

# TOP 1,000 SCHOOLS

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## Winners on a learning curve

- Private schools dominate the rankings again
- Parents' guide to the best choice • Where learning can be a lesson for life

## Top 1,000 Schools

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*Page one picture (by Daniel Lynch): sixth-form girls at Hasmonean High School in Hendon, England's highest-performing non-grammar state school, with Beverley Perin, head of the girls' school and David Fuller, executive head teacher of both the boys' and girls' schools*



Testing times: pupils at Colyton Grammar School in Devon, up from 92nd in 2006 to 85th last year, sitting exams

Alamy

# Class action that gets results

The rankings are led by the usual suspects, says

**David Turner**, but how do they do it?

**O**nce again private schools dominate the Financial Times rankings of the top-performing 1,000 institutions by A-level results, in a relentlessly reproduced pattern generally relieved only by a smattering of grammar schools and comprehensives in middle-class areas. They account for nine of the top 10, and 17 of the top 20.

Another interesting pattern is that 17 of the top 20 are single-sex schools. This adds weight to recently resurgent arguments that boys and girls should be taught separately because they learn in different ways – a point underlined by David Fuller, head of Hasmonean High School, England's best-performing non-state grammar, in a profile in this report. But there are, of course, exceptions – most

notably of all Westminster, which takes bright girls in the sixth form who help it to the very top of the league.

Given the dominance of private schools, the biggest question therefore is, why? How have they managed to maintain their hold as the purveyors of the best academic results, and the institutions that send disproportionately high numbers of pupils to Russell Group universities?

Most independent school heads privately say the sector has done so by adopting a much more ruthless attitude than a generation ago, to both staff and pupils. This explains why their share of Cambridge University undergraduate admissions has risen from a 1980 nadir of 31 per cent to a gently undulating rate of about 45 per cent in the 2000s.

The head of one high-performing private school in Yorkshire mentions a discussion with other heads in the 1980s. It concerned how to treat coasting teachers who, not long before retirement, were not striving as much as they should for their pupils. A head at a school both now

and then regarded as highly academic said the school should accept such behaviour as a fact of life. But nowadays the teacher would have been told to shape up at the very least, and quite possibly be sacked, concludes the Yorkshire head.

Schools may treat the teachers much more harshly, but the pupils sometimes have a worse time still. Observers of the private school system note that selection by academic ability, rather than long-standing family links, has become much more the rule at those private schools that are oversubscribed.

There is even a series of possibly apocryphal urban myths doing the rounds among private school heads, of alleged dirty tricks to push schools up the tables. But no names are mentioned, and such tales are unprovable. These include the claim that pupils likely to earn poor A-levels continue to be taught by the school, but take their exams at a different centre to avoid depressing the school's statistical average. Even if the stories are untrue, the telling of

them shows the pressure heads feel under.

Moreover, the heads of private schools of even middling achievement admit they are stricter than before at weeding out children who are not likely to thrive at sixth form, even though it means foregoing school fees.

Schools with a gentler approach towards pupils and staff suffer accordingly in the league tables.

It is a system that most heads bemoan, but in which they are trapped and that they are propping up.

But in one important respect it works for the children. Research led by Francis Green of Kent University identified a clear earnings premium among private school pupils born in 1970, after stripping out socio-economic factors. The premium of 17 per cent for men and 16 per cent for women was significantly higher than for children born in 1958 and educated at private school, says Prof Green – particularly for women. He says this reflects better exam results, rather than an old boy or old girl network.

He calculates that private

# Top 1,000 Schools

school education produces a 7 per cent annual return in real terms, although he emphasises the figure is approximate. This means if a parent spends £100,000 on a child's education, the child will earn an extra £7,000 each year of working life, after stripping out inflation.

At the Nuffield Foundation seminar where Prof Green outlined his findings, one head of a leading girls' private school firmly rejected a suggestion from the audience that it might be better to send the child to state school, and use the money saved to build a nest egg for the child. Private schools, she explained, provided more than an earnings premium through academic results – they imbued character.

The notion of character was widely talked about in earlier days, when private schools saw their role as producing courageous Christian gentlemen with the moral strength to run the Empire. It has made a comeback.

One analyst of private

schools sees individual schools' talk of instilling character as clever niche marketing, by institutions such as Wellington College and Bedales that do not have results near the top of the league and need something else distinctive – though Wellington has shot up 71 places to a fairly impressive 134th,

## Schools with a gentler approach towards pupils and staff suffer in the league tables

and Bedales comes a respectable 414th.

Nowadays some private school heads talk about the imperative to produce "happy" pupils – a notion irrelevant and rather indecent in the minds of Victorian heads. Anthony Seldon, master of Wellington, says both improving academic results and an emphasis on

well-being have increased parent demand for places at the Berkshire school.

It is easy to be too cynical about the idea. A termtime stroll round Bedales certainly leaves the impression of a happy place, with a distinctive clientele of parents from the creative professions who want a school that offers an alternative to the traditional strict boarding school education. Indeed, Bedales was set up in 1893 as a deliberate alternative to standard private school education.

In Wellington's case, the co-educational school's image has changed considerably from the days when it was set up in 1853 to educate the orphan sons of army officers. But so too has the image of private schools in general. The sector has a tradition of questioning its *raison d'être*, and then adapting.

Wellington has, historically, been no exception. After the 1940 rout of the British army in France, TC Worsley, a Wellington master, lamented: "If the public

schools are national assets because of their leadership training qualities, what are we to think of those qualities when we survey the mess into which their leadership has brought us?"

Private schools, it seems, are again showing their genius for reinventing themselves to fit the new demands of society.

What of the grammar schools and other institutions that appear sometimes in rankings otherwise dominated by private schools?

They often face the same accusations of hothousing as high-performing private schools.

But the head of a girls' school, which is one of the highest-achieving grammars, turns the argument on its head. She says teachers are more likely to tell their self-driven pupils to ease up a little, rather than to work themselves harder. The risk of self-induced burn-out is very real, she concludes.

Such is the tough world of England's top schools.

## Top 20 schools

FT Rank 07	FT Rank 06	School	Town	% of students achieving at least AAB in core subjects
1	1	Westminster School	Westminster	89
2	2	Winchester College	Winchester	72
3	5	Eton College	Windsor	78
4	4	St Paul's Girls' School	Hammersmith	85
5	9	Colchester Royal Gram Sch	Colchester	69
6	8	St Paul's School	Barnes	81
7	7	North London Collegiate S (IB)	Edgware	92
7	25	Radley College	Abingdon	59
9	6	Wycombe Abbey School	High Wycombe	79
10	11	James Allen's Girls' School	Dulwich	75
11	3	Manchester Grammar Sch	Manchester	70
11	19	Badminton School	Bristol	68
13	14	Withington Girls' School	Manchester	79
14	14	Perse School for Girls	Cambridge	72
15	26	Lycee Francais Ch de G (BS)	Kensington	59
16	31	City of London School	City	61
17	14	Cheltenham Ladies' Col	Cheltenham	67
18	10	Magdalene College School	Oxford	63
19	11	Queen Elizabeth's School	Barnet	69
20	27	King Edward VI Grammar S	Chelmsford	63

Source: FT. Rankings based on performance in core A levels - see tables on pages 10-15

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\*Source: 'The Independent' GCSE tables

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## Top 1,000 Schools

# Location, location, education...

### MORTGAGES OR FEES?

**Liz Lightfoot** finds that parental choice can give families a costly dilemma

**I**t is home to the National Lottery, Geri Halliwell and the Hornets but now Watford has a new claim to fame. The town of just 79,000 people in Hertfordshire is the location that sired three of England's top 10 comprehensives.

Watford Grammar School for Girls is the second most highly rated comprehensive in the FT top 1,000, Watford Grammar School for Boys follows closely at fourth, and co-educational Parmiter's comes ninth.

What a joy for parents to have the choice between three of the best state schools in the country!

Or so it might seem. In practice the town is a microcosm of the pitfalls of so-called parental choice, leaving many local families torn between spending a small fortune to live near the

famous state schools or seven years of fees in the independent sector.

Despite their names, the three schools are categorised not as grammars but as comprehensives with local catchment areas.

"We moved to be near Watford Boys because my husband went there and had a vision of his son following in his footsteps," says Mrs Wright. "We wanted our children to go to Cassiobury infant and junior school, which is one of the best around and was seen as the feeder school for the grammars. It was a big financial commitment but we thought

walk away is no guarantee of a place, as Mike and Danielle Wright have discovered. They moved from the other side of Watford eight years ago when expecting their second child.

