

THE SUNDAY TIMES SCHOOLS GUIDE

Your guide to the top

THE TOP 100 INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Ranking based on 2013 examination results with A*-B grades at A-Level double weighted.

2013	2012	A-level %A*-B GCSE %A*/A	2013	2012	A-level %A*-B GCSE %A*/A			
1	1	98.3	98.5	51	47	Abingdon School	90.4	84.0
2	6	98.1	97.9	52	54	Bancroft's School, Woodford Green	89.4	85.8
3	7	98.3	96.5	53	49	St Catherine's, Bramley, Guildford	90.8	82.8
4	10	99.1	94.8	54	60	Dulwich College, London	90.5	82.5
5	4	97.2	97.9	55	40	Highgate School, London	88.2	86.6
6	9	97.4	96.0	56	64	Trinity School, Croydon	88.7	85.0
7	2	97.6	95.0	57	37	Radley College, Abingdon	87.9	86.5
8	5	98.4	93.5	58	68	Oundle School, Peterborough	87.6	85.9
9	23	97.7	94.3	59	52	The Grange School, Northwich	85.5	89.1
10	11	97.8	93.9	60	74	Loughborough High School	90.6	77.0
11	13	97.5	94.1	61	89	Eltham High School, London	93.7	74.0
12	3	97.0	95.9	62	52	Norwich School	87.9	81.1
13	16	96.3	95.4	63	55	Royal Grammar School, Newcastle upon Tyne	87.2	81.9
14	8	95.8	94.5	64	72	Sir William Perkins's School, Chertsey	89.3	77.0
15	24	96.3	93.2	65	99	Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks	87.4	80.5
16	17	96.0	93.7	66	62	Francis Holland School, Regent's Park, London	88.7	80.0
17	14	95.0	95.2	67	80	King's High School, Warwick	87.8	78.7
18	28	96.0	92.4	68	70	Wimbledon High School GDST, London	83.3	87.1
19	14	93.5	95.7	69	63	Caterham School	88.0	77.6
20	12	97.8	85.8	70	50	Nottingham Girls' High School GDST	88.9	73.4
21	48	93.2	94.8	71	36	King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham	81.7	87.8
22	33	94.3	92.1	72	84	Canford School, Wimborne	86.2	78.2
23	44	95.6	88.3	73	64	Tormead School, Guildford	86.2	75.4
24	25	94.6	90.2	74	61	Kingston Grammar School	86.1	78.9
25	26	93.9	91.5	75	62	Nottingham High School	88.6	71.5
26	31	95.1	89.1	76	95	King Edward's School, Bath	84.3	80.0
27	31	94.2	90.4	77	119	The King's School, Chester	88.7	71.1
28	27	93.2	91.3	78	-	Winchester College	79.8	88.4
29	30	93.9	89.5	79	83	St John's College, Cardiff	93.1	61.9
30	43	93.6	89.7	81	110	Exeter School	93.6	80.3
31	18	92.3	92.1	82	47	Newington School, Oxford	94.8	78.1
32	38	94.9	86.5	83	51	City of London Freeman's School, Axtel	83.7	78.9
33	20	93.3	89.2	84	58	Whitgift School, South Croydon	88.2	72.6
34	67	94.0	87.0	85	89	Stockport Grammar School	86.7	71.5
35	41	91.5	91.9	86	85	Downe House School, Thatcham	79.0	86.6
36	57	95.0	84.7	87	158	Norwich High School GDST	88.8	68.9
37	21	94.8	84.3	88	144	Itzbock Place School, Roehampton	94.3	75.8
38	19	93.9	85.5	89	179	Queen Ethelburga's College, York	87.6	68.6
39	34	94.2	82.2	90	101	Howell's School, Llandaff GDST, Cardiff	84.7	73.1
40	35	93.9	82.0	91	260	Birkenhead School, Wirral	84.6	74.8
41	45	95.4	78.0	92	98	The Maynard School, Exeter	85.7	71.8
42	28	87.6	94.0	93	79	Warwick School	83.9	75.2
43	21	89.9	89.0	94	170	Godolphin School, Salisbury	83.6	75.1
44	46	94.8	77.5	95	207	Ashford School	84.0	74.3
45	59	92.1	82.0	96	120	Wakefield Girls' High School	82.9	78.4
46	71	88.3	89.4	97	134	The Red Maids' School, Bristol	88.2	69.7
47	69	89.5	87.0	98	188	Streatham and Clapham High School	89.3	63.3
48	39	82.7	80.2	99	125	GDST, London	89.3	63.3
49	75	80.6	86.1	100	115	Bromley High School GDST, London	84.0	73.4
50	73	89.4	86.5	101	81	King Edward VI School, Southampton	87.5	66.0

