every Sunday and Wednesday, and at the start and end of each term. A smaller chapel in the preparatory school introduces the younger children to the Faith. New Hall is notable for being the only Catholic independent school in the UK to have implemented the diamond model of education whereby girls and boys in the nursery and preparatory divisions and the sixth form are taught in co-educational classes while those in Years 7 to 11 are educated in single-sex classes. "This approach reduces the gender stereotyping of subjects and the negative peer pressure of having to perform in mixed classes, with demonstrable examination success," they explain. Outside the classroom students mix socially and in co-curricular clubs and activities. Under the 20-year leadership of principal Katherine Jeffrey, academic success has risen to 79 per cent of GCSE grades at 7+ (A\*/A) and 97 per cent of A-level grades at A\*-B for 2021. Pastoral care is also excellent and there is an extensive choice of co-curricular activities. Among these, dance, drama and music are especially popular. New Hall Voluntary Service, another co-curricular option, is an award-winning initiative nurturing leadership and teamworking skills and a desire to serve others. Girls and boys can board from Year 3 either as full or flexible boarders, the latter staying overnight for one to six days a week. The school attracts both international boarders and those

who live within the UK, whether locally or slightly further afield. An unusual but highly successful aspect of New Hall School is its on-site farm, home to goats, sheep, ponies, pigs, ferrets, ducks, geese, rabbits, guinea pigs, peafowl, quail and a host of mini beasts. Students are encouraged to observe, hold and care for the animals as part of lessons, after-school clubs or the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

**Day fees:** up to £7,128 per term  
**Boarding fees:** up to £11,289 per term

**St Augustine's Priory**  
Ealing

**Headteacher:** Sarah Raffray  
**Takes:** girls, aged 3-18 (boys in nursery)

Set in 13 acres, St Augustine's Priory is a day school for girls aged 3-18, with boys in the nursery. Rated as excellent by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, it's a unique community with superb sports facilities and a working farm. Educating girls since 1634, the school has close ties with Ealing Abbey and welcomes students of all faiths to share their deeply rooted values to prepare for the future. The school hosts a beautiful chapel, with students regularly playing an active role in the celebration of Mass. From nursery to Year 13, St Augustine's focuses on the whole child with the belief that happy and secure children learn best and achieve their full potential. According to the *Good Schools Guide*, pupils say their school is "loving", "caring" and "friendly". The school's mission statement – "Our girls will change the world" – is at the heart of school life and students' academic success. "Pupils are equipped with an outstanding education for the future, alongside a focus on building confidence, collaborative skills, emotional intelligence and self-awareness," they say. "As a result students embrace all higher education and life after school offers, with girls going to the best universities in the world." For the diary: Nursery, Pre-Preps and Preps open day is on 20 September. Senior School open day is on 4 September.  
**Fees:** From £1,797 to £6,042 per term (Nursery to Seniors)

**St George's School**  
Weybridge

**Headmistress (Senior):** Rachel Owens  
**Headmaster (Junior):** Antony Hudson  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

St George's comprises a junior school with 600 children and a senior school with over



St Augustine's Priory



St George's School



Stonyhurst

1,000. Parents say the school suits high-achievers and multi-taskers, not slackers. The standard has improved vastly since the 2016 appointment of headmistress Rachel Owens, who has previously worked at Catholic schools Prior Park and New Hall. "Poised, super bright, smiley, energetic and highly pragmatic, she radiates quintessential head qualities," says the *Good Schools Guide*. St George's Weybridge was started in 1869 by a Belgian Catholic order of Josephite priests who were founded for the Christian instruction and education of young people. Josephite teaching continues to be central to the life of the school.

**Day fees:** £2,130 to £7,560 per term

**St John's College**  
Cardiff

**Headmaster:** Shaun Moody  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Established in 1987, St John's College is the choir school of Wales's national Catholic cathedral, Cardiff Metropolitan Cathedral. It provides male and female choristers aged from eight to 18. The core values and Catholic ethos of the school continue to prosper and it prides itself on its outstanding academic results and exemplary pastoral care. In 2022, St John's was ranked first for academic results in Wales. St John's College has average class sizes of fewer than 16 pupils, small year groups and a stable, committed staff.

**Day fees:** £2,880 to £4,950 per term

**St Mary's School**  
Ascot

**Headmistress:** Danuta Staunton  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

One of the foremost Catholic girls' schools in the country, St Mary's Ascot has long been in the top drawer of independent schools and attracts the ambitious and socially well connected. It regularly tops the league tables in both GCSEs and A-levels. Of the 390 girls, some 95 per cent are Catholic, and admissions favour daughters, sisters and early registrations. Places are highly sought-after so apply sooner rather than later (at least two years in advance, if you can).

The chaplain, Father Dermot, is an important part of daily life and girls enjoy Mass in the school's private chapel. Headmistress Danuta Staunton has made her mark with impressive results – she is now in her third year. Most pupils are full-boarders

so weekends are packed with activity and the school is regarded as one of the best traditional boarding schools in the country, attracting international girls as well as from around Britain.

**Day boarding fees:** £10,155 per term  
**Full boarding fees:** £14,260 per term

**Stonyhurst**  
Lancashire

**Headmaster:** John Browne  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

The Jesuit college educates close to 530 boys and girls, around two-thirds of whom are boarders (boarding starts from the age of seven). At Stonyhurst St Mary's Hall, the adjacent dedicated preparatory school, there are around 300 pupils aged three to 13. Stonyhurst is set on a 1,000-acre estate in the Ribbles Valley, Lancashire. Stonyhurst is the oldest continuously active Jesuit school in the world. It was founded in St Omer, northern France (then the Spanish Netherlands), in 1593, and moved to its present site in Lancashire in 1794. Throughout the years of religious persecution in England, Stonyhurst educated the boys of the English Catholic aristocracy and gentry. Stonyhurst's Jesuit mission and identity, and its sense of family, seem to set it apart from other schools. Pupils are urged to do as much as they can for others, following the example of Jesus Christ and the spirit and charism of the Jesuits, living by the school motto "*Quant je puis*" ("As much as I can"). The school achieves high academic results and offers an extensive range of co-curricular activities. The sixth form offers three options for study – A-level, International Baccalaureate Diploma, or the IB Career-Related Programme. Each route provides a wide range of subjects to choose from and a pathway to suit different learners.

"At the centre of the educational mission is the Jesuit ideal of finding God in all things, where young people develop the habit of reflection and grow in their personal relationship with God," the school explains. "Pupils are helped to appreciate what they have and learn to make the most of their talents. They are actively encouraged to do their best in everything and to celebrate the successes of others through a spirit of gratitude and generosity." The structure for pastoral care is designed to ensure each pupil feels emotionally secure and knows who to turn to for support. Pupils in Stonyhurst's care

are given the individual attention, resources and space in which to grow intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.

Supported by world-class facilities, Stonyhurst has a strong reputation for rugby, hockey, netball, cricket and tennis. Facilities include a nine-hole golf course, swimming pool, an all-weather pitch, and a Grand Slam-standard indoor tennis facility. The school's co-curricular offer is rich and varied with over 70 activities taking place each year; as well as sport, music and drama, these include dance, fencing, debating, social enterprise, scuba diving and astronomy.

**Full boarding fees:** £12,200 per term

**Day fees:** £7,250 per term

### Woldingham

Surrey

**Headmaster:** Dr James Whitehead

**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

The country's first Sacred Heart School, Woldingham has for decades been one of the go-to girls' schools for wealthy and well-connected Catholics. It has not always had the reputation it had in the 1960s, but today reviews of the pastoral care are very positive. Pupils seem well-adjusted and praise the school's beautiful and tranquil setting. The school is not too pushy academically, but nevertheless girls do well-enough for Woldingham to make it into the league tables for exams. It was awarded "excellent" in all areas by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Woldingham's new headmaster, and its first male head, Dr James Whitehead, is into his second year. A former headmaster of both Rugby and Downside and an alumnus of Stonyhurst, he has been criticised by some parents and pupils for making the school "too

Catholic" since his arrival. But the Herald is not concerned on this front as the school needed to be spiritually re-rooted. Just 25 minutes from London – by train not car – the school has a railway station in its grounds with a direct line to Clapham Junction, used by around one third of pupils many of whom are day girls (the school has heavily marketed itself in recent years to attract "London girls"). Over 80 extracurricular clubs take place each week. Woldingham typically spends around £1 million per annum on all forms of fee assistance.

**Day fees:** £8,250 per term

**Boarding fees:** £13,570 per term

### Worth School

West Sussex

**Headmaster:** Stuart McPherson

**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 11-18

Some 500 acres of pretty Sussex countryside are the backdrop to Worth, which has for over 60 years been a top choice among affluent Catholic families. Originally boys only, Worth became fully co-ed in 2012. Small yet sophisticated, the school is in the grounds of the Benedictine Worth Abbey and its ethos is rooted in the Benedictine educational tradition. There are eight monks in the chaplaincy team who teach the importance of Lectio Divina (sacred reading), liturgical worship and community living and services. Pupils regularly teach English and IT skills at the refugee detention centre at nearby Gatwick airport, and pilgrimages are arranged to Lourdes, Taizé and the Camino to Compostella. Worth offers IB and A-levels and was described as academically "outstanding" in a recent inspection report. The abbey choir has sung at a Mass in St Peter's in Rome attended by the pope and in the Sistine Chapel.

