

Would you choose a school by its uniform?



What you wear at school is as important as what you learn, says Katrina Schollenberger

rom boaters to blazers, parents are ever keen for their children to look smart and professional. But how much influence does a uniform have over the choice of a school?

The purpose of a uniform is to provide order and certainty among students, but some fashion-conscious pupils flout the rules by altering the length and style. At the start of the current school term, 56 pupils were sent home from Djanogly City Academy in Nottingham for wearing the wrong shoes.

Rose Hardy, headmistress at St Margaret's School in Bushey, Hertfordshire, has been criticised for introducing a new set of dress rules for sixth-form pupils this year. The girls are permitted to wear what they like,

but must abide by St Margaret's standards. Therefore, skirts cannot be short, shirts or blouses must be worn with collars, and flip-flops and trainers are strictly off the curriculum. By introducing the rules, girls will be less distracted and look more professional, claims Hardy.

Boys, it seems, are easier to police. 'I spent 10 years working in an all-boys' environment,' says Hardy, 'and uniform wasn't an issue beyond getting them to tuck in their shirts and fix their ties.'

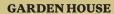
The uniform issue is a hot debate. Some parents say they diminish a child's individuality and development of personality; others argue it teaches children the importance of dressing smartly in formal situations. It's undeniable, however, that uniform reflects what a school is all about.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Uniform introduced in: 1552

Alumni: Thomas Barnes, William Camden, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Style: The distinctive uniform is the oldest in the country, virtually unchanged in over 460 years: long navy blue coat, white band at the neck, bright yellow socks. Girls wear a pleated skirt under the coat; boys wear breeches. The buttons on the coat depict the founder of the school, King Edward VI. Despite the uniform's old-fashioned look, students are proud to wear it.



Uniform introduced in: 1951

Alumni: Lady Margarita Armstrong-Jones Style: A co-educational day school in Chelsea, considered one of the most prestigious in London, Garden House boys and girls share facilities but are taught separately. Uniforms are in tones of blue, grey and white. Girls wear blue overcoats, grey scarves and blue berets, while boys wear blue blazers and grey ties.





OUNDLE

Uniform introduced in: Early 1900s Alumni: Richard Dawkins, Sir Peter Scott, Cecil Lewis, Charles Wintour **Style:** A leading independent co-educational boarding and day school, Oundle is located in Northamptonshire. The uniform for girls includes a navy blazer, white collared shirt and long, fetching pinstriped culottes. The girls say that the longer the culottes are, the more fashionable.

HARROW SCHOOL

Uniform introduced in: 1615

Alumni: Winston Churchill, Lord Byron, Julian Metcalfe, Terence Rattigan **Style:** Harrow, an all-boys school in northwest London, is famed for the boater hats. Varnished straw is secured with a dark blue band. Despite having two uniforms, everyday dress for boys is smart, including a white shirt, black silk tie, black shoes and light grey trousers. A photo of two Harrovians in Sunday dress overlooked by three working-class boys made the News Chronicle (now Daily Mail) back in 1937, becoming a popular national symbol for class divide.



ETON COLLEGE

Uniform introduced in: 1784
Alumni: Prince William, David Cameron,
Tom Hiddleston, Eddie Redmayne
Style: If you didn't know better, you'd
think Etonian boys were off to perform a
piano concerto at the Proms. Eton College
is located in Berkshire, near Windsor, and
was founded in 1440 by King Henry VI. The
dapper uniform of the school includes
black tailcoat jackets, paired with
buttoned waistcoat vests, a white-collared
shirt with a white bow tie and pinstriped
trousers. It's an exceptionally interesting
outfit, so far worn by 19 British prime
ministers during their time at the school.





HILL HOUSE

Uniform introduced in: 1951 Alumni: Lily Allen, Prince Charles, Yasmine Naghdi Style: Pupils are always on the move around the Sloane Square, Knightsbridge and Chelsea areas of London. They are distinctive for burgundy knickerbockers, round-neck mustard jumpers and grey knee socks. The uniform is designed to move from classroom to sport field without changing. Founder Lieutenant colonel Stuart Townend's wife once said, 'A grey uniform produces grey minds'.