THE TOP 100 PREP SCHOOLS

Ranking based on proportion of children passing English and maths Sats at key stage 2, level 5, aggregated between 2010 and 2012

2013	2012	KS2, level 5 aggregate (2010-12)	2013	2012	KS2, level 5 aggregate (2010-12)	
1	1	590	81	38	St Teresa's Catholic School, Princes Risborough	410
2	6	576	82	46	Newstead High School for Girls, Junior GDST	404
3	2	573	54	51	The Duff Preparatory School, Stratford-upon-Avon	404
4	5	553	55	66	Waverley School, Wokingham	400
5	4	552	56	67	Eton End School, Datchet	399
6	7	545	57	42	Capthill Independent Day School, Stamford	398
7	8	535	58	47	Brentwood Preparatory School	396
8	16	522	59	49	Prospect House School, London	394
9	11	518	60	39	St Michael's School, Leigh-on-Sea	390
10	22	513	61	60	Yarella Preparatory School, Poole	389
11	10	509	62	-	Dalgin School, Buckhurst Hill	387
12	12	501	62	-	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn, Junior School	387
13	19	498	64	-	Woodford Green Preparatory School, London	383
14	25	495	65	81	The Park School, Bournemouth	381
15	20	491	66	64	Staines Preparatory School	379
16	40	490	67	58	Stratford Preparatory School, Stratford-upon-Avon	378
17	12	489	67	56	Crown House Preparatory School, High Wycombe	378
18	14	487	68	54	Beechwood Park School, St Albans	377
19	28	484	69	62	Gides Park College, Romford	377
20	18	483	71	57	Sutton High School, Junior School GDST	377
21	10	483	72	-	St Peter and St Paul Independent School, Chesterfield	366
22	9	481	73	-	Lady Lane Park School, Binley	362
23	17	481	74	71	Kent College Preparatory School, Pembury	362
24	21	478	74	59	The Red Maids' Junior School, Bristol	361
25	31	478	74	68	Badminton Junior School, Bristol	361
26	26	472	77	74	Heywood Prep School, Corsham	356
27	14	469	78	75	Chetham's School of Music, Manchester	355
28	27	469	79	-	Salterford House Preparatory School, Nottingham	353
29	30	466	80	78	St Winifred's RC Independent School, Shrewsbury	350
30	52	459	81	90	King's Rochester Preparatory School	347
31	23	453	82	70	Faringdon Preparatory School, Harsham	345
32	24	452	82	97	The Peterborough School Preparatory School	345
33	32	452	82	-	Bootham Junior School, York	345
34	33	451	82	80	Broadwater Manor School, Worthing	345
35	68	450	86	-	Gateway School, Great Missenden	344
36	50	447	86	83	Eversfield Preparatory School, Southill	344
37	29	446	86	83	Gatehouse School, London	344
38	-	444	88	72	St Joseph's College Preparatory School, Reading	342
39	34	444	89	54	St Plux X Preparatory School, Preston	342
40	65	442	91	-	Westholm School, Blackburn, Junior Schools	336
41	37	441	91	-	Braneside School, Junior School, Buckhurst Hill	336
42	-	440	93	76	Shippers Hill Manor Preparatory School, Mayfield	328
43	26	437	94	94	Wells Cathedral, Junior School	322
44	35	436	95	72	Mylnhurst Preparatory School, Sheffield	319



Welcome to a state of

Two very different London secondaries with a mutual ethos of helping pupils to learn from failure win School of the Year, write Judith O'Reilly and Sue Leonard

Keep the faith" is wise advice as far as St Michael's RC Grammar School goes — it is that faith which makes the school a success story.