**Day fees:** £5,630 to £8,360 per term

**Boarding fees:** £12,160 per term

## Top Five Prep Schools

### Alphabetical

#### All Hallows

East Cranmore, Somerset

**Headmaster:** Trevor Richards

**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 3-13

Home to 400 pupils, All Hallows has good academic results and impressive art and music departments. Individual interests are nurtured and children are encouraged to enjoy every aspect of school life, including the faith element, with Holy Communion preparation timetabled in for those who want it. Unusually, headmaster Trevor Richards is an educational psychologist, not a teacher, by background, and mental wellbeing is taken seriously. Parental involvement is an important element of the school's ethos which is to create an intimate, familial environment for students.

**Day fees:** £2,860 to £5,560 per term

**Full boarding fees:** £8,420 per term

#### Moor Park

Ludlow

**Headmaster:** Brendan Brady

**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 3 months-13

Moor Park is a co-ed, Catholic independent boarding and day school with 85 rolling acres just outside Ludlow on the Shropshire and Herefordshire border. The school was the former red-brick country house of the Salwey family and was started in 1964 by Derek Henderson and Hugh Watts, friends from Downside before the war and both exceptional

cricketers. Henderson's study was crammed with *Wisdens* and cans of oil for boys to oil their bats before school matches.

Today the headmaster's study no longer reeks of linseed but the founders' ethos is very much intact. Framed by the entrance of the school chapel are the seven commandments of Henderson. They include: "Look for the best in people; never be rude or hate; don't bear a grudge; and make the most of all that life has to offer... and always say your prayers". Kindness and good manners are very much part of the school's value system with high academic, sporting and music standards. A portrait of St Thomas More hangs in the chapel.

The ethos of the founders still resonates today. That is about "finding the best in every child" and the idea that "it is our job to discover the very best in every pupil". Unusually for a prep school, Moor Park is independent of any senior school. It attracts locals as well as pupils from all over the country, including boarders from France and Spain because of the Catholic link. The school has also taken in seven Ukrainians since April 2022.

The most recent ISI inspection report rated the school as excellent in all areas, stating: "the moral awareness of the pupils, underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos, is extremely well-developed". All pupils attend Mass in the school chapel on a Sunday, although the majority these days is not Catholic. The school has an exceptional new design and technology centre which is run by Ludlow artist and wood carver Andy Pearson; the art department is also exceptional. Many children have won art scholarships and the school has a strong creative environment.

Brendan Brady has this September taken over from Charlie Minogue as headmaster. A highly experienced headmaster from South Africa, he has recently stepped down as the

“Look for the best in people; never be rude or hate; don't bear a grudge; make the most of all that life has to offer... and always say your prayers

head of St Andrew's Prep in Grahamstown, after six years. Prior to that, he was headmaster of Applewood Prep, and Clifton Prep before that, where he was appointed in 2000, aged 33.

A history teacher by trade, Brady will teach the subject at Moor Park and hopes to get involved with school sport, especially cricket (where he has already been playing for a local side) and tennis, if he can find the time. He is a Methodist, although his mother was Catholic.

Brady is prepared for the challenges that will come with running an independent school during a cost of living crisis which is only really just starting. He has been using the past few months to "understand the budget, the culture and ethos of the school, getting to know individual staff members, the estate, the needs of the school and the marketing programme," he says. The school offers means-tested bursaries and scholarships, which come with a fee reduction of up to 30 per cent.

At the beginning of the school holidays, Brady had already visited 19 senior schools, seeing this as an absolute priority in the job. "I have to get to know what their ethos is like so I can give sensible advice to parents," he explains. Pupils go on to top schools such as St Mary's Ascot, Ampleforth and Eton, often with scholarships.

**Day fees:** £2,385 to £6,610 per term

(Reception to Year 8)

**Boarder fees:** £8,185 to £9,805 per term

### The Oratory Prep School

Oxfordshire

**Headmaster:** Andrew De Silva

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2 to 13

This happy, thriving independent day and boarding school is based in the Oxfordshire countryside in 65 acres, with top-end facilities and its own extensive woodland, ponds and

Below from left: Downside College, All Hallows, Moor Park, New Hall School, The Oratory Prep School





adventure playgrounds.

Catholic values are central to school life. The school is also rightly proud of its scholarship and leadership programmes which help students to secure consistently high grades and impressive scholarship awards to some of the country's top senior schools.

Outdoor learning, including a dedicated forest school with weekly lessons for every age group, is an important part of life at the school. There are also many performing arts opportunities, including LAMDA from Year 1, instrument and vocal tuition and musical and drama productions.

The co-curricular programme covers everything from fencing to cookery, and there is also a diverse Saturday enrichment programme for children in Year 5 upwards, including modules in debating, interview and presentation skills, orienteering and beekeeping. Sports facilities include a learner pool, a 25-metre heated indoor swimming pool, full-size 3G pitch, four tennis courts and multiple pitches. In September 2022, the school welcomes a new headmaster, Andrew De Silva, who was previously headmaster of the Junior School at St Edmund's School, Canterbury. In addition to this role, Mr De Silva is also chair of IAPS (Independent Association of Preparatory Schools) District 2 and of the newly-formed IAPs EDI group (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).

"Andrew brings with him a wealth of experience, honing his skills through headships in both the state maintained and independent sectors, in addition to a master's degree in Educational

Leadership and Management and the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship)," says the school.

The Oratory is looking forward to launching its new senior prep curriculum this September.

"Our curriculum is centred around building an interconnected approach to learning that develops pupils' key knowledge and understanding of the world around them, whilst being meaningful and relevant to their everyday experiences."

**Boarding fees** £9,050 per term

**Day fees:** up to £6,200 per term

### Westminster Cathedral Choir School London

**Headmaster:** Neil McLaughlan

**Takes:** boys, aged 4-13

WCCS is an academically selective boys prep school in Victoria, London. Boys, of whom there are around 265 aged four to 13, go on to some of Britain's best schools, including Eton, Winchester, Worth and St Paul's, often with scholarships.

The school has 20 weekly boarding choristers who join in Year 4, all of whom must be baptised and practising Catholics.

Under headmaster Neil McLaughlan the school has developed its own modern liberal arts education, based upon the "three Cs" of curriculum, canon and character. Boys are taught Classics from Year 4 and the school has an outstanding English department; pupils are asked to

memorise poetry by Shakespeare, Milton, Eliot and Keats as part of their studies.

**Day fees:** up to £7,564 per term; Choristers (boarders) £3,600 per term

### Winterfold House Kidderminster

**Headmistress:** Denise Toms

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3 months-13 years

Winterfold House School is an outstanding smaller prep school with a long and peripatetic Catholic heritage set in 40 acres of grounds. The main building is a Georgian mansion with views of the Malvern Hills. The Catholic headmistress Denise Toms is a charismatic and focused history teacher who has been at the school for 20 years. She is assisted by her affable deputy Ross Mitchell, whose own children are at the school. The main cricket pitch boasts a pavilion that could be a royal beach hut in Brighton. It has its own golf course and a new £1-million-plus multi-weather sports field. This is thanks to the resources that go with being part of the Bromsgrove School family. There is also a school radio studio, a dedicated chapel (around 20 per cent of the school are Catholic), a cookery school and vegetable garden. There is also a new 'Forest School' where older pupils camp and children can sit in hides and develop their photography skills whilst researching Latin names of birds on their iPads. School adventure trips are taken to Dorset, the Wye Valley and Snowdon. There's even a Scalextric track room. Religious education is taken seriously along with academic excellence and special needs. The honour boards tell the story of how the school has evolved since being founded in 1928. After the war, it was a feeder to Downside, Ampleforth and Storyhurst but now it is more Malvern and Midland schools.

Mass is celebrated every Thursday and there is a grotto dedicated to Our Lady in the grounds. No boarding although there has been talk this may change with flexi-boarding being introduced.

**Day fees:** £3,010 to £4,820 per term

Below from left: Westminster Cathedral Choir School, Winterfold House. Opposite: Ampleforth College



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## A-Z of Independent schools

### Alton School Hampshire

**Headmaster:** Karl Guest

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 1-18

Alton School is a day school in an old manor house on a 19-acre site on the outskirts of Alton. It was established in 1938 by the Sisters of Our Lady of Providence. Parents note how well pupils were looked after when schools closed during Covid. Excellent exam results achieved in the past two years are testament to this, with 100 per cent of students having been accepted to their first choice universities. The school also offers a breadth of sport, music, drama, art and several co-curricular activities.

**Day fees:** £3,855 to £4,995 per term

### Ampleforth College North Yorks

**Headmaster:** Robin Dyer

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 13-18

Originally founded for 70 boys by the Benedictine monks at Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire in 1802, Ampleforth has around 500 pupils today, of which 70 per cent are Catholic. Long known as the "Catholic Eton", its alumni include Julian Fellowes, Basil Hume, actors James Norton and Rupert Everett, sculptor Antony Gormley, and John Micklethwait (editor in chief of

Bloomberg). Pupils come from all over the UK, some from as far as Dundee and Plymouth. Day pupils remain under 20 per cent.

