

BEDALES SCHOOL ●●

Church Road, Steep, Petersfield GU32 2DG

Website bedales.org.uk

Head Magnus Bashaarat, MBA, since 2018; previously Head of Milton Abbey **Pupils** 455. **Day:** 78 boys, 65 girls; **boarding:** 130 boys, 173 girls **Ages** 13–18 **Term Fees** **Day:** £9,745; **boarding:** £12,400 **Oxbridge** 4% **Admission** Assessment day, school's own exam and interview **Alumni** Daniel Day-Lewis, the Earl of Snowdon **PREP Head** Colin Baty **Pupils** 223 **day and boarding:** 117 boys, 106 girls **Ages** 8–13 **Term Fees** **Day:** £6,415; **boarding:** £8,520

Arriving at the school, a recent researcher was greeted by a vision that is classic Bedales: students in mixed-year groups were hanging out and chatting; others were steering wheelbarrows; some were holding books and chatting amiably to teachers, who they address by their first names. Bedales is famous for its holistic approach to education and excellence in the arts. Music is at the heart of the school, which has 21 music scholars and a thriving collection of musical ensembles, ranging from a symphony orchestra to a barber shop group. Every year, musical talent is channelled into a three-night Rock Show, which last year raised over £8,000 for the school's bursary charity. Drama is top-notch, and budding artists are encouraged by a thrilling roster of career talks. Students are pushed to strike out on their own and stoke their creativity: one Sixth Form student was encouraged to host his first exhibition, which involved booking a venue, printing work and securing press coverage. A Living With the Land course offers an alternative to A-levels, and teaches students foraging, butchery and sustainable farming. Pupils are so attuned to nature that they have even agreed to have technology-free days to reduce the pressures of modern living. By looking back, Bedales is, as ever, looking forward.

BEDFORD SCHOOL ●

De Parys Avenue, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 2TU

Website bedfordschool.org.uk

Head James Hodgson, BA, since 2014; previously Usher (Senior Deputy Head) of Magdalen College School **Pupils** 703 boys: 489 day, 214 boarding **Ages** 13–18 **Term Fees** **Day:** £6,614; **boarding:** £11,186 **Oxbridge** 2.5% **Admission** School's own exam **Alumni** Sir Alastair Cook, Lord Paddy Ashdown, novelist John Fowles **PREP Head** Ian Silk **Pupils** 411 **day and boarding boys** **Ages** 7–13 **Term Fees** **Day:** £5,616; **boarding:** £9,058

At 99, Captain Sir Tom Moore raised almost £33m for the NHS by completing 100 laps of his garden; the war veteran also found the time during lockdown to record the backing vocals for a hit single with musical theatre maestro, Michael Ball. Another person involved in this staggering project was Moore's grandson Benjie, a student at Bedford, whose fundraising prowess goes above and beyond the school's mantra: 'Bedford School. That they be good men.' It will come as no surprise to hear that the school has recently intensified its focus on giving back. By the end of 2021, every leaver will have contributed to the local community through a long-term project. Recently, pupils spearheaded Ready2Lead, a 'self-leadership' conference that drew students from local schools across the area. When Bedford boys aren't learning to lead, they might be found at Lithuanian Society or even on a (fake) beach – Bedford is about as far as it is possible to get from the sea, but that didn't stop the school scooping the title at the National Independent Schools Beach Volleyball Tournament. There's a lot on offer here, which is probably why the school produces determined, decent all-rounders who achieve strong academic results at the same time: in 2019, 83 per cent of boys went on to Russell Group and Times Top 30 universities.

BENENDEN SCHOOL ●

Cranbrook, Kent TN17 4AA

Website benenden.school

Head Samantha Price, MA, since 2014; previously Head of Godolphin **Pupils** 550 **boarding girls** **Ages** 11–18 **Term Fees** £13,124 **Oxbridge** 3% **Admission** ISEB Pre-Test, CE or school's own exam, interview and previous school's report **Alumnae** HRH The Princess Royal, Baroness Shackleton Eschewing all stereotypes, Benenden girls parachute out of planes, trek to Annapurna Base Camp, build microlights with partner school John Wallis Academy, race self-built kit cars and play rugby. They are also charming, funny and great fun to be around. Described as a 'sisterhood' by students, this all-girls Kent boarding school (which will welcome day pupils for the first time next year) with notable royal alumnae offers wraparound care – with hot water bottles on tap. It also encourages the girls to go out and seize every opportunity. With a mixed academic intake, the school is understandably proud of its 56 per cent A*–A achieved at A-level and its value-added score

of 1.0 at GCSE. Hugely popular and inspirational Head Samantha Price is determined that Benenden girls will be prepared to walk into all the best jobs (once they've left their top universities) by ensuring they have LinkedIn accounts, honed CVs and by offering a broad range of professional qualifications alongside GCSEs and A-levels. Last year, 22 girls sat the tricky London Institute of Banking and Finance Award in Financial Education, with 18 achieving the top grade. This focus on finance is clearly paying dividends, with one prefect winning the highly prestigious Young Economist of the Year Competition and the Head Girl and her friends making nearly £3,500 profit from their popular Benenden Bottoms *Dragons' Den* initiative (making tracksuit bottoms with school names written across the back). Fuelling all this enterprise must be the incredible school food; comparable to Ottolenghi's finest, these girls eat bowls of shelled edamame beans, sushi rice with beetroot and roasted vegetables and skate fillets with tomatoes and caper berries – all finished off with the most delicious brownies.



Bedford School