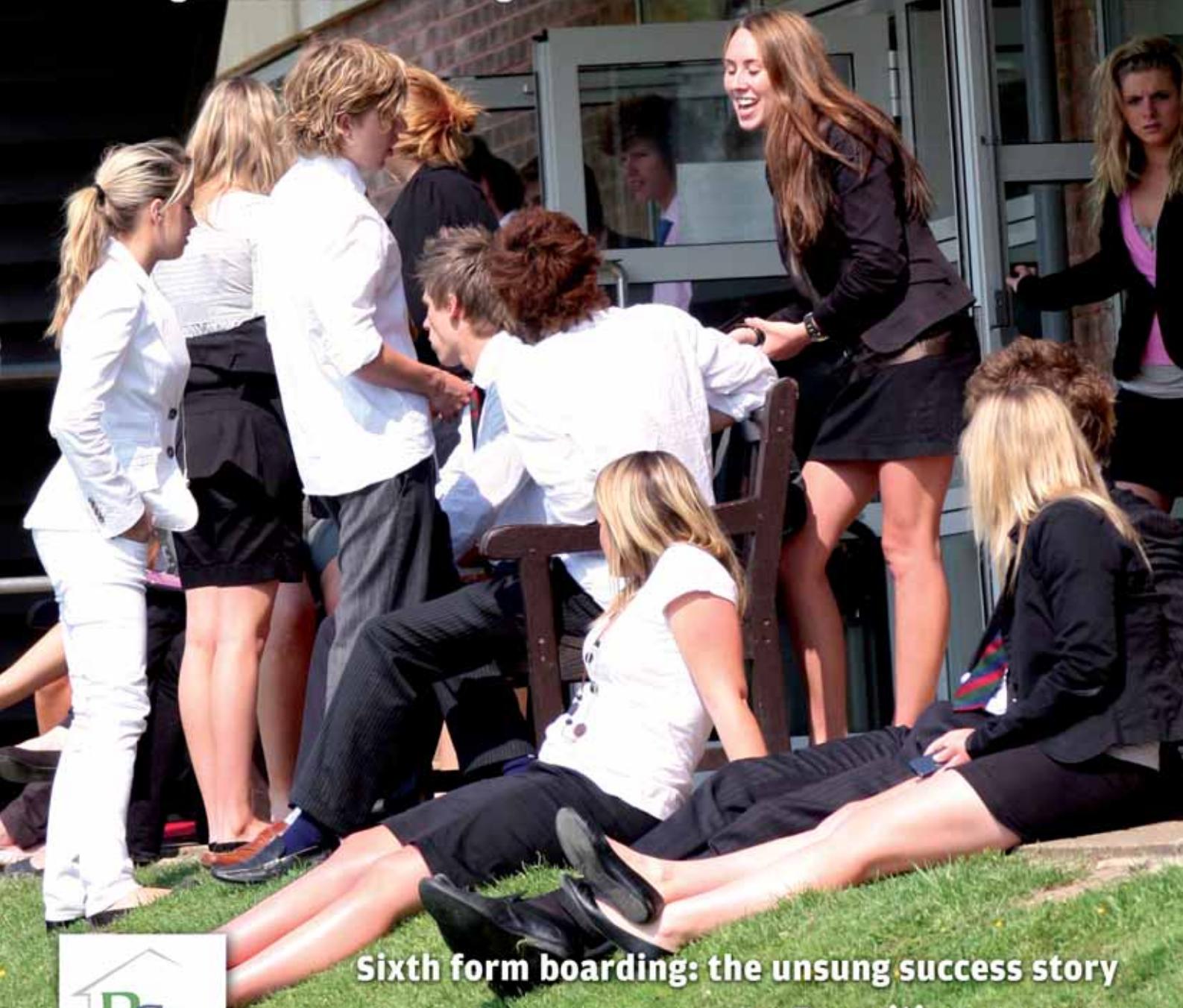


Boarding School

The magazine of the Boarding Schools' Association



Number 29 | Spring 2009

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Boarding in the USA

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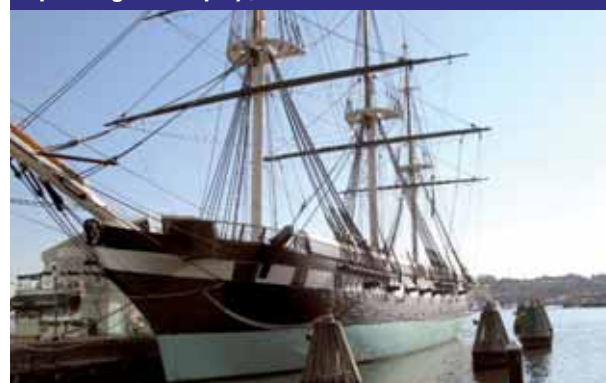
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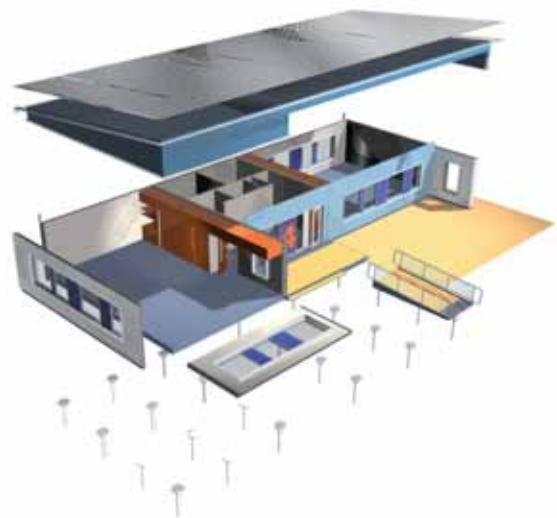
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FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Yes – we can too!

Once read that Chief Executives of American companies were likely to come from areas of their companies such as marketing; British CEOs were far more likely to rise through the accountancy route. One of the consequences of the different routes was – apparently – that in hard times, American companies were inclined to build their way out of trouble: to expand, to grow, to believe that better times would come and that they needed to be there, well equipped for the good days. On the other hand, British companies were more likely to believe that it was sensible to batten down the hatches until the storm passed.

I know not if this is true, nor if the suggestion that the two casts of mind – grow, contract – are actually a consequence of companies being headed by people from very different spheres of business, but it does sound feasible, and at the very least it's a good starting point for debate.

This magazine goes to press as the papers are recording economic changes which will surely affect boarding schools. But I have been very struck by the number of schools I have had the privilege to visit where confidence is evident and expansion and improvement are in progress.