"We moved to be near Watford Boys because my husband went there and had a vision of his son following in his footsteps," says Mrs Wright. "We wanted our children to go to Cassiobury infant and junior school, which is one of the best around and was seen as the feeder school for the grammars. It was a big financial commitment but we thought

it would be worth it in the long run."

They live just 950 metres across the park from the school but the catchment area has shrunk and the complicated admissions rules guarantee places only for those living within around 250m, she says.

The rest of the Cassiobury estate must take its chances. "We'll be going through it next year when our son is in year six," says Mrs Wright. "He won't stand a chance unless he is in the top 5 per cent in the tests and gets in on academic ability."

Children travel up the Met-



Highly ranked: Watford Grammar School for Boys

ropolitan line from Pinner and Harrow in north London to take up the selective places while pupils living less than a 10 minute walk away are turned down.

What makes it even more of a lottery is the sibling rule. Once one child gets in on ability or aptitude, their younger brothers and sisters are given priority under a separate category.

"We could possibly afford private education for one, at a pinch, but we have three boys and would want to treat them all equally," says Mrs Wright. "Our house is worth around £600,000 and we'd have to pay around £850,000 to £900,000 to get a similar one across the park, nearer the school.

"We did think about moving and had the house valued but we don't want to move. We live in a cul de sac and the children all play together and we have a lot of friends here. After all these years we've got the house how we want it," she says.

Moving house can be a wise decision, when it works out. Julie and Richard Woolf bought into the area 12 years

ago, moving three miles to be near the grammar schools. Both their son and daughter are now pupils.

"We feel very lucky that they can both walk and cycle to good schools," says Mrs Woolf. "We didn't do the sums at the time but seeing people struggle to pay independent school fees we certainly did the right thing for us." Being in the catchment has also paid a financial dividend as house prices followed the schools' rise up the league tables.

Six children from Cassiobury junior school failed to get a place at any of their parents' chosen schools last year and three ended up going private.

Aldenham School, the co-educational day and boarding school, is a popular choice but costs between £11,000 and £16,000 a year for day places, based on the age of the pupil. On top of that is the uniform, sports equipment, extras such as school trips and the cost of transport.

Parents have to weigh up the risk that a school will go downhill or that the catch-

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# Top 1,000 Schools

**No guarantees:** Mike and Danielle Wright outside their Watford home

Daniel Jones

ment area will change before deciding to make a move which could cost them upwards of £20,000 in stamp duty and fees alone, says Michael Owen, financial planning director at Brooks Macdonald Financial Consulting. Nowadays there is the added threat of schools changing to admission by lottery.

Families who take on an extra £250,000 mortgage will be looking at another £1,535 a month over 25 years or nearly £18,500 a year. An interest only loan would be £1,150 or £13,800.

Compare this with school fees of £11,000 to £15,000 a year for a day school place and up to £27,000 at the big boarding schools and it could be a sound investment, especially for families with more than one child.

"There's no guarantee that house prices will continue to rise but on the other hand, school fees have been going up by 7 per cent a year and are a huge commitment," says Mr Owen.

"Either way it's a gamble and no one wants to gamble with their child's education."



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## Top 1,000 Schools



Alternative investment: Sevenoaks School was the first member of the Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference and one of the first schools in the UK to switch to the IB

# Diploma fans say breadth is best

### INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

**Francis Beckett** on why some schools offer an alternative to A-levels

The holy grail for admissions tutors in top universities is to find a surefire means of picking out those students most likely to get a first-class degree.

It has, of course, never been found, but many of them now reckon that the nearest thing available in this imperfect world is the International Baccalaureate diploma.

It is, they believe, better than A-levels at dividing the very brainy from the amazingly brainy. A large percentage of A-level students get the best mark there is – a grade A. But the top IB score of 45 is achieved by fewer than 1 per cent of candidates.

Those few who do achieve it, or even get close, are likely to be a good bet for academic success.

Even those who do not get the top score are a better bet than A-level students, according to George Pook, the IB assessment director. "In terms of in-depth critical thinking, and taking responsibility for their own learning, the perceived opinion of the universities is that the IB prepares students better than A-levels because of the skills that are developed by the programme," he says.

"Universities are impressed by the sophisticated intellectual and cognitive skills of IB students."

That, its advocates say, is because the IB gives a much

broader education. All students must take one subject from each of six areas including English, mathematics and a second language.

Students who find, say, mathematics or languages particularly difficult, must nonetheless continue to study them, although not in anything like as much depth as they study their best subjects.

In addition, there are core components which every IB student must take. They must write an extended essay of up to 4,000 words on a topic of their own choice. They must study the theory of knowledge in a course designed, according to the IB office, "to provide coherence by exploring the nature of knowledge across disciplines, encouraging an appreciation of other cultural perspectives".

Students must also take part in a community action programme that "encourages students to be involved in artistic pursuits, sports and community service work, thus fostering students' awareness and appreciation of life outside the academic arena".

Sevenoaks School adopted the IB in 1978. Sevenoaks was the first member of the Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference – the elite group of schools entitled to call themselves public schools – and one of the first schools in the UK to switch to the IB.

The decision paid off. Most schools celebrate if they get one or two pupils into Cambridge or Oxford. Sevenoaks School sends an astonishing 15-20 pupils to Oxbridge most years, and one or two to an Ivy League university in the US. And that is from a pri-

maratively small sixth form of about 80.

Katy Ricks, head teacher, says: "Changing to the IB has contributed to this success. The extended essay and theory of knowledge raise the level of aspiration and the enjoyment of study, and put students in contact with scholarly research. It gives them a taste of undergraduate study, partly because of regular contact with their supervisor."

It is not just potential Oxbridge entrants who benefit, she says. "It's designed for all students, and is not just for selective schools like Sevenoaks."

For younger age groups, IB programmes have hardly taken off at all in the UK

The growing dissatisfaction with A-levels among the UK's most prestigious universities has helped drive the growth of the IB diploma. It is now offered by 122 schools, about half of them state schools. In France, where the home-grown baccalaureate is highly regarded, only 10 schools offer the IB diploma. Only Canada and the US have more schools offering the IB diploma than the UK.

What is perhaps even more significant is that for younger age groups, IB programmes have hardly taken off at all in the UK. It is not widely known in the UK that the IB is more than a diploma for 18-year-olds. There are IB programmes for younger children too: a pri-

mary years programme and a middle years programme. Just seven UK schools take the primary programme, and six the middle years programme.

This is partly because the programmes are not well integrated with the UK's national curriculum. But it is also an indication that the rapid growth of the IB diploma is fuelled partly by dissatisfaction with A-levels. Compare the UK with Australia, which has far fewer schools teaching the diploma – just 50 – but no less than 41 schools teaching the primary programme, and 48 the middle years programme.

But the IB diploma is still a very long way from wiping the floor with the UK's A-levels. Many more schools still teach A-levels than teach the IB, and they have their passionate defenders. A-levels allow students to learn more about the subjects in which they are most interested, and most likely to study at university, and allow them to give up their weakest subjects.

For now, university admission in the UK generally requires either A-levels or the IB, and if you want it to be the IB, you have to find a school that teaches it. But this summer, for some students in some areas, there is likely to be a third way: the Cambridge Pre-U, which is now in its final phase of development by Cambridge Assessment.

It will be closer to A-levels than to the IB, but aimed at identifying the very ablest students for the benefit of the most selective universities. Unlike both A-levels and the IB, this one has been designed specifically to assist in the hunt for the holy grail.