The school remains popular with Brits who live abroad and international students, attracting children from Malta, Austria, Germany, Spain, and France including notable Catholic families who return generation after generation.

Ampleforth struggled with its historical identity and for a time its future was in peril after the 2018 IICSA report (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) which brought back into focus historical cases of abuse that had taken place mainly in the now-closed prep school in the 1960s and 1980s.

In response, the school brought in independent safeguarding experts and has been going through a major transformation of its safeguarding practices, culture and training under headmaster Robin Dyer. Ofsted claimed the school had failed to meet standards during an inspection in September 2021, but in an almost unprecedented retraction was recently forced to admit that three of its four findings were based on falsehoods.

The future now looks much brighter for the school after working with DfE and Ofsted to agree a new action plan.

It is not clear that any of this has had any detrimental effect on the current school experience – indeed the Ofsted parental survey of December 2021 reported that 100 per cent felt their child was safe and happy at the school. Applications have also gone up in the past 2 years.

Although the monastery is no longer

involved with school governance, the Benedictine ethos remains as strong as ever. School facilities have been much enhanced by a multi-million pound facility to improve business and science teaching donated by JCB chairman and old boy Lord Bamford.

Girls have been fully integrated into the school for a generation (20 years), making up 47 per cent of pupils. According to one former pupil, Cicely Craston, who delivered a petition to Downing Street to save the school, Ampleforth "provides a strong sense of community and recognition that we are made better people by each other".

Ampleforth creates an atmosphere which encourages "fruitful friendships, regardless of gender, and ones that support each other wholeheartedly", Craston notes. Living in a boarding house of 65 girls led her to experience "the values are naturally ingrained in girls and boys of the school so, by the time we leave, we really have received a 'Compass for Life' that will guide us just like the Benedictine Rule has done for generations before."

**Boarding fees:** £13,300 per term

**Day fees:** £9,250 per term

### Austin Friars School Carlisle

**Headmaster:** Matt Harris

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Founded by the Augustinian Friars in 1951, Austin Friars is part of a global network of Augustinian schools and welcomes pupils of all denominations. Pupils from Cumbria and south west Scotland attend. The school is justifiably proud of its reputation for high academic standards.

**Day fees:** £2,980 to £5,600 per term

### Beechwood Sacred Heart School Tunbridge Wells

**Headmaster:** Justin Foster-Gandey

**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Situated on a 23-acre campus in Tunbridge Wells, Beechwood School comprises a nursery, preparatory school and senior school, with weekly and full boarding available for children aged

11 to 18. Founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1915, Beechwood retains its founders' traditions but today welcomes pupils of all faiths.

**Boarding fees:** £9,175 to £10,200 per term  
**Day fees:** £2,895 to £5,940 per term

**Bishop Challoner School  
 Bromley**

**Headmaster:** Mr Mark Wallace  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Based in the town of Shortlands in Bromley, which is a 20-minute train ride from Victoria station, and a short bus journey from Croydon and Crystal Palace, the school attracts students from Kent and greater and central London. The school has its own chaplain and chapel as well as strong links with St Edmund's, the local parish. A major plus is the small class sizes, with some A-level classes having as few as three students.

**Day fees:** £3,470 to £4,960 per term

**Blanchelande College  
 Guernsey**

**Headmaster:** Robert O'Brien  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2½-18

Blanchelande College was established in 1902 and is the only fully mixed independent school in Guernsey. The school offers a rural setting where children can roam free in safety, and

where their talents can be nurtured in a relaxed atmosphere. In its most recent ISI report, the college was rated "excellent" in all categories, including pupil achievement and personal development.

**Day fees:** £3,950 per term

**Bury Catholic Preparatory School & Pre-School  
 Lancashire**

**Headmistress:** Helen Farrow  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

Bury Catholic Prep School was founded in 1943 and has a reputation as a thriving family school. Academic standards are high, and there is also much on offer outside the classroom. Extracurricular options range from STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) clubs and sports to music and drama.

**Day fees:** £1,323 to £7,318 per annum

**Carleton House Preparatory School  
 Liverpool**

**Headmistress:** Sandy Coleman  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

Carleton House is an inclusive Catholic school welcoming all denominations. It was ranked as the 10th top performing independent preparatory school in the *Sunday Times* Parent Power 2021 guide.

**Day fees:** £8,500 per annum

**Cokethorpe School  
 Oxfordshire**

**Headmaster:** Damian Ettinger  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 4-18

Cokethorpe School is a day school of about 660 pupils in Hardwick, founded in 1957 by Francis Brown. At the heart of the school is an early-18th-century Grade II Queen Anne-style country house on a 150-acre site. There is also a chapel in the grounds. The school has a reputation for its sporting excellence with pupils representing England in rugby and hockey in recent years.

**Day fees:** £4,560 to £6,950 per term

**Crackley Hall School  
 Warwickshire**

**Headmaster:** Robert Duigan  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 4-11

Crackley Hall is a coeducational day school in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, with some 240 pupils. The school has its own on-site day nursery, Little Crackers, which takes children from two years old. The school succeeds at making learning fun with a wide and varied curriculum designed to help all pupils get the very best of starts on their individual educational journey.

Crackley Hall has been described as the "next best place to home" by its pupils. Central to the school is its strong Christian ethos, high standard of care and a feeling of community, as both staff



and parents work together for the good of all the children. "We place Christ at the centre of our lives, sharing core values that instil dignity and respect," they say.

Crackley Hall benefits from sharing the Christian ethos, resources and approach to learning of its nearby senior school, Princethorpe College, where many pupils move to later.

Originally a girls' Catholic school, St Joseph's Convent, run by the Sisters of Mercy, the school merged with Princethorpe College, a boys' Catholic school between Leamington and Rugby, in 2001, to provide continuous education for children from nursery through to sixth form. The senior pupils moved across to Princethorpe and the school became a mixed junior school and was renamed Crackley Hall.

In September 2010 Crackley merged with Abbotsford School in Kenilworth with the aim of providing the best primary education in the area. The school and nursery, along with Princethorpe College and the Crescent School in Bilton, Rugby, now form the Princethorpe Foundation, a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Most pupils enter at nursery, and then progress through to reception. Some pupils also join at reception and are welcome at any age dependent on a place being available, although places in other years are limited and in years where there is no place available the school operates waiting groups.

Prospective parents and pupils are encouraged to visit both formally and informally to get a true flavour

of the school. Open events are held throughout the year, including a specific nursery, reception and Year 3 open evening. A meeting with the headmaster is also a key part of the admissions process.

**Fees:** £3,586 to £3,991 per term

**Donhead Preparatory School  
 Wimbledon**

**Headmaster:** Philip Barr  
**Takes:** boys, aged 4-11

Donhead is an all-boys Roman Catholic preparatory day school located in Wimbledon, London.

The school is under the governance of the Jesuits. In September 2018, the school's ten-year £8m facilities development plan was completed. The school had a new chapel built that has capacity for 50 pupils.

**Day fees:** £4,275 to £4,440 per term

**Farleigh School  
 Hampshire**

**Headmaster:** Fr Simon Everson  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-13

Farleigh School, founded in 1953, is a Catholic preparatory day and boarding school in a rural village outside Andover. Surrounded by 70 acres of park and woodland, the main school building is a Georgian house, with capacity for over 460 pupils. The old ballroom has been converted to a chapel. The school has over 100 boarders and 50 flexi-boarders. Headmaster Fr Simon Everson is a former Anglican who converted to Catholicism and is adored

by parents and children alike. Parents describe Farleigh as a "magical" school which "lets children be children".

**Boarding fees:** £8,525 to £10,025 per term  
**Day fees:** £4,155 to £7,565 per term

**Farnborough Hill School  
 Hampshire**

**Headmistress:** Alexandra Neil  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

Farnborough Hill was bought in 1927 by the Sisters of the Religious of Christian Education, an existing convent school in Farnborough established in 1889. The chapel was added in the 1930s. A 25-minute train ride from Clapham Junction, the school is proud to teach "proper" subjects like Latin and Greek, with not too many new-fangled "studies" on the curriculum. The school is proud of its very own radio station, F'hill, which is run by the Year 11 pupils and staff.

**Day fees:** £16,698 per annum

**Holy Cross Preparatory School  
 Kingston-upon-Thames**

**Headmistress:** Sarah Hair  
**Takes:** girls, aged 4-11

Holy Cross Preparatory School is a small academic and sporting school founded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, an international teaching order since 1844. Head Sarah Hair is much admired, described as "serious but not austere, caring but not cuddly", and "formal, professional and cheerful". The school has recently acquired a new sports development including floodlit hockey pitch, all-weather playing field, cross country track and new sports pavilion, as well as a new pre-school for 3 and 4 year old girls opened in September 2021.

**Day fees:** £2,407 to £5,037 per term

**Kilgraston School  
 Perth**

**Headmistress:** Tanya Davie  
**Takes:** boys, aged 5-12 and girls, aged 5-18

Kilgraston School is a boarding and day school offering primary school education for boys and girls, and

Below from left: Farnborough Hill School; Crackley Hall School. Opposite: Holy Cross Prep School



secondary education for girls only. The school is centred around a mansion set in 72 acres of parkland, three miles south of Perth.