Most of the new-builds I have seen have been for sixth formers. The ISC census figures for 2008 tell us that more than a third of all our boarders are in sixth forms. Liz Lightfoot explores the phenomenon elsewhere in this edition, but really it's a no-brainer: by 16, most young people believe themselves ready to conquer the world, never mind a boarding house; their parents have confidence that, 'They'll be OK!' coupled sometimes with a heartfelt relief that there will be fewer rows about late nights, inappropriate company and the meaning of the universe. And of course a two-year boarding school fee is easier on the bank balance than a five or seven year hit.

So boarding for sixth formers is, if not a growth market, at the least a stable market. Between 1998 and 2008, the number of boarders aged nine dropped

30% (from 2005 to 1392) and the number of 11-year-old boarders shrank by 20% (5274 to 4172). But sixth former boarders in 1998 numbered 26,789, and in 2008 they were 26,514. How stable is that?

Each of these precious boarders is likely to be 'wowed' by boarding accommodation and facilities which match their self-image as autonomous students, almost ready for the big world of university freedoms (with possibly smaller rooms and no pastoral supervision) and adventurous gap-years. Schools are reacting accordingly, and perhaps also seeing market potential in the holidays for top-class single study accommodation complete with en suite facilities.

Others are renovating or renewing accommodation for younger boarders, mindful of the need to grow their own markets from within, as well as refresh it with later entrants. Parents and pupils are likely to be happier if young boarders find in schools accommodation which is not too dissimilar from the standards of home, though single rooms may not be best for younger boarders. The Australian psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg tells us that for younger boarders, sharing bedrooms is a hugely important part of the boarding experience, building the kinds of relationships which enrich a child's schooldays and may last a lifetime.