### Top IB schools

Name	Town	Per Candidate	Candidates	38+ (%)	Pass (%)
North London Collegiate School	Edgware	1204	23	83	96
Sevenoaks School	Sevenoaks	1194	202	68	
King's College School	London	1155	111	50	
The Godolphin and Latymer School	London	1136	25	44	
Whitgift School	South Croydon	1128	41	51	
St Helen's School	Northwood	1110	22	27	
Malvern College	Malvern	1099	94	45	99
Bedford High School for Girls	Bedford	1089	13	31	
King Edward's School	Godalming	1086	14	21	
Oakham School	Oakham	1083	73	33	99
Haileybury and Imperial Service College	Hertford	1077	56	30	
Bedford School	Bedford	1077	34	35	97
Alton College	Alton	1054	16	13	
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Tasis	Egham	1018	13	8	
Exeter College	Exeter	1010	15	7	
Dartford Grammar School for Girls	Dartford	1009	14	21	
Maidstone Grammar School	Maidstone	1001	43	16	
Truro College	Truro	986	66	15	99
Dartford Grammar School	Dartford	959	117	15	94
Southbank International School	London	951	36	11	94
ACS Hillingdon International School	Uxbridge	943	28	18	93
Slough Grammar School	Slough	930	18	22	89
The Henley College	Henley on Thames	920	47	11	94
Sixth Form College Colchester	Colchester	914	59	14	92
ACS Cobham International School	Cobham	911	64	13	91
Brockenhurst College	Brockenhurst	909	20	0	95
Rossall School	Fleetwood	906	22	9	91
Marymount International School	Kingston Upon	899	37	30	87
Thames	Thames	898	34	29	85
Tonbridge Grammar School	Tonbridge	898	74	18	85
St Clare's, Oxford	Oxford	887	27	19	85
Richmond-upon-Thames College	Twickenham	884	65	14	88
Impington Village College	Cambridge	872	14	7	93
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa, Rugby and Moreton Morrell	Leamington Spa	872	14	7	
Anglo European School	Ingatestone	852	50	10	88
Cirencester Tertiary College	Cirencester	845	25	0	92
Luton Sixth Form College	Luton	835	23	9	87
Waingels College	Reading	819	10	20	80
Taunton's College	Southampton	813	12	0	83
St Dunstan's College	London	806	14	0	86
Hastings College of Arts and Technology	St Leonards on Sea	774	20	15	80
International School of London	London	772	19	11	79
Finham Park School	Coventry	740	12	17	75
The City Technology College	Birmingham	491	74	0	55
The Bolitho School	Penzance	483	20	0	55
Kings College for the Arts and Technology	Guildford	429	21	0	48
Highlands School	London	428	76	3	47
The Business Academy Bexley	Eritrea	373	18	0	39
Broadgreen High School a Technology College	Liverpool	328	19	0	37
George Dixon International School and Sixth Form Centre	Birmingham	191	22	0	23

Institutions offering the IB but presenting fewer than 10 candidates included: Bracknell and Wokingham College, Brampton College, Central Sussex College, Cornwall College, Davies Laing and Dick College, Kings International College for Business and the Arts, Lansdowne College, The Netherhall School, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, Rhodesway School, Sixth Form College Farnborough, Solihull College, Woodsides Park International School  
Source: FT

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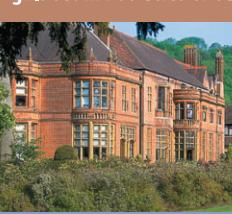
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## Top 1,000 Schools

# Hit rate is no flash in the pan

### OXBRIDGE ENTRANCE

Early selection and mastery of the entry system are vital, says Lisa Freedman

**T**hirty years ago, it would not have been unheard of for a housemaster at Westminster to ring up an Oxford college tutor and say: "I think you should take this boy." An offer by return of post might well have been the response.

Nowadays, of course, housemaster-to-tutor telephone calls are well outside the rules, but if you want to

go to Oxford or Cambridge, the path is certainly more direct if you apply from certain schools.

Westminster, which nestles next to Westminster Abbey in the heart of London, still sends more successful candidates to Oxbridge than any in the country, annually dispatching about half its upper sixth. But, according to a recent report by the Sutton Trust, a charity set up to help the underprivileged, it is just one of 30 schools that supply a quarter of successful Oxbridge applicants.

Of the top 30 schools in the Sutton Trust list, 29 are independent and the other is Colchester Royal Grammar School in Essex. So, if your heart is set on Oxbridge, you should reconcile yourself to paying fees, since the top-performing schools in the independent sector send about double the numbers of even the highest performing grammar schools.

The names at the pinnacle will hardly surprise those with any knowledge of English education. St Paul's Girls and St Paul's Boys, Eton and Winchester, North London Collegiate and Haberdashers' Aske's have been preparing children for an elite education for centuries. But the important point is, how do they continue their success rate at a time when Oxford and Cambridge have done their utmost to broaden the intake?

There are undoubtedly a number of key factors that affect their dominance: intense selection, the quality

and range of their teaching, an atmosphere of high expectation and a detailed knowledge of how the complex admissions' system works.

The highest achieving schools are heavily selective at the point of entry – they are usually oversubscribed at the ages of 11 or 13 by three or four applicants for every place. But those with the highest percentage of successful Oxbridge candidates – Westminster and St Paul's Girls – also take in a carefully edited slice of their sixth form after an intensely competitive entrance process.

Westminster, for example, which adds 60 new pupils (mainly girls) post-GCSE to its 120 boys, chooses this privileged band after two weekends of testing – entry requirements considerably more stringent than the Oxbridge hoops they will go through a year later.

"About 600 people sat the exam," says Emily Robbins, who is now in the lower sixth. "On the first weekend, there were back-to-back written papers of an hour and a half in all your intended AS subjects. Then, if you got through to the next round, you were invited back for a day of interviews. I had five, one in each subject, plus a general interview."

Once their sixth form is assembled, the schools do an outstanding job of stretching and enriching to a point well beyond what is demanded to get 3As at A Level, providing a range of research, writing, critical thinking and presen-

tations skills rarely available in the state sector.

"We don't do specific Oxbridge training," says Helen Turner, head of sixth form at North London Collegiate School, which has sent 176 girls to Oxbridge in the past five years. "In Year 13, however, we offer a university preparation course for all – we prepare them to be brilliant at their subject."

At the majority of these schools both parents – often Oxbridge graduates themselves – and pupils will have high and focused ambitions from early on.

"Peer group pressure has a wholly positive effect when 50 or 100 young people who aspire to a top university are educated together," says Martin Stephen, high master of St Paul's. "The pupils spark each other off and compete in a wholly productive way."

And, of course, the best independent schools, responding to parental expectations, make it their job to be expert at the system, knowing which college or course is likely to suit which applicant, understanding why it is important to prepare early to meet Oxbridge deadlines, and why the odds might be better in classics than in medicine. They are also expert at tailoring their candidates' applications to the rigours of this particularly demanding system.

Highgate School in north London, for example, has recently increased its average Oxbridge hit rate from about 10 a year to this sea-



The sky's the limit: an Oxford University degree ceremony

"The pupils spark each other off and compete in a wholly productive way."

**Martin Stephen**  
High master, St Paul's

### Top 30 schools

By Oxbridge admissions hit rate

School	School type	Five year hit rate (%)	Five year admissions
Westminster School	Ind	49.9	410
St Paul's Girls' School	Ind	49.0	225
Winchester College	Ind	36.0	230
Wycombe Abbey School	Ind	35.1	123
St Paul's School	Ind	33.0	259
Eton College	Ind	32.4	394
North London Collegiate School	Ind	30.5	176
Perse School for Girls	Ind	29.3	76
Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls	Ind	29.3	164
Oxford High School	Ind	25.5	84
Perse School	Ind	23.5	106
Magdalen College School	Ind	23.2	82
Withington Girls' School	Ind	22.6	82
Manchester Grammar School	Ind	22.4	211
Tonbridge School	Ind	21.9	148
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	Ind	21.6	135
South Hampstead High School	Ind	21.2	78
Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School	Ind	21.0	165
King's College School	Ind	20.9	152
Lady Eleanor Holles School	Ind	20.4	93
Abingdon School	Ind	20.3	121
City of London School for Girls	Ind	20.2	74
James Allen's Girls' School	Ind	19.8	84
School of St Helen and St Katharine	Ind	19.7	74
Colchester Royal Grammar School	Sel	19.5	105
King Edward's School, Birmingham	Ind	19.3	111
Cheltenham Ladies' College	Ind	19.3	125
St Mary's School, Ascot	Ind	19.1	45
Sevenoaks School	Ind	17.7	169
King Edward VI High School for Girls	Ind	17.4	64

Source: Sutton Trust

# Success is a long-term matter

### RISERS AND FALLERS

**Francis Beckett** looks behind this year's biggest ups and downs

There are some big risers in this year's FT Top 1,000 Schools rankings, but schools tend to get better slowly and steadily, not in sudden leaps. Some of the fastest rising schools stressed that their strong progress was a long-term trend.

An obsessive interest in league tables is unlikely to produce steady improvement, and Noel Toone, head of this year's fastest-rising school (out of those that were also in last year's Top 1,000), Northamptonshire Grammar School, sets no store by them. "We're not an academic hothouse" he says. A small independent school, it does not set a high bar to get into the sixth form of only 65 pupils. Six GCSEs, at grade B

for those subjects you want to do at A-level, will do fine.