"The fact we share the same faith is a unifying factor," says headmaster, Julian Ward. "We have a community that is cohesive, and when you have such a cohesive community, it is easy to share common values such as the need for excellent behaviour and the importance of a good work ethic."

St Michael's (whose trustees are a small German order, the Sisters of the Poor Christ Jesus) doesn't stand alone: it is one of four Catholic schools across our categories to achieve Sunday Times School of the Year.

It is certainly an impressive record and getting better all the time. The North Finchley girl's school (which since 2009 has admitted boys to its sixth form) has been consistently in the top 20 for years. This year it made it into the top 10 with its best-ever A-level results at 92% of entries achieving A* to B grades. Success at GCSE is also impressive with 87.2% of entries at A* and A grade.

Ward has been at the school since 1988, first as assistant head, then deputy head between 1990 and 2008, associate head between 2008 and 2012, then taking over as headmaster in September last year. Whatever the exam figures, he argues that something is wrong in the GCSE and A-level marking system in subjects which include English and history.

"Every three or four years we are unhappy with either GCSE or A-level marking in English,"

completely unreliable and that is a national disgrace. So much rides on these grades now that it is just not good enough."

Ward believes the fault lies in the sheer scale of marking required and the inexperience of markers. He argues marking is paid too poorly to attract older, more experienced teachers. "The real problem is that they are unable to find enough high-quality markers."

St Michael's is unusual among selective schools for its urban intake. It also has a higher than usual ethnic mix. Only 35% of the 750 pupils currently on its books (220 of them in the sixth form) come from within the borough of Barnet.

"The only thing we say is that parents have to make a judgment as to committing to and from school." Distance from school is no excuse for missing after-school activities in winter. And parents remain keen — one driving their child in from Ilford in east London — a journey which takes about 45-50 minutes in the car and 1½ to two hours on public transport.

Because of the faith element, applications are lower than they might otherwise be — all things being relative, of course. The school has a year 7 intake of 96 with just over four applications for every place compared with some grammar schools where applications can be as many as 10 or 11 for every place. Numbers are reduced by the requirement that candidates must have been baptised Catholic, taken their first communion, and attend mass with a letter from a parish priest to prove it.

Because Barnet is not a selective borough, the school sets its own 11-plus with tests in verbal reasoning, non-verbal

providing they agree to support the Catholic ethos of the school.

The most recent Ofsted report (from 2008) judged the school to be "outstanding". Inspectors praised the "excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations" of teachers.

Although there are 40 boys in the sixth form, teaching in a single-sex environment further down the school allows the girls to develop confidence in voicing opinions through techniques such as working in pairs or groups.

Ward says: "Even when boys have nothing to say they will be opening their mouths dominating the conversation because they think their contribution matters, while the girls can be frightened of being wrong. We encourage them to be assertive and not to be afraid of failure."

Ward's next target is to increase the number of leavers getting to Oxbridge. This year six pupils won places, but usually it is just three. A school of this calibre would generally hope for at least 10.

Ward ascribes the relatively low numbers to an Oxbridge presumption that, because the school is selective, its children are from privileged backgrounds — which is not the case. In point of fact the other problem with Oxbridge numbers is persuading pupils who may not be from families with high educational aspirations to have the self-confidence to apply.

Two years ago St Michael's introduced what Ward describes as a "gamechanger" in its shift to making pupils more independent learners, stretching their thinking and resilience.

In particular, the school adopted ideas by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck. "She talks about how different mindsets affect us all. The problem is most of us have a fixed mindset and what you want is a growth mindset. You start out not fearing anything and able to try things. But as you go through school you get more inhibitions and things get harder."

Ward explains: "A fixed mindset says: 'I used to be good at maths, now I am finding it hard — that must be because I am no