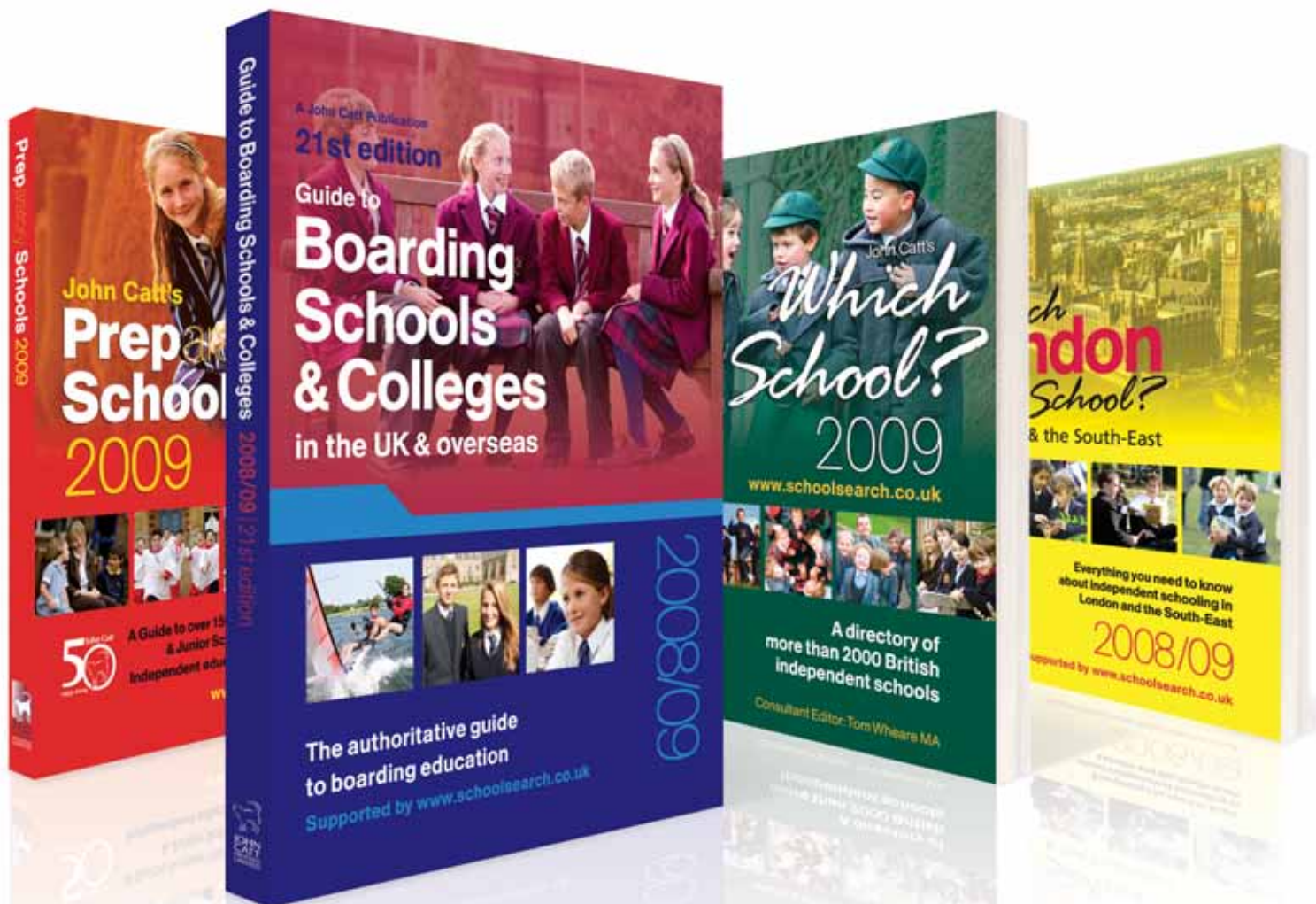
There has probably never been a better time to be a boarder, whatever the economic climate. Our schools are providing better standards of education, pastoral care, facilities and accommodation than ever before.

Let us therefore be confident. Let us hoist the sails in the face of the winds. Let us declare our strengths and our values, loud and clear. Whatever gloom 2009 has brought us, whatever difficulties in the market, and whatever doubts about our capacity to meet new challenges, it has without question brought us a time in which boarding schools also should be able to say, 'Yes we can.'

