

BEDALES SCHOOL ●●

Church Road, Steep, Petersfield GU32 2DG
Website bedales.org.uk
Head Magnus Bashaarat, MA, since 2018; previously Head of Milton Abbey **Pupils** 470. **Day:** 76 boys, 65 girls; **boarding:** 150 boys, 179 girls **Ages** 13–18 **Term Fees** **Day:** £9,745; **boarding:** £12,400 **Oxbridge** 7% **Admission** School's own exams, interview and previous school's report **Alumni** Daniel Day-Lewis, The Earl of Snowdon **PREP Heads** Colin Baty and Fiona Read **Pupils** 294 **day and boarding:** 146 boys, 138 girls **Ages** 3–13 **Term Fees** **Day:** £6,415; **boarding:** £8,520 Bedales, under charismatic Head Magnus Bashaarat, has stayed true to its founder's 1893 mission 'to shape the school around what is considered best for the individual child's education, welfare and happiness'. A later start to the school day has been introduced to reflect teenagers' circadian rhythms, soon every sixth former will have their own study separate from where they sleep, and Bedales is in its 12th year of offering hugely successful GCSE alternatives. Parents are impressed by the 'enlightened ethos', and Parents' Day is not to be missed – think tartan rugs strewn across the orchard, delicious picnics and top-notch jazz music performed by students. Block 3 (Year 9) pupils benefit from an interdisciplinary, cross-subject humanities course in which they explore issues such as 'Refugees, Racism and Diversity' and 'Who Made My Clothes?', while sixth formers can now do Music Technology and Sports Science. Happy and down-to-earth pupils achieved excellent results in 2020. Eighty-one per cent of A-levels were graded A* to B and leavers headed on to high-ranking universities, both in the UK and abroad, art schools and musical conservatoires. Dunhurst and Dunannie (the prep and pre-prep schools) champion hands-on learning while allowing children to be children. The Dunannie cohort are outside 'come rain or shine'.

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, Oxford **Pupils** 698 boys: 504 day, 194 boarding **Ages** 13–18 **Term Fees** **Day:** £6,983; **boarding:** £11,810 **Oxbridge** 6% **Admission** School's own exam, interview and previous school's report **Alumni** Sir Alastair Cook, politician Lord Ashdown, novelist John Fowles **PREP Head** Ian Silk **Pupils** 403 **day and boarding boys** **Ages** 7–13 **Term Fees** **Day:** £5,616; **boarding:** £9,058 An oasis of calm set in the midst of the busy town of Bedford (described by a sixth former as 'a good town to live in – despite lacking a Five Guys'), this school is a well-ordered, well-oiled machine: 'a school that knows who it is, what it represents and, most importantly, where it is going,' says a researcher. (There are no plans to begin taking girls, for example.) Bedford very much supports a holistic education: life here is about so much more than academia, and the school's mission is to teach boys to think intelligently, act wisely and to be fully engaged with the challenging and changing world. Head James Hodgson is universally liked and admired by pupils, staff and parents – 'He's committed to his long-term plans for the school and the development of the individual pupil,' says one parent. Support for the local community is paramount – 25 lower sixth pupils recently taught reading, music and Mandarin at local primary schools. During lockdown, Bedford boys even set up a scheme to collect old and unused devices for refugees to stay in touch with loved ones back home. The school turns out boys who are confident enough in their own skin to walk into any company, anywhere, to hold their own and speak well – and in 2020 an impressive 87 per cent of leavers went on to either a Russell Group or to a *Times* Top 30 University.

Benenden encourages its pupils to eschew stereotypes to race self-built kit cars, earn thousands of pounds of profits in Dragons' Den initiatives and do parachute jumps

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** £13,616 **Oxbridge** 6% **Admission** ISEB Pre-Test, CE or school's own exam, interview and previous school's report **Alumnae** HRH The Princess Royal, Baroness Shackleton It's hard to keep up with the senior Benenden girls as they whizz around their 240 acres of rhododendron-strewn countryside on scooters, hurrying from Founders (their state-of-the-art Sixth Form accommodation) to lessons and on to the lacrosse pitches or the sparkling new hall and music school. Year after year, this picturesque all-girls haven, guided by inspirational Head Sam Price, encourages its pupils to eschew

stereotypes to race self-built kit cars, earn thousands of pounds of profits in *Dragons' Den* initiatives, do parachute jumps and climb mountains. Keen to share this good fortune with those of lesser means, the school is fundraising to increase its bursary provision, in part by opening a series of Benenden Schools in China. Alongside the boarders who can choose to go home every second weekend (two-thirds opt to stay in school to enjoy pool parties, socials with nearby Tonbridge and murder-mystery dinners), there will also now be a limited number of day pupils. D deservedly proud winners of the 2021 *Tatler* Schools Best Food Award, Benenden sent care packages with the school's famously delicious brownies to all their alumnae who were locked in their university halls of residence during the coronavirus pandemic.