LANCING COLLEGE

Uniform introduced in: 1848 Alumni: Sir Michael Darrington, Sir Roy Calne, Tom Sharpe **Style:** The school is based in the countryside of West Sussex, near the village of Lancing. Nowadays, the thriving school is co-educational. Girls wear kneelength blue tartan skirts, a blue jumper and navy-andwhite striped ties. It was founded originally by Reverend Nathaniel Woodward, whose sole purpose was to give back to the village, as it was rife with poverty in the 1800s.



Uniform introduced in: 1885
Alumni: Dame Margaret Cole, Alison
Adburgham, Verity Lambert OBE
Style: The modern uniform includes a long
blue pinafore, to be worn with socks or
tights, and a navy blue jumper over the
top. The pinafore was modelled around
the dress of North African tribesmen,
known as a djibbah, designed by one of the
three sisters who founded the school.



CHELTENHAM LADIES' COLLEGE

Uniform introduced in: The 1950s

Alumni: Kristin Scott Thomas, Helen Rosa Wright, Beatrice Harraden, Talulah Riley

Style: The Cheltenham Ladies' College girls mix greens, navy blues, light blues and blacks. Girls say they live in their jumpers 'every day, no matter what season', dyed in a dark green to symbolise the college. For generations, even green knickers were an essential part of the uniform.





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It's a question that parents ask all the time. The answer, as Vanessa Berridge reveals, differs for everyone but the benefits are plain to see

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'You are buying an international kite mark,' says Alice Phillips, headmistress of **St Catherine's, Bramley**.

People aspire to this kind of education all around the world. You are also buying continuity, tradition and steadiness. There's also breadth and depth of opportunity in extra-curricular activities which are not affordable in the maintained sector.

'The structure of boarding schools, and even independent day schools, means that the days are longer, which requires a greater sense of dedication on the part of the teachers,' say Paul Kelly, head of school and university placement at educational consult- ▷





Team players:
Boys and girls
come together on
the rugby and
hockey fields at
Moor Park
Above: The
serene setting of
Malvern St James
in Worcestershire





ants **Gabbitas**. 'Modern languages and sciences are flourishing in the independent sector and close bonds formed between pupils at boarding schools can lead to a wonderful support network later in life.'

'Independent schools have the autonomy to provide a whole school curriculum which fits the children they are educating rather than having to abide by the national curriculum,'

says Rose Hardy, headmistress of **St Margaret's School**, Hertfordshire. 'And our staffing ratio means that girls really are known as individuals. It is impossible to fall through the cracks here.'

'Our Christian-based ethos runs through everything,' says Jonathan Bartlett formerly head of **Moor Park School**, Shropshire. He starts this coming term as headmaster of St Andrew's Pangbourne. 'Moor Park is a very kind school, with an emphasis on thinking of others, and on good manners. There are opportunities to shine and be valued outside the classroom. Even if pupils are less strong academically, they have time to grow in confidence in other areas.'

'Parents choosing an independent school can select the school which best suits their child rather than having to settle for the one-size-fits-all maintained school locally,' says Charlie Minogue, formerly of all-boys **Aldwickbury**, Hertfordshire, and newly appointed headmaster of co-ed Moor Park. 'Aldwickbury was set up for boys, so I shall beat a different drum at Moor Park. I'm just glad that parents have a choice.'

'We offer a beautiful location in idyllic countryside, small class sizes and excellent facilities,' says David

'Our girls really are known as individuals, it's impossible to fall through the cracks here'

Sibson, headmaster of **St Francis School**, Pewsey. 'We also aim to make our children good citizens, giving them opportunities for debates and school committees. Our farm was an initiative driven by the pupils who wanted the school to be more self-sufficient. I know every child and speak to each one most days.'

'Choir boys are involved in achieving something greater than themselves,' says Richard Murray, headmaster of **Christ Church Cathedral School**, Oxford. 'They are part of a long tradition, and are in group where the choristers are the equal of adults.