Hilary Moriarty
February 2009

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Sixth forms: the unsung success story of boarding

SIXTH FORM BOARDING IS BOOMING. NEARLY A THIRD OF ALL SIXTH FORM STUDENTS IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ARE BOARDERS. SCHOOLS HAVE INVESTED HEAVILY IN FACILITIES WHICH OFFER MATURING TEENAGERS A HALF WAY HOUSE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY. IN AN EXTENDED FEATURE, LIZ LIGHTFOOT, FORMER EDUCATION EDITOR OF *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*, TAKES A LOOK AT THE PHENOMENON AND, ON PAGE 8, INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO START BOARDING AT THE AGE OF 16, DESCRIBE THEIR MOTIVES FOR DOING SO AND THEIR EXPERIENCES.

Light tunnels through the boat shaped roof, flooding the gleaming oak floor of the sleek, open space. A group of elegant young people chat on Corbusier style sofas under a huge plasma screen broadcasting activities for the day.

It could be a five star hotel in New York or Sydney, but this is Scotland and the state of the art building is Craighleith, the new sixth form boarding house at Fettes College. The school in Edinburgh has spent upwards of £10 million bringing the daring plans of its award winning architects to fruition. When the first sixth formers walked in they had only one word to describe it: Wow!

Hundreds of miles away there was a similar reaction to the new sixth form boarding house and centre at Moreton Hall in Shropshire, described by its headteacher as “Travel Lodge Plus” because of its spacious study

bedrooms and modern en suite facilities. During the holidays, when the pupils are not using the centre, it brings in income as accommodation for conferences and language courses.

Government investment in the 34 state boarding schools has brought a much needed boost to their capital budgets. A grant of £6.5 million to Wymondham College in Norfolk helped fund its stunning new centre for sixth formers, modelled on a modern university campus.

In an economic downturn the record spending on sixth form boarding over the last few years may seem profligate in retrospect, but the schools say it was a wise investment, helping them to hold on to their older pupils against competition from sixth form colleges or day schools. Furthermore, it has helped to attract new ‘first time’ teenage boarders. ➡



A £6.5m Government grant helped Wymondham College build its new sixth form centre, which was modelled on a university campus.



Students enjoy the stunning facilities in Craigleith, Fettes College's new sixth form house

And the investment in sixth form accommodation is in response to an increase in demand for places. The steady rise in 16-year-olds both from the state sector and overseas seeking to spend the crucial sixth form years in boarding schools helped reverse a downward trend last year when UK boarding figures rose by 0.4 per cent.

Close inspection of the annual census carried out by the Independent Schools Council reveals some surprising facts about modern day boarding. First, students in the two sixth form years account for four in 10 of all boarders. Secondly, when you look at all sixth formers in ISC schools, nearly a third of them are boarders – more than 26,000 of the total 82,000 students.

Sixth form boarding is the unsung success of the independent sector and thriving too in the state boarding schools, where places are five times oversubscribed for the age group. When you consider that only around 13 per cent of independent school pupils board, the figure seems even more impressive, not least amid media scaremongering about alleged – and still unproven – bias against independently educated pupils in the university admissions process.

But perhaps we should not be surprised that some of the oldest schools in the country have seized the spirit of the times and harnessed it to help ensure their survival. That is what happened when new parenting philosophies attached a stigma to 'sending your child away' to boarding school in the seventies and eighties. As numbers fell, heads and governors picked themselves up and started

planning. Soon there were duvets in the dorms, posters on the wall and family friendly policies on communication and exerts. Then came weekly boarding, followed closely by flexi boarding for parents with unpredictable work schedules, both of which have proved hugely popular and often evolved into full boarding places for children who don't want to leave at the weekend.

Few 16-year-olds want to be told what to do by their parents and nor, you might think, do they want to conform to the rules and regulations essential to the smooth running and safety of a boarding school. But just at the time they are yearning for freedom and want to make their own decisions, teenagers are opting for boarding schools. Isn't that strange? Not at all, says Jonathan Forster, the principal of Moreton Hall, the girls' school in Oswestry. "In the sixth form they have a degree of independence away from home but we are there to look after them. We monitor what they are doing but we give them freedom. Our weekly world view discussions and personal, health and social education programmes prepare them to use their freedom responsibly as young women who have the skills to make choices."