Mr Toone seeks to create a happy school where all pupils feel they can achieve what they want. "If we do it in, say, music, or sport, it will reflect in the classroom," he says.

You do not need to be an independent school or a grammar school to achieve, as Littleover Community School's place as fifth best riser proves. Littleover, in Derby, has no overt or covert selection. Forty-two per cent of the intake are from ethnic minorities, and 11 per cent are poor enough to be eligible for free school meals.

The school was pronounced "outstanding" by school standards watchdog Ofsted last year. Four of its sixth form students have been offered Cambridge places this year and nine out of 10 go to university. There is no magic pill: "Children like coming to school, we get 97 per cent attendance, and we do a lot of pastoral work" says David Nichols, head.

When schools decline, there may well have been a trauma, especially if this exacerbates the effect of a growing reliance on one teaching method. That seems to be the problem at Hull Collegiate School, which has had the sharpest fall – 513 places. Its last inspection report, from the Independent Schools Inspectorate, makes the problems clear.

It is not a dreadful report. This is nothing like a failing school. But it is very lukewarm, and identified a recent crisis. The school was formed just three years ago from the merger of a boys' school and a girls' school. The merger, say inspectors, "has been painful for many of the parents and some of the children".

Inspectors returned over and over again to what they obviously saw as the underlying problem: too much reliance on didactic teaching methods, which meant pupils were not challenged sufficiently. It is only politicians who set "traditional teaching

methods" in opposition to teaching methods that liberate the imagination. In reality, both are needed.

Hull Collegiate School is part of the United Church Schools Trust, which controls eight independent schools and 13 academies. The Trust keeps a tight grip on all its schools, taking key decisions centrally and aiming where possible to fill vacancies from within its own organisation. This runs the risk that its 21 schools, all over the country, may start to live in a kind of bubble, instead of cross-fertilising with the rest of the nation's schools.

A spokesman for the Hull school points out that, with a sixth form of only 30, one or two bad results are enough to pull it down.

In some cases, there is no obvious reason for the sudden fall. Two grammar schools in Kent, that last bastion of selective state education, appear in the table – one, Harvey Grammar School, as the second best riser, the other,

### Ups and downs

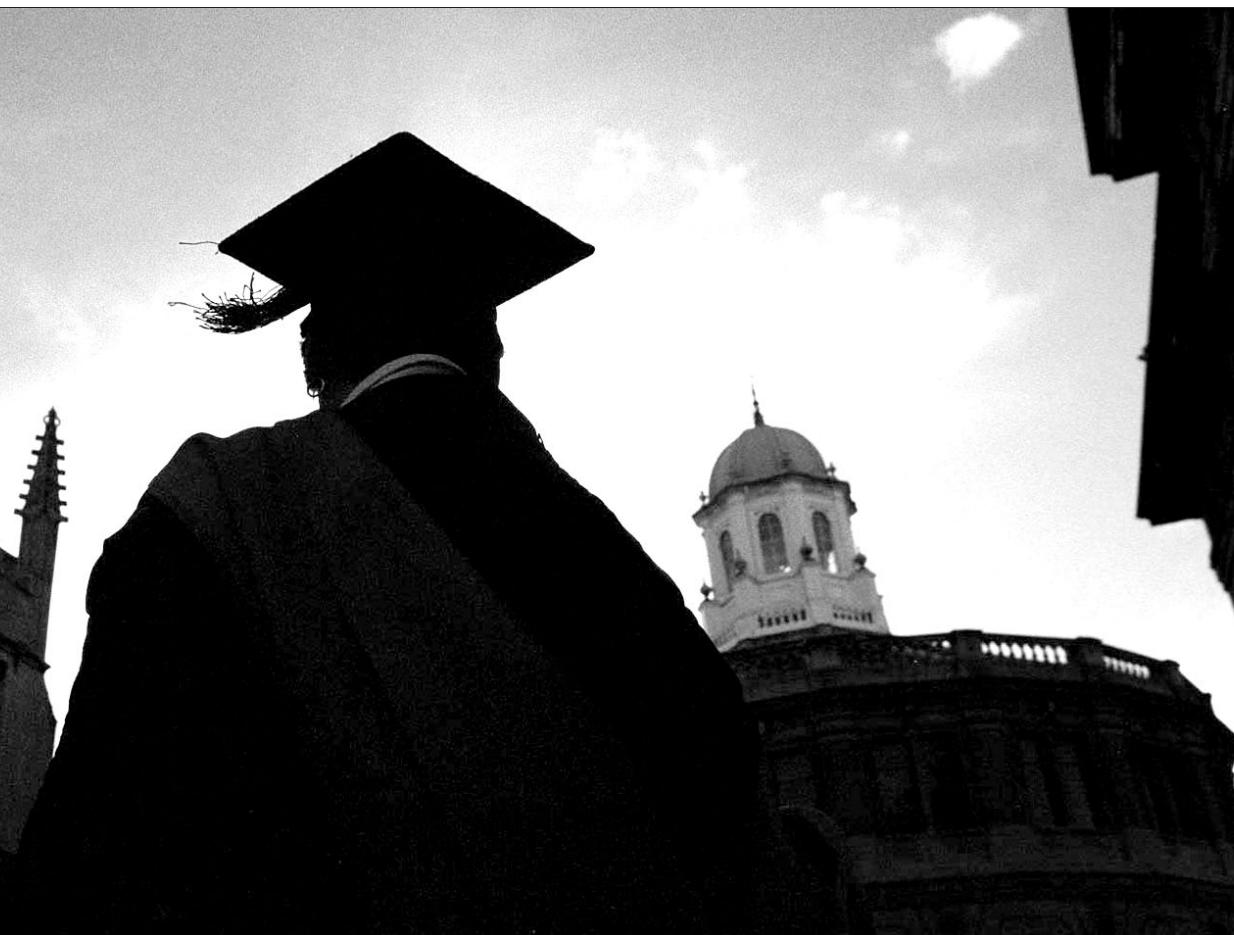
FT rank 07	FT rank 06	School	Town	School type
<b>Best risers</b>				
186	805	Northamptonshire Gram School	Northampton	Ind
480	973	Harvey Grammar School	Folkestone	Gram
500	993	Dixons City Academy	Bradford	Other
67	550	Farnborough Hill	Farnborough	Ind
459	941	Littleover Community School	Derby	Comp
<b>Worst droppers</b>				
906	393	Hull Collegiate School	Hull	Ind
974	492	Lady Hawkins High School	Kington	Comp
910	461	King's School	North Shields	Ind
845	427	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School	Faversham	Gram
946	589	Ilford Ursuline High School	Ilford	Comp

Source: FT

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, as the fourth worst dropper. Yet their inspection profiles are fairly similar, and on published statistics, if anything Queen Elizabeth's does slightly better. Maybe Queen Elizabeth's has just had unfortunate cohorts recently, and maybe its new head, David Anderson, who took up his post in January this year, will be able to arrest any decline.

# Top 1,000 Schools

## It's about more than simply the learning



Graduation ceremony, with the Sheldonian Theatre in the background

### CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

**It takes more than exam results to make a good school, says Miranda Green**

with the highest indicators of unhappiness and mental aberration."

He recommends parents should, when deciding where to send their children, favour schools with a broad approach to developing everything from a pupil's sporting and creative aptitudes to spiritual awareness.

According to research into what drives choices in the fee-paying sector, many children are already guiding their parents in this direction, and surveys show their impressions of a school are the largest contributing factor in a family decision.

More pupils in the independent sector are achieving impressive exam grades, as this supplement attests. In the state system, meanwhile, grammar schools continue to excel and pass rates are being forced up in schools with a comprehensive intake – often by radical measures such as reopening a failing school as a privately-sponsored academy.

But in the relentless pursuit of academic performance, have both sides of the educational divide lost sight of the need to produce well-balanced individuals?

Many headteachers and education experts believe so, and are urging parents choosing a school to consider more than the raw results or university entrance record. As Alan Smithers, director of the centre for education and employment research at Buckingham University, puts it: "The kind of personal development that you might have thought added to a sense of wellbeing gets submerged in the chase for exam scores."

At the bottom end of the achievement scale, Prof Smithers says constant assessment can make less able children opt out of learning and turn under-achieving schools into desperate places trying to avoid sanction or even closure. At the top end of the spectrum, there can be extreme strain on high achievers.