Our choristers learn in depth about our heritage, and come to understand the rhythm and vocabulary of poetry. Only the choristers board, but that gives the school a family feel.

'The cathedral pays 60 percent of the choristers' fees and they will invariably go on to get a music scholarship at their senior schools. Becoming a chorister means you can get an independent education at a good price.'

'We say to our girls "who do you want to be?" and help them craft their school experience appropriately,' explains a spokesman for **Malvern St James**. 'The soft skills that employers seek, such as resourcefulness, the ability to problem-solve and

to negotiate as a member of a team, are honed through working and playing together. The girls find their strengths and nurture their talents, and create teams where their skills are complemented and balanced.'

'Manchester High School for Girls is a vibrant, stimulating environment where girls are inspired to aim high,' says a school representative. 'In 2015, 98 percent of all A-level grades attained were in the A* to B range. The International Baccalaureate girls secured an average point score of 38 against the global average of 30.' ■









TURMOIL in the sixth form

Michael Gove's A-level reforms are dividing opinion, reveals Vanessa Berridge

levels have been under pressure for years. The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a longestablished competitor, but recently the appearance of the Cambridge Pre-U seemed to offer the linearity and depth that A levels were believed no longer to do. So the A* grade was introduced at A level to sort out the excellent from the good. Now, starting this term, we have the Govereformed A levels. These will be phased in over several years, with AS therefore remaining in some subjects but disappearing in others. Confused? I know I am. So, too, are many schools.

Alice Phillips, headmistress of the academically high-achieving St Catherine's, Bramley, is trenchant. 'A-level reforms are a disaster. AS levels gave wings in the first summer of the sixth form to young women. When the current A-level system was introduced in 2000, it produced more breadth without narrowing choices too early. It gave flexibility.'

She believes that the IB leads more naturally into an American liberal arts degree. 'We are going to stick with

A levels, but will continue to examine everyone at AS. Universities like AS as it gives them a realistic guide to a young person's abilities.'

The first tranche of subjects to be reformed include biology, chemistry, economics, English literature and history, followed next year by languages, geography and music. Maths and further maths may not be phased in until 2017 or 2018. At Shiplake College near Henley-on-Thames, pupils will be sitting a combination of reformed and non-reformed subjects. Ian Munro, deputy head, academic, explains that the school has decided that, unlike St Catherine's, Bramley, 'in reformed subjects, we will not offer the AS qualification. We believe our pupils will benefit from spending more time learning and less time being tested.'

Surprisingly, perhaps, neither IB nor Pre-U has gained the popularity that might have been expected. Indeed, anecdotally, there appears to be a slight reverse trend with schools returning to a mixed offer of IB and A levels. King's College School, Wimbledon, the country's top IB school, offered IB alone for just six years. Andrew Halls, headmaster since 2008, elected to return to a mixed economy from 2013. 'It was my hardest decision in 17 years as a head to do a volte-face on IB,' he recalls. 'But the diploma doesn't suit evervone.' Now, in a sixth form of 200, the IB cohort is just 70.

King Edward's School, Witley, a school with many international students, is also phasing in some A levels, and may introduce more, depending on how the new reforms work. 'The IB does help attract overseas pupils,' says headmaster John Attwater. 'But as a UK school, we ought to be able to offer



the national syllabus if it's good enough - and the new linear A levels look as though they will be.'

Martin Reader, headmaster of Cranleigh, wonders whether schools compromise by mixing IB with A levels. 'Are you saying that A levels aren't as good?' he asks. He is, however, very sorry that the reformed A levels didn't look at IB assessment methods. 'The challenging English oral presentation is a good preparation for university seminars.' At Cranleigh, Pre-U has been offered in maths and further maths and also in art.

But Pre-U has failed to take off. with only a few schools, such as Winchester, taking it on wholesale. Paul Kelly, head of school and university placement at educational consultants Gabbitas, sees merit in all three diplomas. 'IB has great attraction for brighter students, as it stretches them and students can perform well across a variety of subjects,' he says. 'But there is nothing to beat maths and further maths at A level.'

