

Top senior schools

Our experts pick the best of the best



Pupil voice

Children and teenagers have their say



Stage and screen

Performing arts schools

THE WEEK

Autumn/Winter 2021

Independent Schools guide



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● The Duke of Edinburgh's Award ● Clare Balding's schooldays

Great for dance and drama**Forest School**

Just over half an hour on the Central Line from Oxford Circus, yet surrounded by 50 acres and the ancient trees of Epping Forest, this is a London school with a difference.

Drama is offered at GCSE and A level and is also a popular extra-curricular option, with three school productions a year and keenly contested house drama competitions for which pupils write and direct their own plays.

Several former pupils have gone on to careers in the performing arts, including Paapa Essiedu, who became the RSC's first black Hamlet in 2016.

The school also has a dance department, staffed by professional dancers who introduce pupils from pre-prep upwards to street dance, jazz, musical theatre, ballet and performance skills.

forest.org.uk

Other contenders:

Stowe

St Edward's, Oxford



Forest School



Bootham School



Mayfield School



Fettes College

Great for co-curricular**Bootham School**

Pupils at Bootham, a day and boarding school in the city of York, end each day with an hour of extra-curricular activities and have more than 100 to choose from each term. Drone flying, vegetarian cookery, natural history, basketball, jewellery making, cryptography and astronomy are just some of the options. Bootham's College Specials are weekly lectures and workshops for older pupils, either related to careers or topics of general interest. Mike Shaw, a teacher at Bootham School, was recently honoured in a national competition for inspirational education leaders. The i25 Award was in recognition for his work in promoting astronomy to young people in schools across York.

boothamschool.com

Other contenders:

Uppingham

Charterhouse

Great for art and creativity**Mayfield School**

Fine art, textiles, ceramics, photography – pupils at Mayfield, a Catholic girls' day and boarding school in East Sussex, have plenty of scope for creative expression. All are encouraged to explore and experiment using a range of media and techniques in two and three dimensions. The school's art department is staffed by working artists with different specialisms and comprises three studios, a dark room and individual working spaces for sixth formers. After-school workshops, trips to galleries and visiting artists extend the pupils' knowledge and practical skills. The school also offers history of art as an A level subject. Many pupils combine creative arts with maths and science at A level and go on to study art, design, engineering and architecture at degree level.

mayfieldgirls.org

Other contenders:

Gresham's

Roedean

Most beautiful setting**Fettes College**

An imposing blend of Loire château and Scottish baronial, surrounded by 100 wooded acres, Fettes College in Edinburgh has been described as one of Scotland's greatest buildings. The school was founded to educate poor boys and orphans following a bequest by a wealthy merchant and former lord provost of Edinburgh, Sir William Fettes, in memory of his son who died young. Sir William's coat of arms included a bee and this gave rise to the school's motto – "Industria". The Fettes crest also features a bee, and depictions of bees and beehives are incorporated into some of the buildings. The most famous former pupil is probably former prime minister Tony Blair, but the list also includes composer Lorne Balfe and economist and Nobel Prize winner Sir Angus Deaton.

fettes.com

Other contenders:

Culford School

Lancing College