Anthony Seldon, master of Wellington College in Berkshire, is in the vanguard of a movement to combat this unhappiness by putting pastoral care and the active pursuit of happiness at the top of the educational agenda and even on the curriculum. Wellington pupils take well-being classes, complete with breathing exercises, stress-control techniques and discussions on topics such as how to use technology responsibly and conduct respectful relationships.

Last month Dr Seldon told the audience at a debate organised by Agora, the education thinktank, that "the most [academically] successful schools are also those

which is excellent in its wider curriculum but failing in its basic academic mission," he says. "The highest achieving schools in the state and private sectors almost invariably place a high premium on social skills and developing the talents of all their pupils."

John Dunford, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, the membership body for headteachers, says the past 20 years have seen a "narrowing" of the educational focus on to results. He argues that a school's broader role, for example its ability to counteract other negative influences, has become far more important.

"The social context is about as bad as it could be," Mr Dunford laments. Along with many in the education world, he was deeply disturbed by last year's report from Unicef, in which British children were branded the unhappiest in the developed world. "Never have the values of schools, with their clear boundaries and moral framework, been more valuable in children's lives."

For David Laws, education spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, schools cannot be expected to compensate for society's ills and produce happy children if their home lives are chaotic. But he, like Mr Sheerman, has seen good headteachers create an environment that shields both pupils and teachers from the effects of too much academic pressure, so the school does well without sacrificing a lively, nurturing atmosphere.

Both Mr Laws and Michael Gove, the Conservative schools spokesman, are united in their defence of the ambitions for greater attainment that have driven the obsession with exam results.

Mr Laws says a good school must be one with high aspirations for its pupils. Mr Gove goes further, insisting the number one requirement must be to give young people access to knowledge and the advantages a university education brings.

Prof Smithers agrees there have been very good reasons for politicians' – and parents' – relentless focus on exam results and independent inspections. But he points out that accountability mechanisms cannot encapsulate the character of a school.

"How we get out of this I'm not sure," he admits candidly. "The government has to find a way back to the actual purposes of education, which is giving pupils ways to make sense of their lives and get the best out of them."

### High standards pursued religiously at Hasmonean

Hasmonean High School in Hendon, which tops the FT rankings as England's highest-performing non-grammar state school, underlines the ability of religious comprehensives to deliver sometimes stellar results.

But Hasmonean, 114th in the FT's overall table, is an exception to the Catholic institutions that dominate the rankings among the highest-achieving religious state schools. The institution, named after a dynasty of Jewish rulers in ancient Israel, is for Orthodox Jews.

David Fuller, the gentle executive head

**David Fuller: no greenhorn**

teacher, says "being Jewish" is "quite an element" in the school's success. "Orthodox Judaism very much values education."

He also thinks the school's segregated system, which places boys and girls on different sites within the same London suburb in line with Orthodox Jewish values, is a key ingredient in its success. Boys and girls learn differently, he explains – echoing the views of many heads of top-performing single-sex private schools. "You can tell boys to listen, but you have to persuade girls."

Mr Fuller also acknowledges the clientele "are certainly more towards the middle class" – a characteristic common to virtually all the best comprehensives. But while many non-state grammars near the top of the FT table select a minority of their pupils by academic ability, Hasmonean does not

opt for this head-start on potential rivals in the league tables.

The most commonly taken A-Levels at the school are similar to other high-achieving schools. They include history, business studies and the sciences.

But the destinations of successful A-level candidates are a little different. Mr Fuller says about 70 per cent go to Russell Group universities – Britain's top tier. But Oxbridge entry is "not so high". He says this reflects the Orthodox Jewish emphasis on staying near one's family, and a tendency to go to certain universities that cater well to Orthodox Jewish needs.

Hasmonean is also unusual in one other, unexpected, way. The 54-year-old Mr Fuller is on his seventh headship, and does not meet many heads "with that sort of number". Mr Fuller is certainly no greenhorn at the helm.

**David Turner**

In his experience, a strong and positive headteacher makes the greatest difference to a school's success, whatever its circumstances or intake – and crucially this leadership tends to secure both academic improvement and a positive atmosphere.

Lord Adonis, schools minister, rejects the idea that high academic standards and enjoyment are mutually exclusive.

"I have yet to visit a school

## Top 1,000 Schools

# How to read the tables

The FT's school league tables are different from all the others, writes **Simon Briscoe**. They focus unashamedly on academic achievement as defined by "core" subject A-level results (as set out by Cambridge University, for further information go to [www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/requirements](http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/requirements)).

The government's summary scores for schools at GCE/VCE, A-level and AS levels this year (for 2007 exam results) again included various other qualifications in subjects such as animal care and make-up, which we feel give little help to students and parents aiming for places at top universities.

The table contains the 2007 A-level results for our top 1,000 schools. Around 2,200 schools (out of nearly 2,800) in England met the criteria for possible inclusion by having at least 20 pupils entered for any exams at A-level and an average of at least two A-levels per entrant. Results are organised by geographical area, broadly by county. We show county averages that include all schools that meet our criteria, not just those in the top 1,000.

The government has used the QCA points system (as it did in 2006, having previously used Ucas in earlier years), as follows:

A solid black horizontal bar used for redacting sensitive information.

A-levels are awarded QCA points as follows: A=270 points, B=240 points, C=210 points, D=180 points and E=150 points.

We use two measurements to rank the schools: the points per candidate in core

A-levels (to measure the quantity of work), and the points per entry in core A-levels (to measure the quality). The two measurements are z-scored (a mathematical formula that creates numbers reflecting the range of the points). We then add the two z-scores to give an easy-to-read FT score where 0 is the mid-point of the universe of qualifying schools. A positive score is above average for the

The left part of the table  
deals with the schools

deals with the core A-level results, the FT score and subsequent ranking. This is the second year that we have used this methodology so the 2006 ranking is also shown. Only large changes in rank are likely to be significant as the figures are volatile from year to year and the schools are closely bunched. The middle of the table deals with all exams and lists the total points accrued and the ranking (on the government measure) that would have derived from that.

In previous years the FT

ranked all points (not just those from core exams) with a weighting of 3:1, in favour of quality, for a quality to quantity ratio. The ranking using this method is also shown for comparison purposes.

The right of the table provides information on the top grades achieved in core subjects. The percentage of pupils achieving AAB in core subjects is a proxy for the percentage achieving what might be considered as the basic Oxbridge entry requirement. We also show the rank of the school in terms of the number of A and B grades, and the up/down column shows the change in FT rank between 2006 and 2007.

IB after a school's name denotes a school that offers the International Baccalaureate diploma. If a school offers only the IB, and it meets the criteria for inclusion, it appears only in our separate IB table (*see page 6*).

Sixth-form centres and consortia are not reported in the table as we give the results for the participating schools individually. School type is denoted by the following codes: Ind = Independent; 6th = Sixth Form College; Gram = Selective Grammar School; Comp = Comprehensive; Other. Some "comprehensive" schools are partially selective.