In general, schools seem to be remaining with A levels while cherrypicking from IB and Pre-U. At the Mount School in York, students do the



Extended Project Qualification (EPQ, based loosely on the IB's extended essay) and take part in a Global Thinking Programme with echoes of Pre-U's Global Perspectives. Deputy principal Jo Hayward is proud of what has been achieved. 'The highlight of my year is the EPQ presentation,' she says. Research starts in March of Year 12 and encompasses topics as varied as astrophysics, war's contribution to medical advance and Japanese flower structure. 'Students are taught study skills, have to fill in a logbook to monitor their progress and provide a mini essay to explain their thinking.'

The mixture of four A levels and the EPQ provides the IB breadth but also specialisation, believes Stephen Ward,

head of sixth form at traditional A-level school, Lancing College. The school is introducing Pre-U in photography. 'A-level reform is in a mess, but I won't consider English and history at Pre-U until these reforms have fed through.' Seventy-five per cent of his sixth form take maths, so the fact that

it won't be reformed until at least 2017 concerns Ward.

Headmaster Andrew Fleck likes the breadth of IB but believes it wouldn't work at Sedbergh, a boarding school in Cumbria. 'But we have stolen some great ideas from it. We are teaching a nine-star programme to our 13-year-olds, which is based on the IB theory of knowledge course,' he says. In the coming year, Sedbergh plans to retain AS in all but four subjects. 'The AS is a useful interim target for boys.' Fleck thinks the reforms are going in the right direction, although opportunities have been missed. 'The science

to parents in the catchment area, says Jonathan Mitchell, director of teaching and learning. But the EPQ will be compulsory for sixth-form students from this September, and the school will also offer basic-speaking courses in additional languages such as Portuguese, Russian and Mandarin. 'We consulted with 20 major universities and employers, who want students to show interest and to be proficient communicators in writing and in speech. So we're giving students vivas at the end of the LVI [lower sixth form], and again in the UVI [upper sixth form].'

Dr Kevin Stannard, director of

innovation and learning at the Girls' Day School Trust, suggests that sixth-form study is dictated by specialism at

British universities. But both schools and parents are striving for the Holy Grail of a diploma that will capture breadth beyond A levels.

'That is what all the best schools offer - and schools are right to pick and choose and craft their own diplomas.'■

'We believe pupils will benefit from spending more time learning and less time being tested'

of film could have been introduced into physics to engage pupils and make them aware of employment opportunities. We are still wedded to 20th-century-style academic education which won't engage most children.'

For Forest School in east London, the familiarity of A levels is important







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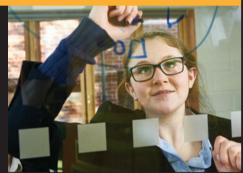


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Mindfulness IN CLASS

Pausing at the start of lessons to relax the mind and attain a 'sense of being' is part of a growing ethos in independent schools, says Vanessa Berridge

n recent years, schools have become acutely aware of the pressures on their pupils. Academic league tables, the advent of social media with its potential for bullying and self-exposure, and the increasingly competitive job market are a toxic combination that has led to an increase in mental problems among young

mental problems among young people. Teachers have had to look how best they can help pupils cope with these challenges.

'Once upon a time we would have been encouraging year 11 to work harder,' says Carol Chandler-Thompson, headmistress of **Blackheath High School**. 'Now we emphasise that they need downtime.'

Schools are responding much more than in the past to the special requirements of every child from their earliest years. Brodie Bibby is head of **North Bridge House Preparatory School**, in north London. 'We're quite a traditional prep school,' he says. 'We believe that rote learning is still of benefit for seven-, eight- and nine-year-olds for times tables and spellings. But children learn in different ways. Some, for instance, are more visual than others. Our teachers bear that

in mind and respond to individual needs. Our marking is interactive, so that the dialogue between teacher and child helps each child develop.'