It is the only Catholic boarding secondary school in Scotland. Kilgraston has a thriving music and arts departments, hockey, tennis and swimming academies, and is Scotland's only school with an on-site equestrian centre. In 2015, Kilgraston was named as the *Sunday Times*' top performing independent school for Highers and Advanced Highers.

**Boarding fees:** £9,910 to £14,015 per term  
**Day fees:** £4,470 to £7,595 per term

**Laleham Lea School**  
Purley

**Headmistress:** Karen Barry  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

Laleham Lea achieves high academic standards and was classified as "excellent" in its most recent ISI inspection in 2022. The school is a feeder for top public schools, but parents note that it is a caring environment not a "hot house" obsessed by statistics and results. The majority of pupils are Catholic.

**Day fees:** £6,966 to £9,855 per annum

**Leweston School**  
Dorset

**Headmaster:** John Paget-Tomlinson  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 1-18

Leweston School is a day and boarding school near Sherborne, half an hour from the Jurassic coast. It was originally founded as a girls' boarding school by Belgian nuns in 1891. It moved to the beautiful Leweston Manor estate in 1948 and has since grown to comprise a nursery, prep school, senior school and sixth form. The school is not a hot-house, but more of a relaxed environment where pupils are encouraged to find their "thing", says a parent. It is a Catholic foundation but welcomes pupils of all denominations and none, with a strong focus on the development of the spiritual life.

Mass takes place every Wednesday and Sunday evening for boarders in the

school chapel of St Antony. Catholic actress Kristin Scott Thomas is an alumna.

**Boarding fees:** £6,288 to £10,540 per term  
**Day fees:** £2,195 to £5,665 per term

**Loreto Preparatory School**  
Altrincham, Cheshire

**Headmistress:** Anne Roberts  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

Loreto Preparatory School was established in 1909 and continues under the trusteeship of the Loreto Sisters, a worldwide network with five schools in England and over 150 worldwide. Facilities are modest and parents say the school is more "nurturing" than academic. There is stiff competition from nearby prep and primary schools for places at the next door school Loreto Grammar.

**Day fees:** £2,750 per term

**Loughborough Amherst School**  
Leicestershire

**Headmaster:** Julian Murphy  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 1-18

Loughborough Amherst School was founded in 1841 on traditional Christian principles and was run by the Rosminian order until 2015. A small school with small class sizes, it is not academically selective but has been growing in popularity in recent years and now operating a waiting list for certain year groups.

**Day fees:** £3,740 to £4,880 per term

**Loyola Preparatory School**  
Essex

**Headmistress:** Kirsty Anthony  
**Takes:** boys, aged 3-11

Loyola Preparatory School is a Catholic School for boys aged three to 11 in Buckhurst Hill, Essex. It has been educating boys for more than a century. Parents praise the kindness and professionalism of the staff.

The school has an excellent multi-sports programme. The boys can participate in a comprehensive range of physical education activities. In



addition to the onsite all-weather sports pitch, facilities include a dedicated library, computer suite, art room and science room.

**Day fees:** £3,870 per term

From top: Marymount International School, The Oratory School, More House School

**Marymount International School**  
Kingston upon Thames

**Headmistress:** Margaret Giblin  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

Around 12 miles from central London, Marymount International School is a small school of 240 girls, a third of whom are boarders. Students, who come from around 35 different nationalities (46 per cent are British), are drawn to the school by its well-established IB programme, which has been running for over 40 years. Another attraction is the small class sizes of around 12 pupils.

Founded in 1955 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM), the school is part of the RSHM global network of Catholic schools. Mass is celebrated weekly, and prayer life includes assemblies, daily reflections in class, and the celebration of important feast days and festivals. Around 25 per cent of students are Catholic but all participate. Marymount is a top performing IB school. In 2020, the school's average IB score was 38 and, in 2019 (the last year that students sat exams) it was 37. 41 per cent of students achieved a Bilingual Diploma in 2019. University destinations include Durham, UCL, Manchester, Warwick, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, King's College London, and UCLA and Emory in the USA, as well as top universities in Japan, Europe, South Korea and Canada. Marymount accepts applications throughout the school year, which is helpful to families relocating mid-academic year. The admissions process is not as strict or selective as many schools in the London area, but includes English and maths tests, and crucially an interview with the headteacher to establish if the child is a good fit for the school and the IB programme.

Marymount offers five day, seven day, and flexi-boarding options. There are around 50 international students who full-board and sleep in rooms of two or three. The school is proud to encourage independent living with students doing their own laundry, for example.

There are plenty of activities at weekends to keep boarders busy. The school describes itself as "a garden campus", where beautiful grounds

surround a combination of modern classrooms and older buildings including a chapel. Facilities include a STEAM Hub, science labs, art studios, a dance studio, auditorium, sports hall, tennis court and sports pitch, and chalet-style garden rooms.

**Day fees:** £27,250 per annum

**More House School**  
Knightsbridge

**Headmistress:** Faith Hagerty  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

More House School promotes core Catholic values of commitment, integrity and compassion which are evident in the students' academic and co-curricular achievements. Its central London location provides a launchpad for access to London's best sporting venues, galleries, museums and theatres.

It was founded in 1952, by a group of parents seeking a better Catholic education for girls in London. The school boasts its own chapel where regular services are held. The music department shares music and liturgy all over the world from small local churches to Notre Dame and the Vatican. "Its secret is the warm relationship between pupils and staff," says a parent.

**Day fees:** £7,750 per term

**Mount St Mary's College**  
Derbyshire

**Headmaster:** Dan Wright  
**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 3-18

Mount St Mary's College, which includes prep school Balborough Hill School, is a Jesuit school in the countryside near Sheffield with about 600 pupils. It has a reputation for high academic performance.

**Boarding fees:** £6,740 to £10,815 per term  
**Day fees:** £4,290 to £4,930 per term

**Mylnhurst Preparatory School and Nursery**  
Sheffield

**Headmistress:** Hannah Cunningham  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 4-11

Mylnhurst is the highest-ranking prep school in the south Yorkshire and

Derbyshire region, placed 22nd in the *Sunday Times* Parent Power Top 100 prep schools in the UK. Situated within a private and secluded campus, it has a swimming pool, forest school, sports centre, games field, library and dance studio all on-site.

**Day fees:** £11,250 per annum

**Notre Dame School**  
Cobham, Surrey

**Headmistresses:** Anna King and Amélie Morgan  
**Takes:** girls, aged 2-18, boys, aged 2-7

Notre Dame School is a Catholic girls day school which also takes boys from age two to seven. The school is one of more than 300 schools, educational foundations and projects (and the only one in the UK) associated with the Company of Mary Our Lady, an educational order founded in Bordeaux to educate girls in 1607. The school was recognised as "excellent" across the board in the latest ISI inspection report.

**Day fees:** £1,520 to £6,323 per term

**Oakhill School**  
Lancashire

**Headmistress:** Jane Buttery  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 0-16

Oakhill School is a small school in rural Lancashire which excels academically partly because it can offer small class sizes. It also has over 50 sports and activities helped by a county-standard sports hall and leisure facility with a fully equipped Technogym fitness suite and spin studio, a new 3G sports pitch and extensive playing fields.

**Day fees:** £1,140 to £7,126 per term

**Oakwood School**  
Croydon

**Headmaster:** Ciro Candia  
**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 3-11

Oakwood is an independent co-educational day school with a Catholic ethos, founded on a belief that parents are the first educators of their children. Founded in 1996, it is part of the PACT group of school whose ethos is inspired by Opus Dei.

**Fees:** up to £3,480 per term



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**The Oratory School Reading**

**Headmaster:** Joe Smith  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 13-18

Founded in 1859 by Saint John Henry Newman, The Oratory has been providing pupils with a Catholic education for over 160 years. The school says the move to co-education in 2020 has been a great success, both in terms of girl numbers and the experience for both sexes in the new environment. In the academic year 2021-22, The Oratory received the highest grade of excellent in the Independent Schools Inspectorate for both categories of “pupils’ academic and other achievements” and “pupils’ personal development”.

Inspectors described Oratory pupils as showing high levels of understanding for their age. “They show self-confidence in many areas of school life, are resilient and adapt well to new situations. They are self-reflective and have a strong awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.” Inspectors also commented on how the founder’s motto, which is also the school’s motto, “*Cor ad Cor Loquitur* – Heart Speaks to Heart” is “enacted daily”.

The *Good Schools Guide* also revisited the school for the first time since it became co-educational, describing The Oratory as “an active choice for families looking for a nurturing environment” and commenting on the “excellent leadership”. The school has once again secured its place in the *Good Schools Guide*’s best boarding schools 2022: “Parents love the ability to ‘dip in and out of boarding’ – truly flexible.” Day, weekly and flexi-boarding is available. The Catholic faith and two chapels are central to the school’s life, ethos and identity. Mass is offered regularly for those who wish to attend. Most days of the week, the school also holds a second, different act of worship from the Church’s wide traditions. On Sundays and Days of Obligation, Mass is celebrated in the main chapel with the whole school community present, with pupils serving as sacristans, servers and readers. Oratory pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds: Catholic families, families from other



Christian denominations, families from other world faiths, and families with no religious background. The majority of pupils gain entry to their first choice of university, including many Russell Group universities.