---

FT Rank 07	FT Rank 06	School	Town	School type	Core A levels			All Exams			Core A lvl Grds												
					FT score	Points/A level candidate (core exams)		Number of candidates	Core A level entries/candidate		Gov/DCSF rank / Points/cand)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)		% A grade/ entry (core subjects)									
						Points/ core A level entry	Number of candidates (All exams)		Points/ candidate	All A level entries/candidate		Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)									
<b>Bedfordshire</b>					<b>412</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>725</b>			<b>0.9</b>										
285	161	Bedford High School (IB)	Bedford	Ind	<b>2.40</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>-12</b>		
329	429	Bedford Modern School	Bedford	Ind	<b>2.15</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>10</b>		
178	214	Bedford School (IB)	Bedford	Ind	<b>3.00</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>3</b>		
768		Biddenham Up Sch & Sp Coll	Bedford	Comp	<b>0.53</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>1074</b>	<b>941</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>713</b>			
359	338	Dame Alice Harpur School	Bedford	Ind	<b>1.96</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>-2</b>		
711	696	Sharnbrook Up' Sch & CC	Sharnbrook	Comp	<b>0.64</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>-1</b>		
<b>Berkshire</b>					<b>495</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>779</b>						<b>1.3</b>							
108	94	Abbey School Reading	Reading	Ind	<b>3.49</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>-1</b>		
429	429	Bradfield College	Reading	Ind	<b>1.64</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>462</b>			
617	814	Charters School	Ascot	Comp	<b>0.92</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>1041</b>	<b>650</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>19</b>		
116	151	Downe House School	Thatcham	Ind	<b>3.42</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>3</b>		
539	384	Downs School	Newbury	Comp	<b>1.20</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>-15</b>		
3	5	Eton College	Windsor	Ind	<b>5.48</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>3</b>			
209	269	Heathfield St Mary's School	Ascot	Ind	<b>2.82</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>6</b>		
633	629	Herschel Grammar School	Slough	Gram	<b>0.88</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>1274</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>605</b>			
716		Hightown Sch & Sixth Form C	Emmer Green	Comp	<b>0.63</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>1459</b>				<b>28</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>761</b>		
598	420	Holt School	Wokingham	Comp	<b>0.98</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>-17</b>		
40	22	Kendrick Girls' Grammar Sch	Reading	Gram	<b>4.31</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1046</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>-1</b>		
820		Kennet School	Thatcham	Comp	<b>0.41</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>769</b>			
322	458	Langley Grammar School	Slough	Gram	<b>2.19</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>13</b>		
278	455	Leighton Park School	Reading	Ind	<b>2.45</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>17</b>		
180	318	Luckley -Oakfield School	Wokingham	Ind	<b>2.99</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>13</b>		
927	687	Maiden Erlegh School	Reading	Comp	<b>0.16</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>-24</b>		
302	357	Marist Senior School	Ascot	Ind	<b>2.30</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>5</b>		
856	941	Newlands Girls' School	Maidenhead	Comp	<b>0.33</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>1043</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>8</b>		
978	704	Piggott School	Reading	Comp	<b>0.05</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>1133</b>				<b>683</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>-27</b>
336	138	Queen Anne's School	Reading	Ind	<b>2.07</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>-19</b>		
706	603	Ranelagh C of E School	Bracknell	Comp	<b>0.65</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>1138</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>-10</b>		
368	239	Reading Blue Coat School	Reading	Ind	<b>1.94</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>12</b>		
66	37	Reading School	Reading	Gram	<b>4.01</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>66</b>			
881		Slough Grammar School (IB)	Slough	Gram	<b>0.26</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>1408</b>				<b>25</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>798</b>			
686	520	St Bartholomew's School	Newbury	Comp	<b>0.72</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>-16</b>		
359	424	St Bernard's Cath Gram Sch	Slough	Gram	<b>1.96</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>6</b>		
314	92	St George's School	Ascot	Ind	<b>2.22</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>-22</b>		

## Top 1,000 Schools

FT Rank 07		FT Rank 06		School		Town		Core A levels		All Exams		Core A lvl Grds		All Exams		Core A levels		All Exams		Core A lvl Grds																							
								FT score	Points/A level candidate (core exams)	Points/core A level entry	Number of candidates (All exams)	Gov/DCSF rank (Points/cand)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	AB rank	Pupils taking A level only	Gov/DCSF rank (Points/cand)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	Pupils taking A level only																			
								Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (all exams)	Number of candidates (All exams)	Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	% cans at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	AB rank	Up/Down	Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	AB rank	Up/Down																	
512	482	Highfields School	Matlock	Comp	1.33	530	229	106	2.3	2.9	926	294	516	532	35	1.4	18	56	106	523	-30	684	578	Marling School	Stroud	Gram	0.73	470	226	110	2.1	3.0	822	657	596	718	32	1.3	16	0	110	622	-106
652	776	Lady Manners School	Bakewell	Comp	0.83	444	232	125	1.9	2.9	920	307	586	36	1.2	14	54	125	704	124	895	573	Marlwood School	Alveston	Comp	0.23	447	218	108	2.0	2.6	764	955	30	1.1	15	60	105	833				
956	Landau Forte College	Derby	Other	0.09	422	219	117	1.9	2.7	773	906	943	22	0.9	50	111	1042			79	73	Pate's Grammar School	Cheltenham	Gram	3.82	719	255	169	2.8	3.1	1165	11	25	41	65	2.5	52	50	169	78	-6		
459	941	Littleover Community School	Derby	Comp	1.50	555	229	98	2.4	3.1	844	543	523	896	34	1.4	18	60	97	513	482	519	388	Rendcomb College	Cirencester	Ind	1.26	551	224	33	2.5	3.2	802	757	468	426	33	1.6	24	46	33	423	-131
776	553	Mount St Mary's College	Sheffield	Ind	0.50	427	227	33	1.9	3.1	733	1117	604	543	27	1.1	15	27	33	809	-223	734	597	Ribston Hall High School	Gloucester	Gram	0.60	456	225	66	2.0	2.8	853	499	573	487	28	1.2	9	83	66	661	-137
910	Newbold Community School	Newbold	Comp	0.20	473	213	41	2.2	2.5	845	537		23	1.0	17	68	41	954			303	248	Sir Thomas Rich's School	Gloucester	Gram	2.29	636	234	118	2.7	3.1	1010	121	378	226	34	1.7	19	30	118	348	-55	
153	285	Ockbrook School	Derby	Ind	3.12	668	248	23	2.7	3.0	824	644	194	258	57	2.3	48	100	23	113	132	743	965	St Edward's School	Cheltenham	Ind	0.58	418	231	53	1.8	3.0	790	831	549	472	31	1.1	11	40	53	780	222
332	635	Queen Elizabeth's Gram Sch	Ashbourne	Comp	2.08	565	241	89	2.3	2.8	1000	136	410	830	54	1.8	33	52	89	311	303	500	492	Stroud High School	Stroud	Gram	1.35	494	236	128	2.1	2.9	843	546	424	416	37	1.5	66	100	128	477	-8
163	196	Repton School	Derby	Ind	3.08	634	252	109	2.5	3.4	933	272	105	178	65	2.3	42	47	109	143	33	519	267	Westonbirt School	Tetbury	Ind	1.26	531	228	27	2.3	3.0	774	703	560	257	33	1.6	22	100	27	433	-252
418	332	St Mary's Catholic High Sch	Chesterfield	Comp	1.70	562	233	118	2.4	3.0	915	322	515	309	35	1.5	22	56	118	466	-86	519	653	Wycliffe College	Stonehouse	Ind	1.26	481	236	76	2.0	2.7	708	1257	499	541	36	1.4	11	36	76	528	134
674	624	Trent College	Nottingham	Ind	0.76	426	234	90	1.8	2.7	783	852	484	434	35	1.2	13	38	90	732	-50																						
910	674	Tupton Hall School	Chesterfield	Comp	0.20	483	211	113	2.3	2.7	685	1392	803	22	1.0	8	56	112	879	-236																							
924	810	Woodlands School	Derby	Comp	0.17	460	214	82	2.1	2.8	702	1302	939	752	16	0.9	9	56	82	1055	-114																						
<b>Devon</b>																																											
415	415	Blundell's School	Tiverton	Ind	1.71	559	233	81	2.4	3.0	783	856	460	365	35	1.6	20	40	81	417	0	971	948	Alton College (IB)	Alton	6th	0.29	408	226	733	1.8	2.8	869	451	726	687	34	1.0	14	52	579	875	113
404	353	Churton Ferrers Gram Sch	Brixham	Gram	1.77	535	239	129	2.2	3.0	961	209	276	272	42	1.6	23	59	129	411	-51	415	451	Bay House School	Gosport	Comp	1.71	576	231	135	2.5	3.0	789	834	495	518	31	1.5	15	53	133	440	36
85	92	Colyton Grammar School	Colyton	Gram	3.71	698	256	101	2.7	3.1	224	2	15	21	68	2.4	49	48	101	96	7	519	388	Rendcomb College	Cirencester	Ind	1.26	551	224	33	2.5	3.2	802	757	468	426	33	1.6	24	46	33	423	-131
432	384	Devonport High Sch for Boys	Plymouth	Gram	1.63	592	226	121	2.6	3.2	1003	131	406	377	26	1.5	18	0	120	456	-48	734	274	Churcher's College	Petersfield	Ind	0.12	417	220	92	1.9	2.9	918	313	694	800	31	1.1	11	51	92	851	-38
340	420	Devonport High Sch for Girls	Plymouth	Gram	2.04	603	234	103	2.6	3.1	942	256	353	350	40	1.6	29	100	103	399	80	652	750	Fordgate School & 6th F'm Cen	Fordingbridge	Comp	0.12	417	220	92	1.9	2.9	918	313	694	800	31	1.1	11	51	92	851	-38
153	111	Exeter School	Exeter	Ind	3.12	671	247	98	2.7	3.2	911	334	217	147	53	2.2	39	31	98	171	-43	519	274	Churcher's College	Petersfield	Ind	3.12	666	248	70	2.7	3.1	985	170	139	250	56	2.2	44	36	70	155	121
454	578	Grenville College	Bideford	Ind	1.53	536	233	33	2.3	2.4	711	1238	718	865	38	1.5	24	58	33	453	124	675	550	Farnborough Hill	Farnborough	Ind	3.94	720	258	24	2.8	3.2	938	265	99	503	73	2.5	54	31	113	80	47
902	915	Ivybridge Community College	Ivybridge	Comp	0.22	453	217	192	2.1	2.8	854	495	774	680	24	1.0	11	51	185	977		68	115	King Edward VI School	Southampton	Ind	3.91	705	260	113	2.7	3.1	920	308	62	134	76	2.5	54	31	113	80	47
748	931	Kelly College	Tavistock	Ind	0.57	393	235	40	1.7	2.9	756	998	475	773	34	1.2	12	28	40	677	183	277	400	Lord Wandsworth College	Hook	Ind	1.90	563	237	48	2.4	3.1	813	702	418	448	40	1.6	31	45	429	23	23
734	956	Kingsbridge Community Col	Kingsbridge	Comp	0.60	435	228	107	1.9	2.7	729	1142	644	802	31	1.2	13	61	105	668	222	519	635	Oaklands Catholic School	Waterloo	Comp	2.48	549	225	78	2.4	2.8	726	1159	829	829	27	1.7	50	78	631	121	
114	127	Maynard School	Exeter	Ind	3.43	704	249	52	2.8	3.1	923	78	115	749	27	1.0	10	40	120	966		514	635	Ryde School with Upper Chine	Ryde	Ind	2.64	590	250	52	2.4	3.2	903	349	228</								