A current buzz word is 'mindfulness', interpreted by schools in different ways. Claire Kelly is operations director of the Mindfulness in Schools Project, which has developed the '.b'

'We mostly live in the past and future, students need training to live in the present'

(or 'dot-be', meaning 'stop-breath-be'), nine-week course, based on cognitive therapy. It is usually embedded in a school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) or Well-Being Programme, but can also be incorporated into academic teaching.

Students are asked to pause at the beginning of each lesson, and move their attention away from the noise in their heads to thinking about their breathing and the physical sensation of sitting in a chair with their feet on the floor. 'Just this simple exercise helps with calmness and clarity,' says

Kelly. 'In education, mindfulness is about honing attention to use it more effectively. We mostly live in the past and the future; students need training to live in the present. They have to be helped to step back from their thoughts to be able to comment on them.' Previously deputy head at **South Hampstead High School**,

Kelly introduced a mindfulness course there, greeted initially by some staff cynicism. Now, however, there is a trained team teaching the .b course, which, says Kelly, 'gives the girls a toolbox of strategies they can use'.

Mindfulness works with children's instinctive behaviour. 'Children are naturally quite in the moment,' says Dimitra Louskas, headmistress of **St John's Wood** ▷





Pre-Prep School in London. 'If they are engaged, they focus. It is almost built-in and we try to maintain that.'

Mindfulness is linked with the educational philosophy of St James Junior School, west London, which aims to develop the mind, emotions and physical wellbeing of its pupils. 'All these aspects need support for a rounded education,' says headmistress Catherine Thomlinson. 'We teach our pupils that everybody has the same essential nature, but equally we each have individual talents.

of every lesson, we have a prayer often applicable to the subject. And the chapel is always open; a quiet place away from the bustle of the day.'

For some children, kindness and understanding may not be enough to help them achieve their full potential. An extension of the mindfulness concept is Tougher Minds, a programme devised by Jon Finn. It sprang out of his PhD work to find out why some young footballers reach the highest echelons while others, equally talented, fall by the wayside. His proneed detailed strategies - which is what his programme offers. Students are expected to monitor their sleep, diet, exercise and their self-control. 'We encourage pupils to set targets for themselves and to be aware of their behaviour to others. Understanding yourself is the key starting point.'

A measure of the programme's success is its naming as Education Initiative of the Year at the 2014 Independent School Awards. 'Some parents have said it has transformed family life,' claims Finn. ■

'One former pupil spoke of how much she valued those pauses in which arguments were washed away'

We celebrate diversity through unity.'

Part of the school's teaching practice is to have periods of quiet before and after every lesson. 'There is togetherness in that quiet moment. One former pupil told me how much she valued those pauses in which arguments were washed away.'

'Mindfulness is not a term we would use,' says Matthew Burke, headmaster of St Martha's School, Barnet, 'but as a concept, it is part of what we do. As a Catholic school, we offer time for reflection. At the start

gramme has been in operation at Colfe's School in Greenwich for the last two years.

'It is broken down into building confidence; getting emotional control; learning to concentrate and gaining motivation,' explains Finn. 'These four pillars work together. We also need to teach people how they learn so that they can use their particular skills to best advantage.'

Finn believes that it is good that mindfulness is gaining so much ground, but argues that schools also







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MORE THAN A CHARITY

Public schools have a long tradition of giving to the community and helping those most in need, writes Vanessa Berridge

ost major public schools were originally founded to educate poor pupils and schools such as Christ's Hospital, King Edward's School, Witley, and QEH, Bristol, have remained close to those charitable roots. St Thomas's Hospital, Christ's Hospital and Bridewell Royal Hospital (now King Edward's School, Witley) were all founded in the 1550s after the Dissolution of the Monaster-

ies by the Bishop of London to care for the city's poor.

Headmaster John Franklin is proud of what **Christ's** Hospital still achieves 460 years after the school's foundation: nearly 80 per cent of pupils receive financial support, with 14 per cent paying

nothing. 'Our level of bursary support is the highest of any independent school in the country. Each pupil who qualifies for a place is assessed and charged fees according to their family's financial circumstances. This lends the school a unique egalitarian ethos and enables capable children from all backgrounds to live and work together.'