**Day fees:** £9,185 per term  
**Boarding fees:** £13,368 per term

**Our Lady’s Abingdon Oxfordshire**

**Headmaster:** Daniel Gibbons  
**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 7-18

Headmaster Daniel Gibbons has just completed his first year, having joined the school from Downside where he was previously deputy head and helped develop boarding provision. Gibbons is said to have improved academic performance at all his prior schools, specialising in maximising “value-added”.

He has already been praised for having brought in a new academic leadership structure to OLA, with clearly defined middle-level heads of faculty to complement the pastoral heads of section. The school was founded in 1866 for pupils in the area but also as a boarding school by Sister Clare Moore of the Sisters of Mercy at Our Lady’s Convent.

The Catholic faith continues to be an important part of school life, with Mass and feast days attended and celebrated by pupils, parents and visitors. The school, which is eight miles from Oxford, is within the parish of Our Lady and St Edmund and is regularly visited by the parish priest, who is also on the board of governors. The school accepts children of all faiths who are sympathetic

Above: Our Lady’s Abingdon  
Opposite from left: Prior Park, Princethorpe College

to its ethos. Our Lady’s Abingdon does well academically. In 2020, 75 per cent of students achieve A\* to B grades at A-level, while 99 per cent passed. Although the school has only been co-ed since 2013, there is now a 50/50 split of boys and girls. The school prides itself on remaining small and maintaining small class sizes so that pupils are known by staff and therefore get all the attention they need. There is an entrance exam and interview for prospective pupils. The school is especially proud of its “value-added” achievements, which assess what pupils achieve against baseline expectations. The Department for Education ranked OLA in the top five per cent of the country for value-added – “an exceptional achievement”.

**Day fees:** £11,505 to £17,145 per annum

**Our Lady’s Preparatory School Crowthorne, Berkshire**

**Headmaster:** Michael Stone  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 0-11

Our Lady’s was founded in 1961 by Father Daniel Boyle, priest of Crowthorne. It is a small school with only 240 pupils, with a family atmosphere and a highly rated nursery department. The school was rated “satisfactory” in its most recent inspection.

**Day fees:** £8,376 per annum

**Our Lady of Sion School Worthing**

**Headteacher:** Steven Jeffery  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Our Lady of Sion is a co-educational school in the centre of Worthing near local sports and leisure facilities, which the school uses. Fees are reasonable compared to other independents in the area and the school is not obsessed with building new facilities and multi-million pound athletics tracks. Co-curricular activities include helping out at the next door nursing home. It is described as a “personality-filled school” with a flexible curriculum which encourages pupils to think for

themselves. Pupils do well in exams and go on to top universities including Oxbridge.

**Day fees:** £3,055 to £4,800 per term

**Princethorpe College Rugby**

**Headmaster:** Ed Hester  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 11-18

Princethorpe College, which has around 930 pupils, is renowned for the way in which it looks after its pupils and is characterised by its strong Christian ethos, which underpins all aspects of school life. The atmosphere is warm, open and friendly, but the traditional values of courtesy, discipline, organisation and mutual respect are expected from all. “We aim to encourage a lifelong love of learning and an understanding of moral values, and to put young people on the road to happy and fulfilled lives,” says the school.

Princethorpe was established in 1966 by the Catholic missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), who moved their expanding boys’ boarding and day school, St Bede’s, from Leamington Spa to Princethorpe, taking over the former St Mary’s Priory, previously home to an order of Benedictine nuns.

The school draws inspiration for its ethos from the MSC’s founder, Jules Chevalier, and the college motto “*Christus regnet*”.

Princethorpe College has recently received the highest possible ratings across all criteria from the Independent Schools Inspectorate following an inspection in April 2022.

The report, which has just been

published, consists of two elements, a focused compliance inspection, encompassing statutory standards, and an educational quality inspection evaluating the achievements of pupils, including academic performance and their personal development.

During the inspection, the ISI observed that “pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and are highly focused in lessons”, that they “achieve a high level of results, exceeding predictions at every level” and they “benefit significantly from an atmosphere in school which is positive and one where learning and trying one’s best are celebrated”.

Referencing the extensive co-curricular programme, the inspectors commented that “pupils embrace wholeheartedly the many opportunities to participate in a myriad of activities and many enjoy substantial success” and are able to “find their own unique passions and relish taking part in them, broadening their perspective on life”.

The ISI inspectors also noted feedback from parents that “commented positively on the strength of the children’s learning and how this reflected the commitment of the teaching and the direction provided by the school’s leaders and trustees”.

The majority of children join Princethorpe College in Year 7, but children are welcome to join in other year groups as space allows. Children who want to come to Princethorpe sit an entrance examination in the November of the year before they are due to start in September.

The school encourages prospective pupils and their parents to visit both formally and informally to get a true flavour of the school.

**Day fees:** £4,912 per term

**Prior Park College Bath**

**Headmaster:** Ben Horan  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 11-18

Originally run by Clifton Diocese and then the Christian Brothers, the school has been under lay management since 1980 but remains strongly bound to its Catholic values. Set in 57 acres and overlooking the city of Bath, Prior Park is listed by the Oxford Royale Academy as one of the most beautiful boarding schools in the UK.

Alongside the day houses, there are two boarding houses, each with a dedicated live-in house parent and team of residential tutors, who work hard to create a home-from-home environment. Prior Park has excellent on-site facilities, including a state-of-the-art sports centre complete with fitness suite, and an indoor swimming pool. The visual arts department has recently seen the addition of a sixth-form D&T workshop complete with industry-standard equipment. The school has its own theatre, dance studio, music practice rooms and music studio. The College Chapel, built in the 1870s, where pupils gather for Mass, concerts and assemblies, is very much the heart of the school.

Prior Park is a kind school rather than an academic hot-house where “children learn from exceptional teachers in a





Above: St Anthony's School for girls. Opposite: Radcliffe College

community where learning is prized, and curiosity welcomed," says the head. At Prior Park every child is known, valued and cared for.

"Faith is more than just gathering for Mass at Prior Park, it is intertwined into the work of the student charities committee, the music department, its sixth-form personal development programmes, and the students' everyday school lives," Horan adds.

The lay chaplain, Theresa Gibson, helps to prepare pupils for Confirmation and arranges optional retreats; boarders and teachers attend Sunday Mass. There is a whole-school Mass for all holy days of obligation. Non-Catholics are welcome. As part of its pastoral care programme, the school has a scheme which offers younger pupils access to encouragement, advice and information from 40 upper-sixth formers who train as "peer mentors". They complete a seven-week course which trains them in listening skills, body language, safeguarding and work with the Samaritans.

**Full boarding fees:** £12,250 per term  
**Day fees:** £6,160 per term

### Ratcliffe College Leicestershire

**Headmaster:** Jon Reddin  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

A co-ed day and boarding school based in Leicestershire, Ratcliffe College was founded in 1847 by the Rosminian Fathers, who still live within the campus grounds and gave the school its motto, *Legis plenitudo caritas* – "charity is the fulfilment of the law".

The Father President, rector of the

college, celebrates Mass daily in the college chapel, which also hosts senior school assemblies twice a week.

Students enjoy a range of state-of-the-art facilities including a £1.3 million industry-standard fitness suite, and an additional £2.3 million sports hall near the preparatory school, with a new English block due to be completed at the start of this autumn term.

Ratcliffe is steeped in history and tradition, and surrounded by 200 acres of beautiful grounds situated in Leicestershire. The school teaches children aged three to 18, and is proud of its strong Catholic values and ethos. Ratcliffe is inclusive of all, with a real sense of community, offering exceptional teaching and outstanding pastoral care with small class sizes.

Students aged 11 and above can choose from full, weekly, flexi and casual boarding and become part of a diverse boarding community, which includes many individuals from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Our close-knit, family-orientated community is something the school is very proud of and many of its students regard the school as a home-from-home. Ratcliffe College has always encouraged big ideas, helping young people to achieve their greatest potential, both inside and outside the classroom.

**Boarding fees:** £7,785 to £11,697 per term  
**Day fees:** £3,500 to £6,074 per term

### Rydes Hill Preparatory School Guildford

**Headmistress:** Sarah Norville  
**Takes:** boys, aged 3-7, and girls, aged 3-11

Rydes Hill is a non-selective Catholic school educating girls from three to 11 and boys from three to seven. It welcomes families of all faiths and beliefs. The school is consistently awarded the top-rated "excellent" by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. It prides itself on the breadth of education offered and the array of academic, sporting, performing arts and art scholarships achieved by its leavers.

**Day fees:** £3,256 to £4,987 per term

### Rye St Antony Oxford

**Headmistress:** Joanne Croft  
**Takes:** girls and boys, aged 3-18

Just a mile from the centre of Oxford, Rye St Antony offers students all the perks that come with being so close to this university city full of world-class libraries, museums, galleries and theatres. The school takes boys until the age of 11 and girls, who may board from the age of nine, through to 18. The school is home to St Teresa's chapel, where Mass is held for pupils once a week. Rye (as it is known) is unusual for a Catholic school in that it was founded by two women rather than a religious order, and is named after the church of St Antony in Rye, East Sussex.