## Top 1,000 Schools

# Top 1,000 Schools

FT Rank 07		FT Rank 06		School		Town	School type	Core A levels												Core A levels												Core A levels											
								Points/A level candidate (core exams)			Points/core A level entry			Number of candidates (All exams)			All Exams			Core A lvl Grds			Points/A level candidate (core exams)			Points/core A level entry			Number of candidates (All exams)			All Exams			Core A lvl Grds								
								Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (all exams)	Points/candidate (all exams)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	Pupils taking A level only	Gov/DCSF rank (Points/cand)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	Pupils taking A level only	Gov/DCSF rank (Points/cand)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	Pupils taking A level only									
128	82	Eltham College	Mottingham	Ind	3.36	653	256	110	2.6	3.1	908	341	116	87	65	2.3	44	27	110	122	-46	748	506	Abbey College	Manchester	Ind	0.57	539	211	52	2.6	2.9	695	1333	764	22	1.2	15	40	52	624	-242	
519	578	Emanuel School	Wandsworth	Ind	1.26	528	228	73	2.3	3.0	779	874	441	559	28	1.5	16	21	73	482	59	222	236	Altrincham Gram Sch for Boys	Bowdon	Gram	2.78	652	243	131	2.7	3.2	1080	52	205	189	57	2.1	41	0	131	215	14
856	603	Farringtons School	Chislehurst	Ind	0.33	372	233	25	1.6	2.6	703	1291		721	38	0.9	12	100	25	1019	-253	110	124	Altrincham Gram Sch for Girls	Bowdon	Gram	3.46	703	250	140	2.8	3.2	1101	39	134	113	58	2.3	42	100	140	123	14
686	517	Graveney School	Tooting	Comp	0.72	512	219	279	2.3	3.0	734	1114	865	742	28	1.2	15	50	278	681	-169	969	853	Aquinas College	Stockport	6th	0.07	420	219	776	1.9	2.7	852	507	976	23	0.9	11	48	753	995	-116	
543	642	Haberdashers' Aske's H'Am Col	New Cross	Other	1.17	524	227	137	2.3	2.9	748	1046	508	579	29	1.3	15	52	136	559	99	617	446	Audenshaw School	Audenshaw	Comp	0.92	515	223	99	2.3	3.0	943	251	634	520	2.8	1.3	18	44	99	585	-171
93	99	Hampton School	Hampton	Ind	3.61	719	251	160	2.9	3.4	1196	8	31	36	56	2.4	41	0	160	92	6	724	661	Blue Coat CofE School	Oldham	Comp	0.62	468	223	124	2.1	2.8	899	362	823	629	26	1.1	15	61	123	827	-63
377		Harrowian School	Richmond	Ind	1.90	535	242	42	2.2	3.0	779	873	486	47	16	21	50	42	415		142	110	Bolton School Boys' Division	Bolton	Ind	3.24	677	249	106	2.7	3.1	992	147	146	141	59	2.1	48	0	106	181	-32	
799	984	Holy Cross School	New Malden	Other	0.45	464	220	84	2.1	2.5	670	1473		26	1.0	11	100	76	867	185	128	161	Bolton School Girls' Division	Bolton	Ind	3.36	660	254	104	2.6	3.1	1055	72	58	132	2.3	44	100	104	130	33		
429		Ibsstock Place School	Roehampton	Ind	1.64	516	239	25	2.2	2.9	807	731	379	39	1.5	16	40	25	449		487	178	Bury Grammar School (Boys)	Bury	Ind	1.39	591	221	59	2.7	3.1	869	453	667	304	27	1.3	22	0	59	583	-309	
10	11	James Allen's Girls' School	Dulwich	Ind	5.20	865	263	106	3.3	3.6	1144	17	11	51	81	3.2	75	100	105	10	1	116	84	Bury Grammar School (Girls)	Bury	Ind	3.42	716	247	74	2.9	3.2	996	143	173	90	50	2.3	42	100	74	126	-32
950		John Fisher School	Purley	Comp	0.10	419	220	92	1.9	2.9	752	1015	847	966	20	0	9	75	1096		610	638	Canon Slade CofE School	Bolton	Comp	0.94	479	229	177	2.1	2.9	960	211	558	711	31	1.2	16	55	177	646	28	
195	56	King's College School (IB)	Wimbledon	Ind	2.91	665	243	155	2.8	3.1	1075	55	195	73	47	2.2	34	0	44	158	-139	149	190	Cheadle Hulme School	Cheadle	Ind	3.18	667	249	111	2.7	3.1	1066	65	184	228	54	2.2	38	47	111	150	41
93	205	Kingston Grammar School	Kingston	Ind	3.61	718	251	89	2.9	3.1	918	314	121	212	58	2.5	48	48	89	112		254	242	Chethams School of Music	Manchester	Ind	2.61	595	248	45	2.4	3.0	760	979	251	275	56	2.0	29	44	45	255	-12
49	44	Lady Eleanor Holles Sch	Hampton	Ind	4.18	754	258	78	2.9	3.1	1141	19	18	17	70	2.7	62	100	78	43	-5	541	761	Crompton House CofE Sch	Oldham	Comp	1.18	496	232	136	2.1	2.9	888	388	646	823	40	1.4	19	52	134	544	220
848	883	Langley Park School for Boys	Beckenham	Comp	0.34	393	229	224	1.7	2.8	776	890	892	27	1.0	9	33	224	879	35	642	642	Holy Cross College	Bury	6th	0.85	478	227	717	2.1	2.9	965	203	536	564	30	1.2	14	56	716	663	0	
822	765	Langley Park School for Girls	Beckenham	Comp	0.40	436	224	187	1.9	2.6	779	671	799	52	24	11	12	81	179	816	-57	312	461	Hulme Grammar Sch for Girls	Oldham	Ind	2.23	574	234	41	2.4	3.0	1015	112	313	447	52	1.8	32	100	41	325	149
81	77	Newstead Wood Sch for Girls	Orpington	Gram	3.80	740	252	153	2.9	3.3	984	171	83	83	57	2.5	45	100	153	74	-4	577	507	Hulme Grammar Sch, Boys	Oldham	Ind	1.05	522	225	74	2.3	3.0	930	279	562	597	34	1.4	22	0	74	490	-70
160	190	Nonsuch High School for Girls	Cheam	Gram	3.11	671	247	155	2.7	3.1	1089	48	140	136	50	2.2	34	100	155	145	30	324	608	King David High School	Manchester	Comp	2.18	554	245	100	2.3	2.7	797	782	407	407	49	1.7	21	60	87	337	284
131	94	Old Palace Sch of John Whitgift	Croydon	Ind	3.34	704	247	60	2.8	3.2	929	285	198	196	52	2.3	35	100	60	117	-37	444	230	Corlo Primary School	Altrincham	Gram	1.57	567	229	107	2.5	3.0	831	605	640	315	34	1.4	21	100	107	493	-214
487	517	Prendergast School	Lewisham	Comp	1.39	550	228	58	2.4	3.0	766	939	517	586	29	1.4	16	100	55	494	30	11	3	Manchester Grammar Sch	Manchester	Ind	5.11	889	257	194	3.5	3.5	965	200	46	32	71	3.2	70	0	194	9	-8
47	84	Putney High School	Putney	Ind	4.23	741	261	61	2.8	3.2	988	161	35	86	78	2.7	59	100	61	53	37	42	47	Manchester High Sch for Girls	Manchester	Ind	4.30	746	262	94	2.9	3.2	1044	81	47	43	77	2.7	61	100	94	42	5
642	541	Royal Russell School	Croydon	Ind	1.48	551	229	62	2.4	3.5	845	537	440	466	34	1.5	18	42	62	443	79	772	675	Parry Wood High School	East Didsbury	Comp	0.52	485	218	200	2.2	2.7	723	1180	960	25	1.2	55	191	797	-97		
681	601	S Dunstan's College (IB)	Catford	Ind	0.74	463	227	60	2.1	3.0	780	867	491	29	1.1	9	35</td																										

