

When state education does not offer what you want,  
perhaps it's time to think about

# going PRIVATE

Finding the right school is one of the most important choices you will ever make for your child.

Private education used to be the luxury of the wealthy, but thanks to scholarships, bursaries and payment plans it is now more accessible to everybody.

So if you thought it wasn't an option for you, check out CHILD magazine's guide to private education first.



### What is an independent school?

There are 2,400 schools in the UK which are independent of local or central government control. They are sometimes called fee-paying or private schools, although many are not privately owned. Most of these schools have a board of governors, responsible for the overall direction of the school, and a bursar, responsible for financial management. Any surplus income must be used for the benefit of the school. The choice includes day and boarding schools, single-sex and coeducational schools.

### What sort of children goes to them?

Children from every sort of background. It is not true – and never was – that only rich and privately-educated people send their children to independent schools. Four out of ten independent school pupils are 'first-time buyers' – that is, they come from families where neither parent went to an independent school.

### What are the advantages of independent schools?

Independent schools pride themselves on being able to develop the full potential of each student whatever their ability or aptitude. Most have smaller classes than state schools and the staff have the time to give pupils individual attention.

### Accountability

Independent schools are accountable to parents. If parents do not think their children are being educated properly they will take them away and send them elsewhere. Because of this, independent schools have to have very high standards and most are equipped with the most up to date facilities available.

### Why do parents choose Independent Schools?

In surveys carried out for ISC by MORI (Market & Opinion Research International) the main reasons stated by parents for choosing independent schools include: small classes with individual attention, high standards of education and examination results, good discipline, encouragement of a responsible attitude to school work, development of social responsibility, and extra-curricular activities.

### Small Classes

Classes in many independent schools are smaller than in other types of school, particularly for the younger age groups between 5 and 13. This is when children are especially keen to learn, the foundations of a good education can be laid, and mistakes and learning difficulties are recognised and put right.

### Academic

83% of 15-year-olds at independent schools (including independent special schools) gain five or more GCSEs at grades \*A-C (compared with 49% of maintained school pupils).

Independent school candidates achieve, on average, 350 UCAS points at A level (roughly equivalent to A level grades ABC plus an additional B grade at AS level), compared with a state school average of 263 points.

Nine out of ten independent school A-level leavers go on to higher education degree courses. Independent schools educate 7% of the total school population, but 20 per cent of school sixth-formers. And 19% of new university students coming from schools or sixth-form colleges have been educated in them.

### Extra –curricular activities

In order to survive, independent schools have to satisfy parents that they are good value for money. Parents value what they pay for and are keen to encourage their children to do well.

Independent schools aim to develop the whole personality: the imaginative, practical, and physical as well as the academic. Music, art and drama flourish. Team games are encouraged as well as individual sports and indoor games and hobbies.

### Staff

As a general rule, independent schools will invest more heavily in teachers than schools in the maintained sector. High-quality education depends on having the right number of teachers with the right skills.

Teachers in independent schools are required to have a university degree and/or a recognised teaching qualification. They will be subject to the necessary checks and many will be registered with the General Teaching Council. One of the greatest strengths of independent schools is the quality and commitment of the staff, who readily contribute to the rich and varied extra-curricular programmes offered during the school day, after school, on Saturdays and sometimes during the holidays.

One of the strengths of preparatory and independent junior schools is the extent to which they provide teaching by specialists in their subjects, rather than by 'generalists' trying to cover the whole curriculum.

### Discipline

Discipline and contact with parents

All schools have rules. The prospectus and your visit should give you some idea of the regime. You need to be clear in your own mind what sort of discipline you approve of and to what kind of regime your child will best respond. Paying for an independent education does not give you the right to interfere in the professional running of the school. But you should receive a regular supply of important information and you should know what channels to use if you are worried about anything.

## ● INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL

Type of school fees	Age	Approximate range of PER TERM
PRE-PREPARATORY	2-7 years	£1000 to £1500
JUNIOR or PREP Day pupils Boarders	7 to 13 years	£1750 to £3500 £3400 to £5250
SENIOR SCHOOL	11 or 13 to 18 years	
Girls' day Boys' day		£2400 to £3600 £2500 to £4500
Girls' boarding Boys' boarding		£4050 to £6800 £4400 to £7200