**Full boarding fees:** £8,200 per term  
**Day fees:** up to £4,525

### Sacred Heart School Wadhurst, East Sussex

**Headmistress:** Johanna Collyer  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2-11

Sacred Heart School was established in 1938 by the Sisters of the Order of Notre Dame. It is a small community of only 100 pupils so each child gets maximum attention. Fees are affordable as the school is owned by the local diocese. Parents praise the school for its high academic standard.

**Day fees:** £3,045 to £3,095 per term

### Salesian College Farnborough

**Headmaster:** Gerard Owens  
**Takes:** boys, aged 11-18, and girls in sixth form

The Salesian tradition follows the example and guidance of St John Bosco. Before Covid, each Easter boys and girls from lower-sixth form would go on pilgrimage to Lourdes. They are acclaimed for their high levels of academic, cultural, spiritual and physical achievements, student behaviour and their caring ethos. It boasts a 100 per cent pass rate at GCSE and A-level and has also broken into the top 25 schools for sport in the UK.

**Day fees:** £13,614 per annum

### St Aloysius' College Glasgow

**Headmaster:** Matthew Bartlett  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

The school was founded in 1859 by the Jesuits who previously staffed the college. It is Scotland's only Jesuit school and has a good reputation among locals who know it as an all-round nurturing school with good transport links around Glasgow. An £8 million state-of-the-art sports facility opened in 2017. They regularly send pupils to Oxbridge though most go on to Scottish universities.

**Day fees:** £8,397 to £14,976 per annum

### St Ambrose Preparatory School Cheshire

**Headmistress:** Sinead Aldridge  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

St Ambrose Preparatory School is a top independent, Catholic co-educational school in Altrincham in the Cheshire countryside, with a high academic standard. The most recent ISI report rated the pupils' academics as "excellent" and their understanding of spiritual life as "outstanding". The school is a modern building, with extensive grounds and impressive facilities including a large playing field, AstroTurf pitches and a swimming pool.

**Day fees:** £5,925 to £7,950 per annum

### St Anthony's School for Boys Hampstead, London

**Headmaster:** Richard Berlie  
**Takes:** boys, aged 4-13

St Anthony's School opened in 1952. Today, nearly 300 boys are

educated here before moving on to top independent schools. There is an associated nursery. The music department is particularly impressive, offering digital music composition, a jazz band and numerous orchestras and choirs. Coding, chess, arts and crafts, theatre, swimming, and many sporting activities are also on offer.

**Day fees:** £7,055 to £7,285 per term

### St Anthony's School for Girls Golders Green, London

**Headmaster:** Donal Brennan  
**Takes:** girls, aged 4-11

St Anthony's School for Girls opened in 2016 as the sister school to highly esteemed St Anthony's Boys in Hampstead. With only 85 girls, it offers small class sizes. It has a co-educational nursery on-site feeding into the girls' and boys' schools.

**Day fees:** £6,315 per term

### St Bede's College Manchester

**Headmistress:** Sandra Pike  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Founded in 1875 by the then Bishop of Salford, Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, St Bede's College performs well across the board.

The main building, called the Vaughan building, is the former Manchester aquarium, with additions. Today it is decorated with ceramic mouldings by George Tinworth and leads into an imposing corridor adorned with mosaics and marble. The college motto *Numquam otio torpebat* – "Never rest in idleness" – derives from the prayer of St Bede. The esteemed



pianist Stephen Hough is an alumnus.  
**Day fees:** £8,640 to £13,311 per annum

### St Benedict's School Ealing

**Headmaster:** Andrew Johnson  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Opened in 1902, St Benedict's Ealing caters for a wide range of abilities but has become more academic since the arrival of headmaster Andrew Johnson in 2016. Following the discovery of historic abuse scandals at the school, St Benedict's has taken huge steps to turn its reputation around completely and is now known for its excellent pastoral care (the school is not under lay management). Alumni include the journalist and author Douglas Murray, historian Peter Hennessy, writer Peter Ackroyd and Lord Patten.

**Day fees:** £3,605 to £6,525 per term

### St Bernard's Preparatory School Berkshire

**Headmistress:** Asha Verma  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2½-11

St Bernard's was ranked the seventh best prep school of 2022 in the *Sunday Times* Parent Power list. A recent inspection described it as "an outstanding Catholic school in every respect" where pupils "radiate the joy and confidence which emanate from learning in an environment where each one feels welcomed and valued". Pupils go on to top grammar schools and public schools.

**Day fees:** £3,415 to £4,070 per term

### St Catherine's School Twickenham

**Headmistress:** Johnneen McPherson  
**Takes:** girls, aged 3-18

St Catherine's is the only independent Catholic girls' school in the Richmond area, located on the River Thames. It was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1914. Visitors often comment on the friendly atmosphere at the school which prides itself on its welcoming Christian ethos.

**Day fees:** £3,880 to £5,095 per term



**St Christina's School**  
North London

**Headmaster:** Alastair Gloag  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3 to 11

St Christina's school in St John's Wood, London, was founded in 1949 by the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. While the co-ed school stresses the importance of developing the whole person, academic standards are also excellent. Classes are small, between 12 and 21 pupils, most of whom go on to top London day schools. There is a strong focus on STEM subjects and popular extracurricular activities include robotics, judo and chess. Sixty per cent of pupils are Catholic and children of all faiths take part in the religious life of the school, which includes Mass every Friday in the convent chapel adjoining the school. Catholic children in Year 3 are prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist which also happen on-site. Nuns from the adjoining convent are involved in school life.

**Fees:** £5,350 per term

**St Columba's College**  
St Albans

**Headmaster:** David Buxton  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 4-18

St Columba's was founded in 1939 and since 1955 it has been a member of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart's global community of schools. It is unique in being the only such school in the UK. The self-defined goal of the college is to provide a moral and religious education based on the charism of the Brothers of

the Sacred Heart, teaching pupils the Columban values of courage, courtesy, and compassion "to enable them to become confident and well-rounded individuals who aim to leave people and places better than they find them".

In 2021, girls joined each year group in lower prep (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) and the lower sixth form (Year 12). From September, girls will be welcomed into Form 1/Year 7. This will be followed by a phased transition, which will eventually see St Columba's being open to both boys and girls from ages four to 18.

"At St Columba's, we pride ourselves on providing an education of the head and heart, placing academic success, happiness, and confidence at the centre of our mission," they say. "Throughout each phase of education, prep, senior and sixth form, the curriculum is ambitious and varied, rooted in a long tradition of academic excellence. Through small classes, our passionate and inspirational teachers provide students with high-quality learning opportunities." There is also a broad range of extracurricular activities and service opportunities on offer: "it is equally important in our overall aim of preparing young people to 'not just to make a living but to make a life'," says the school.

The school runs a distinctive so-called "SHAPE" programme in the senior school and the sixth form, which includes service activities such as student ministry and fundraising for charities such as CAFOD, homeless shelters and foodbank; house activities such as inter-house music, sport and public speaking competitions;

academic clubs such as lunchtime and after-school subject sessions and specialist exam groups workshops. It also includes practical activities such as college sport, drama, and music. Extracurricular activities include all the clubs in the school, such as mindfulness, scrabble and chess club, as well as CCF and the Duke of Edinburgh awards.

**Day fees:** £11,883 to £17,949 per annum

**St Dominic's Priory School**  
Stone, Staffordshire

**Headmistress:** Rebecca Harrison  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3 to 16

Officially opened in 1934 by the English Dominican Sisters, the school shares its site in Stone with the convent.

A recent inspection praised the pastoral care and was impressed by the pupils' moral development. Academic achievement and quality of teaching were also described as excellent. The new senior-school building, which opened in 2020, houses new science laboratories, performing arts studios and peripatetic music rooms alongside high-tech classrooms.

**Day fees:** £7,560 to £11,439 per annum

**St Edmund's College and Prep School**  
Ware

**Headmaster:** Matthew Mostyn  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3 to 18

St Edmund's College, founded in 1568 as a seminary, is the oldest continuously operating and oldest post-Reformation Catholic school in

Above: St Edmund's College. Below: St Columba's College. Opposite: St John's Beaumont



the country. It is located in 400 acres of Hertfordshire countryside and is often over-subscribed so parents are encouraged to get applications in early. The school takes pupils with a real mix of abilities and nurtures their talents. It is not super academic, but pupils still do well with 61 per cent of the 2021 cohort achieving A\*-A grades A Level. Music is important and the school's Schola Cantorum regularly performs in Britain's most splendid sacred buildings, including the cathedrals of Canterbury and Westminster. The school has a vibrant boarding community.

**Boarding fees:** £8,459 to £11,762 per term  
**Day fees:** £3,528 to £6,647 per term

**St Edward's School**  
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

**Headmaster:** Matthew Burke  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 1-18

St Edward's School offers a kindergarten, prep and senior school for children aged from one to 18. The school site, Charlton Park, was a hunting lodge that belonged to Edward the Confessor (1003-1066), the only English monarch to have been canonised. Parents praise the school for its small class sizes and "beautiful private setting".

**Day fees:** £7,980 to £18,915 per annum

**St John's Beaumont**  
Windsor

**Headmaster:** Giles Delaney  
**Takes:** boys, aged 3-13

St John's Beaumont is a day and boarding Jesuit preparatory school founded by the Society of Jesus in 1888. It is situated between Englefield Green and Old Windsor on Priest Hill, with the school building in Surrey and the sports fields in Berkshire. The oldest purpose-built preparatory school in the UK, it is now owned by Stonyhurst College, where many boys progress. Eton and Radley are also popular destinations.