## Top 1,000 Schools

## Top 1,000 Schools

FT Rank 07	FT Rank 06	School	Town	School type	Core A levels										All Exams										Core A lvl Grds										All Exams									
					FT score	Points/A level candidate (core exams)	Points/core A level entry	Number of candidates (All exams)	Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (All exams)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	Pupils taking A level only	AB rank	Up/Down	FT score	Points/A level candidate (core exams)	Points/core A level entry	Number of candidates (All exams)	Core A level entries/candidate	All A level entries/candidate	Points/candidate (All exams)	Rank 07 - FT method (all exams)	Rank 06 - FT method (all exams)	% A grade/entry (core subjects)	No AB/candidate (core subjects)	% cands at least AAB (core subjects)	% girls (A level candidates)	Pupils taking A level only	AB rank	Up/Down								
212	420	Notre Dame Senior School	Cobham	Ind	<b>2.81</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>208</b>		173	205	Dauntsey's School	Devizes	Ind	<b>3.01</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>32</b>	
510	608	Prior's Field School	Godalming	Ind	<b>1.34</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>98</b>		317	119	Godolphin School	Salisbury	Ind	<b>2.20</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>-198</b>	
380	556	Reeds School	Cobham	Ind	<b>1.88</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>176</b>		514	783	Hardenhuish School	Chippingham	Comp	<b>1.28</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>269</b>
978	Reigate College	Reigate	6th		<b>0.05</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>1163</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>1015</b>		784	745	Malmesbury School	Malmesbury	Comp	<b>0.49</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>856</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>-39</b>		
141	168	Reigate Grammar School	Reigate	Ind	<b>3.25</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>27</b>		91	133	Marlborough College	Marlborough	Ind	<b>3.62</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>42</b>
600	719	Rosebery School	Epsom	Comp	<b>0.97</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>119</b>		974	653	Sheldon School	Chippingham	Comp	<b>0.06</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>-321</b>	
25	18	Royal Grammar School	Guildford	Ind	<b>4.72</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>173</b>		296	290	South Wilts Gram Sch for Girls	Salisbury	Gram	<b>2.33</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>-6</b>	
205	157	Sir William Perkins's School	Chertsey	Ind	<b>2.84</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>-48</b>		647	832	St Augustine's Cath Col	Trowbridge	Comp	<b>0.84</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>185</b>
716	868	St Bede's School	Redhill	Comp	<b>0.63</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>152</b>		788	603	St John's Sch & Comm Col	Marlborough	Comp	<b>0.48</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>975</b>		<b>672</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>-185</b>
43	36	St Catherine's School	Guildford	Ind	<b>4.28</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>-7</b>		848	615	St Laurence School	Bradford-on-Av	Comp	<b>0.34</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>1560</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>-233</b>	
172	345	St George's College Weybridge	Addlestone	Ind	<b>3.02</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>173</b>		621	321	Stonar School	Melksham	Ind	<b>0.91</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>1098</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>-239</b>	
684	912	St John The Baptist Cath Comp	Woking	Comp	<b>0.73</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>975</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>228</b>		626	661	Warminster Kingdown	Warminster	Comp	<b>0.10</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>35</b>
385	279	St John's School	Leatherhead	Ind	<b>1.87</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>-106</b>		626	586	Wootton Bassett School	Swindon	Comp	<b>1.22</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>87&lt;/</b>													

## Top 1,000 Schools

# The hard truth about 'soft options'

### NEWER SUBJECTS

**Huw Richards** on the debate about the relative value of different A-levels

If the most predictable event of the academic year, in both timing and content, is the annual punch-up over alleged grade inflation that follows the issue of examination results in August, then the running debate over whether one A-level is worth as much as another is not far behind.

Critics focus on such comparative newcomers as media studies and psychology, suggesting that they are soft options without the rigour of more traditional subjects such as maths and chemistry. However, the underlying assumption that all A-levels should be of equivalent value is, says Tim Oates,

director of research for Cambridge Assessment, "completely mystifying to people in many other countries. Australia, for instance, does not pretend that their equivalent exams are all equal." Cambridge Assessment is the university department that oversees OCR, one of the three main English examining boards.

Moving beyond conventional assumptions to serious analysis is tough. As Isabel Nesbit, director of regulation at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and designated head of the new regulatory body Ofqual, says: "It is extremely hard to find a way to compare dance with mathematics."

One crude measure is grade and pass rates. These are strikingly counter-intuitive. Among the alleged "soft options" 45.2 per cent of students taking A-level media, film or TV studies in 2007 were awarded A or B grades. For psychology the figure was 42.2 per cent, in sports studies and PE 36.8 per cent.

Against that, 56.6 per cent of A-level chemistry candidates were in the two top grades, 65.1 per cent in maths and 77.1 per cent, including 56.8 per cent with As in the famously demanding further maths.

So are subjects such as media studies really the soft options? The answer is no. As Cambridge Assessment points out: "A-levels are self-selecting and results reflect the quality of candidates. Nobody takes further maths unless they are very good at maths."

This raises the question of why such choices are made. A Cambridge Assessment survey of more than 6,000 students last year suggested that talk of soft options is making little impact on choices. Only 17.7 per cent gave "I thought it would be an easy subject" as a reason for their options, compared to scores around 80 per cent for "I thought it would be an interesting subject", "I thought this subject would be useful for my future career" and "I thought I would enjoy this subject".

Both Mr Oates and Pam Tatlow, chief executive of the Million+ thinktank supported by former polytechnics and other universities, favour students following their enthusiasms. Ms Tatlow says: "If a wider choice of subjects gives people the chance to study what interests them, they are far likelier to progress in the system."

The minority who choose "easy" subjects may be disappointed. Last month's QCA "Inter-subject comparability studies" report suggests that the soft option is largely a myth. It found, for instance, "no clear evidence of significant differences in demand" between English, history and media studies.

The report also found that, while biology demanded better recall than psychology or sociology, psychology's technical demands and sociology's requirement for judgments to be contextu-

alised in theory were also extremely challenging. The one significant difference was between the established disciplines of history and geography rather than any newer subject.

Those taking newer subjects may find it a struggle to get into some prestigious universities. Cambridge does not, as has sometimes been reported, operate a "blacklist" of subjects, including media studies and sport studies, that it does not recognise. It does, though, warn that any candidate taking more than one may be handicapped against those with more traditional choices.

The Russell Group, representing universities usually found at the upper end of league tables, has expressed consistent concern about the decline in state school pupils taking modern language, maths and single science A-levels.

Wendy Piatt, its director-general, emphasises: "We don't find it helpful to talk about 'soft' versus 'hard' subjects," but worries that

Overall grade and pass rates, one crude measure, are strikingly counter-intuitive

"some students may be closing off some options by taking subjects...which just won't equip them adequately for certain courses. For example, most engineering courses want maths, and often further maths as well as physics. If you haven't taken one of these subjects, you put yourself at a disadvantage in competing for a place, particularly at a Russell Group university."

Toughest of all, it would seem, is making your choices at 16. As one school pupil well remembered by Ms Nesbit said: "How can I decide what subjects to choose, when I don't yet know what sort of job I'll want to do?"

Isabel Nesbit  
of the  
QCA



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