The history of King Edward's School, Witley, has been slightly different. Effectively an orphanage until the beginning of the 20th century, it evolved gradually from a boys' school into a co-educational foundation in the 1950s, when parents first paid fees. There are now 400 pupils, of whom 25 per cent are on special foundations and a proportion are fully funded. The school retains its historic links with City of London livery companies who help with funding. So, too, do several charities, including Buttle UK and the Royal National Children's Foundation.

We have our own criteria for selecting pupils,' explains headmaster John

'Children are fantastic at mixing, especially if you leave them to it and don't make assumptions'

> Attwater. 'Boarding may be needed for children who are dealing with illness in the family, or have lost a parent. There are little pots of scholarships, some provided by individual donors.'

> King Edward's has also worked at being an international school and now has pupils from 43 different countries. 'Children are fantastic at mixing, especially if you leave them to it and don't make assumptions,' says Attwater.

> QEH, Bristol, was founded in 1590 by John Carr, a wealthy Bristol

merchant. He left provision in his will for a school for orphans, an original grant that has been added to by donations down the centuries. 'We have built up a fund of several million pounds from which money is drawn down to support needy boys and for building projects,' explains Andrew Lewis-Barned, development director. QEH was a grant-aided grammar school until the late 1960s, but then chose to become an independent in 1975 rather than a state comprehensive.

> A further crunch came when the Assisted Places Scheme, set up by the Conservatives in 1980, was withdrawn after Labour's election win in 1997. Schools such as QEH and King Edward's Witley had to enter the market to attract more

fee-paying pupils. 'Fee inflation has been higher than standard inflation,' says Lewis-Barned, 'so our endowments have been eaten away. In our 425th year, we are launching a strong initiative to raise funds to replace or enhance endowments.'

Today, QEH supports about 10 per cent of the boys on full bursaries, with other smaller amounts being offered according to need. 'We are academically selective,' says Lewis-Barned, 'but socially comprehensive.' ■





Christ Church Cathedral School

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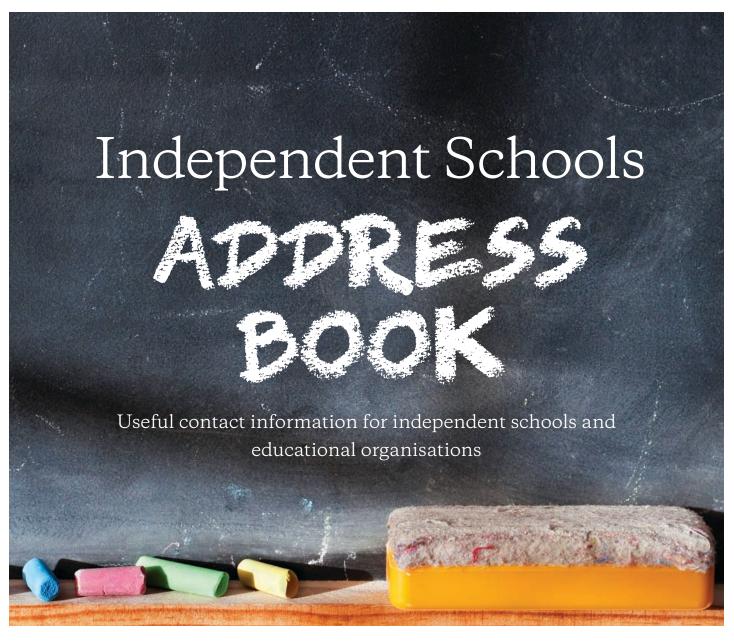


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- ◆ Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC): 01858-469059, www.hmc.org.uk
- ◆ Mindfulness in Schools Project: email, enquiries@mindfulnessinschools. org; www.mindfulnessinschools.org
- ◆ Tougher Minds: www.tougherminds. co.uk