**Boarding fees:** £6,045 to £10,415 per term  
**Day fees:** £3,540 to £6,820 per term



**St Joseph's Park Hill School**  
Burnley

**Headmistress:** Maria Whitehead  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

St Joseph's Park Hill is owned by the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy. Learning opportunities at Park Hill are broad, balanced and exciting as it promotes academic success but also believes in the education of the whole child.

Following the example of both their foundress Catherine McAuley and also St Joseph, they place importance on the need for tolerance and understanding and concern for others.

**Day fees:** £7,038 per annum

**St Joseph's Preparatory School**  
Stoke-on-Trent

**Headmaster:** Daniel Hood  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

St Joseph's Preparatory School is built on the tradition of its founders, the Christian Brothers, who own the school. A recent inspection report comments on the happiness and confidence of the pupils, and on how they pray calmly during assemblies.

**Day fees:** £3,080 to £3,250 per term

**St Joseph's College**  
Reading

**Headmistress:** Laura Stotesbury  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

St Joseph's was founded in 1894 by the Sisters of St Marie-Madeleine

Postel. Parents comment on the nurturing and detailed attention received by their children in a wholesome community environment. It won the TES Independent School of the Year award in November 2015. A wide range of clubs are open to all pupils, including string and brass groups, wind bands, choir, theatre studies, science club and a variety of sports.

**Day fees:** £7,737 to £13,230 per annum

**St Mary's College**  
Crosby, Liverpool

**Headmaster:** Michael Kennedy  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 0-18

St Mary's College is a co-educational school with a Christian ethos. The college was established in 1919 by the Christian Brothers, a clerical order founded by Blessed Edmund Rice. It provides high-quality education, encouraging achievement in many fields via its rich programme of extracurricular activities. The college has its own multi-gym and sports hall. There are seven laboratories, two workshops and a library. Twenty acres of playing fields are sited nearby on Little Crosby Road.

**Day fees:** £8,496 to £12,396 per annum

**St Mary's Hare Park Catholic School and Nursery**  
Romford

**Headmaster:** Ludovic Bernard  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2½-11

St Mary's Hare Park was established to provide education for Catholic children, but will consider applications from any family who is willing to support the ethos



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of the school. The school was rated "good" overall by Ofsted in 2018, with pupils' behaviour deemed "outstanding".  
**Day fees:** £2,800 to £3,000 per term

**St Mary's School  
Cambridge**

**Headmistress:** Charlotte Avery  
**Takes:** girl, aged 3-18

Based in central Cambridge, St Mary's is a Mary Ward school for around 650 boarders and day girls aged from three to 18. In July 2021, it was shortlisted in the Independent Girls' School of the Year category at the Independent Schools of the Year awards, and students often win awards in international art competitions.

Academic results are strong; girls can opt to take classical Greek and additional maths at GCSE on top of the core curriculum. In modern foreign languages pupils can choose from Mandarin Chinese, German, Spanish and French. Worship is an important part of daily life at the school. Every girl is expected to take religious education at GCSE and there is an optional Mass every Wednesday morning. There is daily prayer during Advent and year group assemblies take place in the Chapel.

**Day fees:** £6,093 per term  
**Full boarding:** £12,629 per term

**St Mary's School  
Hampstead**

**Headmistress:** Harriet Connor-Earl  
**Takes:** girls, aged 2-11

St Mary's was established in 1871 in the heart of Hampstead as a Catholic

convent boarding school for girls. The school has its own chapel with beautiful stained-glass windows, where Mass and weekly "Praying Together" sessions take place. St Mary's is proud of its chapel choir which performs annually at the Albert Hall. Girls are high-achievers and facilities are excellent.

The school has recently opened its Global Learning Centre which includes an engineering and robotics lab, virtual-reality launch pad, art and design studio as well as a green room.

**Day fees:** £3,110 to £5,750 per term

**St Philip's  
South Kensington**

**Headmaster:** Alexander Thomas  
**Takes:** boys, aged 11-18

A school for only 110 boys, St Philip's offers a "traditional, Catholic, liberal education that combines the very best of the world in the pursuit of timeless excellence", according to headmaster Thomas, who is also keen on good manners and tidy uniforms.

Parents are delighted with the school which, though small, caters for individuals with distinctive interests (the boys recently set up an ornithology club).

Although based in central London, boys have access to several acres of sports fields where they play football, rugby, hockey and cricket. In 2020, half of the leavers went on to either Eton or City of London. Other regular destinations are Harrow, the London Oratory, Ampleforth and Worth.  
**Day fees:** £6,050 per term



**St Philomena's  
Catholic School**

**Frinton, Essex**  
**Headmistress:** Philippa Mathews  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

St Philomena's is the only independent school in Tendring. It is a small and nurturing school with high academic standards. It was established by the Sisters of Mercy in September 1926. As a Catholic school, it promotes a Christian ethos, but children of all faiths are welcomed. It is a worshipping community, valuing prayer and praise, which enjoys close links with the parish of the Sacred Heart and St Francis in Frinton.

**Day fees:** £1,110 to £2,800 per term

**St Pius X Catholic  
Preparatory School**

**Lancashire**  
**Headmaster:** Patrick Gush  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 2-11

St Pius X Catholic Preparatory School was founded in 1955 by a group of forward-looking Preston businessmen to provide local Catholic families with the best in private education. Academic standards are high with many pupils winning places at grammar schools and scholarships to top secondary schools.  
**Day fees:** £8,288 to £8,898 per annum

**St Teresa's  
Effingham**

**Headmistress:** Claire McShane  
**Takes:** girls, aged 7-18

St Teresa's school in Effingham, established in 1928, is set in 48 acres

Above from left: St Pius X Prep School, The Marist School. Opposite: Thornton College

in a designated area of outstanding beauty in the North Downs in Surrey. The school is gradually accepting boys with the co-ed Sixth form due to open in 2025. Pupils are well-mannered and enjoy music and drama and the school is average academically compared to others in the area.

Facilities include horse stables and a swimming pool complex as well as a multimillion-pound, 750-seat technologically-equipped performing arts theatre hall, with music and drama suites.

**Boarding fees:** £9,995 to £11,325 per term  
**Day fees:** £4,850 to £6,695 per term

**St Winefride's  
Shrewsbury**

**Headmistress:** Elizabeth Devey  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

St Winefride's is a small convent school for boys and girls aged three to 11, next to Pugin's Shrewsbury Cathedral. The school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1868 and always had a nun as headmistress. Despite being previously recognised by the Sunday Times as a leading independent prep school there have been parents' concerns over spiritual values and leadership since a lay headmistress - from the state sector - took over.

There are few sports facilities, frustrating parking and parental concerns over the school's SENDCO dept. The curriculum includes French and Spanish from kindergarten and

children can learn Mandarin in the older years. The 1960's facilities are reflected in the reasonable fees.

**Day fees:** up to £1,742 per term

**The Cedars  
Croydon**

**Headmaster:** Robert Teague  
**Takes:** boys, aged 11-18

On its founding in 2013, The Cedars was the first senior school in the country to be based on the ethos of Opus Dei, which does not directly run the school but supported its opening and has links with the trust. It is part of the PACT group of schools and shares its site and ethos with its sister school The Laurels (below).

**Day fees:** up to £5,460 per term

**The Laurels  
Croydon**

**Headmistress:** Linda Sanders  
**Takes:** girls, aged 11-18

The all-girls secondary school is the newest of the PACT (Parents, Children and Teachers in Partnership) schools in London, whose ethos of "character first" is inspired by Opus Dei. They unashamedly do things their own way here. A prayer is said at the beginning of every lesson and alongside the mainstream academic curriculum, girls listen to talks on motherhood and family love. The school was ranked the sixth best independent school with a small sixth form in 2020.

**Day fees:** up to £5,460 per term



**The Marist School  
Ascot**

**Headmistress:** Joanne Smith  
**Takes:** girls, aged 2-18

The Marist School has been in the top one per cent nationally for A-level results for the last three years, with 86 per cent of pupils gaining A\* and A grades. It is situated within 55 acres of woodland and the site includes a science block, drama studio, an indoor swimming pool, a music block, a recording studio, large playing fields, a pond, netball courts, an AstroTurf pitch and a multi-purpose sports hall.

Founded in 1870 by the Marist sisters, the school has just been bought by the Concept Education group after a decline in vocations led the Marist trust to sell.

**Day fees:** £3,700 to £5,505 per term

**The Priory School  
Edgbaston**

**Headmaster:** Jonathan Cramb  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 4-18

The Priory School Edgbaston was founded in 1936 on the Catholic values of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus to provide a Catholic education for young women. Now taking boys and girls all the way through, the school was rated "outstanding" by Ofsted for its early-years education provision.

**Day fees:** £3,500 to £5,285 per term

**Thornton College  
Milton Keynes**

**Headmistress:** Val Holmes  
**Takes:** girls, aged 3-18

Thornton College Catholic day and boarding school for girls, located between Milton Keynes and Buckingham, is set in 25 acres of beautiful grounds. The main school building is a manor house dating back to the 14th century and it became a school in 1917, founded by the Sisters of Jesus and Mary.

The school is very proud of its rich history, exceptional pastoral care for the individual and its strong emphasis on core Christian values, though it is also proud of the fact that it is a

forward-looking school, with exciting opportunities both in and outside the classroom, and where girls of all faiths and none are equally welcome and valued. Thornton College is part of an international family of J&M schools in 28 countries around the world. This means students can participate in international partnership programmes, celebrations, projects and exchanges, giving them a global outlook and cultural intelligence. Boarding is “upstairs” in the main manor house, offering a home-from-home experience. The boarding bedrooms and common areas are bright and spacious. Thornton offers flexi, weekly and termly boarding for domestic and international students, with a packed programme of exciting evening activities and weekend trips.

Thornton College is a one-site school ensuring, that there is smooth transition for students throughout pre-prep, prep, senior and sixth form, and lots of leadership and role-modelling opportunities. Academic results are comparable with high-achieving competitive schools while having a varied ability intake, and Thornton consistently ranks as one of the top non-selective schools in the UK.

Woodland walks, cookery, ballet, French, music and movement, library time and a host of other weekly activities are on offer. As a Forest School, Thornton allows girls to excel inside and outside the classroom with prep school children enjoying an outdoor classroom in the woodlands and exploring and pond-dipping in the eco-habitat park. Thornton College is leading the introduction of robotics into its prep school curriculum and won the Independent Schools of the Year award 2020 for its student careers programme;

it was a finalist school in the ISA awards 2020 for outstanding STEM provision. Students in senior and sixth form enjoy overseas sporting tours, World Challenges, Duke of Edinburgh (with sixth-formers achieving their gold awards), EPQs, UCAS and careers events and debating. The sixth form, which opened in 2016, offers a wide subject choice, small class sizes and individual attention with future pathway support. In 2020 and 2021, 100 per cent of sixth form students achieved their first-choice universities.

**Full boarding fees:** £10,195 per term  
**Day fees:** £5,945 per term

### Trinity School Devon

**Headmaster:** Lawrence Coen  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-18

Trinity is a small day and boarding school praised for its excellent pastoral care. It is the best non-selective school in Devon according to the Sunday Times Top Independent Schools list, with 50 per cent A\*/A at A-level (or equivalent), and a 98.5 per cent pass rate at GCSE. It was founded in 1979 as a joint Roman Catholic and Anglican school.

**Boarding fees:** £7,340 to £10,615 per term  
**Day fees:** £2,975 to £4,695 per term

### The Ursuline Preparatory School Ilford

**Headmistress:** Lorraine Pereira  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

Part of the international network of Ursuline schools, the Ursuline Prep School in Ilford stands out for its high academic standards. The school was

recently ranked the 29th best primary school in England by the *Times*. Masses for pupils take place throughout the year, as well as special celebrations on the feast days of St Angela (the order's founder) and St Ursula (its patron). Extracurricular activities are on offer such as Irish dancing, STEM and Mandarin.

**Day fees:** £10,530 per annum (£5,508 to £8,019 per annum for nursery)

### The Ursuline Preparatory School Brentwood, Essex

**Headmistress:** Pauline Wilson  
**Takes:** boys and girls, aged 3-11

The Ursuline Preparatory School is an independent, co-educational Catholic day school, described by the Diocese of Brentwood Inspectorate in 2022 as “an outstanding Catholic school at all levels”. It has an excellent quality of both academic and co-curricular achievements, teaching a broad curriculum.

Day fees: £2,370 to £4,415 per term

### The Ursuline Preparatory School Wimbledon

**Headmistress:** Caroline Molina  
**Takes:** girls, aged 4-11 (co-ed nursery)

The Ursuline Preparatory School was founded in 1892 by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union. In recent years the school has invested in dedicated facilities for art and music, together with a library. To support their extensive sporting provision the school uses off-site facilities in addition to their floodlit AstroTurf sports surface.

**Day fees:** £2,625 to £4,275 per term CH



From left: The Ursuline Prep School, Brentwood; Trinity School

# ‘Children feel valued here’

**Richard Berlie**, head of St Anthony’s Boys’, and **Donal Brennan**, head of St Anthony’s Girls’, in London, on what makes their schools stand out



Richard Berlie

### Describe your careers so far.

**Richard Berlie:** St Anthony’s is my seventh school over a 25-year career, including Ampleforth, Emanuel School and Dulwich College, where I was the head of the Upper School. My last role was that of deputy head academic at Mander Portman Woodward in South Kensington.

I have just completed two years as head of St Anthony’s Boys’.

**Donal Brennan:** Prior to my appointment at this school I was the headmaster of the Hampshire School, Chelsea for five years, having spent 25 years at Hill House International School, London.

### What attracted you to the school?

**RB:** I felt a great affinity with the ethos of the school, especially the candour and enthusiasm of the boys. A prep school sets the foundations for pupils’ academic success and over the course of my career I have come to understand the fine importance of curriculum coherence and planning all the way from reception up to Year 13.

**DB:** My previous school was very large and well established and I saw St Anthony’s as an opportunity to be part of a young project and to develop a school, almost from scratch, through my vision and philosophy, with a golden thread of spirituality rooted in Catholic virtues and values.

### What achievement are you proudest of since joining the school?

**RB:** The 11+/13+ senior school offers were excellent for the academic year just ended because of the hard work and dedication of the boys who were assisted by a really good preparation for their exams and interviews. A new faculty system is now in place focusing on English, Maths, Science, Humanities and the Creative Arts.

**DB:** The greatest achievement so far has been in opening our co-educational nursery.

The addition of boys and children as young as two and a half has brought a new energy to the school.

### What are the schools’ key values, ethos and vision?

**RB:** The school’s ethos is rooted in the Gospel and the teaching of Our Lord. I tell the boys that Almighty God has created them for some special purpose, that they are a unique creation and loved beyond all understanding by the Creator of all. It is a privilege to be a boy at St Anthony’s and because they have been given so many wonderful opportunities, much will also be asked from them.



Donal Brennan

**DB:** It is our nurturing family environment and high-quality education that makes us exceptional. We believe that children reach their true potential when they feel safe, secure and valued as part of a supportive community. Through our guidance,

our pupils will flourish academically and go on to effect change, making a positive contribution to society through their academic abilities and moral and spiritual beliefs.

### How do you incorporate the Catholic faith into school life?

**RB:** There are prayers each morning and at lunchtime. There is also assembly each week which all boys attend. A hymn is usually sung and I lead a reflection which is usually connected to the liturgical calendar. Boys attend Holy Mass once a term at St Mary’s Church in Hampstead. Our Chaplain Mgr Phelim Rowland regularly comes into school to speak with the boys. Charity fundraising has a long tradition and the boys raise thousands of pounds each year for the Catholic Children’s Society, Mary’s Meals, the Cardinal Hume Centre and the Passage, to name a few.

**DB:** The school has been acknowledged in recent diocesan inspections as having an outstanding commitment to Catholic life. As St Anthony of Padua himself said: “Actions speak louder than words.” Our girls lead in many charitable causes, from foodbank collections to bake sales to supporting refugee women.

### In practice, what is the relationship between the girls’ and boys’ schools?

**DB and RB:** The schools share a nursery and foster close links through sharing sporting events, assemblies and reception class “play dates”, as well as a shared worship at Mass for Christmas and Easter. Staff also share resources with one another and have fostered a symbiotic working relationship, which continually helps to raise standards.

### What kind of pastoral care do you offer at the schools?

**RB:** The pastoral programme (PSHE) is informed by Ten Ten, which is endorsed by the Diocese of Westminster. It is crucial that boys learn to make informed and moral decisions, especially in a world that can appear confusing or even hostile to those of any religious faith. The boys’ school employs the services of a professional counsellor once a week and this will be supplemented from September 2022 by the part-time work of a recently ordained Catholic priest.

**DB:** Each student is valued for their individual strengths and abilities and our staff take great pride in knowing all the children across the school. Children feel safe and secure and feel that their voices are heard here. Wellbeing activities are embedded in the curriculum and their effectiveness is constantly being reviewed and updated.

### What advice do you give to leavers?

**RB:** “To thyself be true.” The school exhorts boys to be critical thinkers and learners, never afraid to question or analyse. They should hold fast to the values they have been taught by their families so they can come to understand that freedom and conscience and happiness all form part of one golden thread.

**DB:** Never be afraid of hard work, commit to the task in hand, focus until it is entirely finished, and then the feeling of satisfaction is greatest. I remind St Anthony’s girls to always be the ones to raise their hands, speak up, challenge wrongdoing, offer suggestions, support the weak, while being polite but always assertive. CH

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THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

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THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

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There is an occupational requirement for the post holder to be a practising Christian in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

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Closing date for applications: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Further details and Application packs available from: [www.pooerservants.org/recruitment](http://www.pooerservants.org/recruitment) or email: [hrofficer@psmsg.org.uk](mailto:hrofficer@psmsg.org.uk)



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# CATHOLIC HERALD

Our next report on Catholic Education will be included in our February 23 issue

If you would like to promote your school, open days or courses in this issue, please contact Benedetta at:

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