At the age of 16 young people think they are grown up and adult when they are not and that's why parents value boarding at this stage, says Hilary Moriarty, BSA National Director. "Parents with a stroppy teenager may be thinking that boarding away from home would be a very good idea. It's half way between being at home with

mother saying ‘have you done your homework?’ and university where nobody cares. At a boarding school someone will care and make sure they do the work and eat breakfast and they will be able to do it with less conflict,” she says.

For the student it is a move towards independence and a chance to learn to live with others and fend for themselves which will make settling into university less difficult, she says. Most boarding schools expect sixth formers to start looking after themselves by sharing the chores and learning to cook snacks and simple meals.

It’s a way of getting out of the hair of your parents and having your own life while at the same time doing what your parents want you to do, which is to do well at A level and go on to a good university, says BSA chairman Melvyn Roffe, Principal of Wymondham College.

“Parents tell us that their teenagers are spending too much time in front of the TV or the computer at home and not enough time interacting with others or debating and taking part in sport, music or drama,” says Mr Roffe.

In recent years, say headteachers, another reason for boarding is often cited by parents – the chance for their children to gain life skills, such as leadership, initiative and strategic thinking; the attributes that universities say they want alongside good exam grades. At a time when a quarter of A level entries are awarded the top ‘A’ grade, admission tutors are seeking evidence of extended interest in a subject, beyond the exam syllabus.

All this works very much in favour of boarding schools where students have the time, the opportunity and the facilities to broaden their horizons, says Mrs Moriarty. Sixth formers play an important role as mentors to younger students and helping to run the boarding houses. At Wymondham College they act as subject leaders helping younger students with their prep and liaising between pupils and departments. At Worth, the Benedictine boarding school in West Sussex, which has just taken girls into the sixth form for the first time, sixth formers help run the chaplaincy, take responsibility for prayers and run reading groups.

The new buzz word is entrepreneurship. A growing number of schools are encouraging their sixth formers to get a taste of commerce by starting and running small businesses. Moreton Hall, a leader in the field, has set up Moreton Enterprises which employs more than 60 students and has an annual turnover of £35,000. Sixth formers run five retail businesses, a bank, a radio station, an innovation group, a marketing team and a finance department. Business studies teacher Karen Booth says students learn skills which will help at university and when they start their careers. “They gain experiences of managing money and stock and develop time management skills plus the ability to set goals and take responsibility for achieving them,” she says.

More than 50 years ago NATO chose a small public school on the narrowest part of the English Channel to help spread multi-lingualism in the wake of the Second World War. Since then Dover College has stayed true to its mission, attracting students from across Europe and

the rest of the world to learn alongside British students. The biggest intake is in the sixth form where home and international students are in equal proportions.

Most of the students join the college for the full two years as preparation for entry to UK universities. A year in the lower sixth, or even just a term, is a popular option for students from Germany where the education system frees its students to study abroad for short periods. In recent years Spain has encouraged its pupils to spend time abroad before returning to their studies, especially at schools such as Dover College which provide intensive English language support.

Barbara Glasmacher, the international school consultant, says A levels or the International Baccalaureate increasingly offered by British boarding schools, are good preparation for entry to universities across the world

“Many German schools encourage students to spend the lower sixth year in Great Britain. During the year abroad, students can perfect their English language skills, and the challenge of spending a year away from home develops their personality. Provided students study the right combination of subjects in Britain, the return to their local high schools usually runs smoothly,” she says.

Overseas families are often attracted to university towns, such as Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh. Charlotte Avery, the headmistress of St Mary’s in Cambridge, says the school’s location is a good selling point and around half the sixth form are boarding for the first time. Parents see two years in the sixth form as a cost effective way of getting the benefits of a British public school education, she says: “Parents feel it is a benefit to have their daughters in an academically aspirational university town. English public schools have a solid reputation internationally and parents want to invest in an English education so their children will get good results and be able to get into a British university.”

The International Baccalaureate is particularly popular with students from Europe, says Gino Carminati, Head Master of Worth School, the Benedictine Catholic boarding school in West Sussex. “There are a large number of German families who send their children to England for the final years of pre-university studies and that is partly to do with the upheaval of educational reforms going on in their own country,” he says.

“We are currently the only Catholic school offering the IB and a lot of our sixth form intake recognize the fact that if they are intending to go to university they need to develop their all round potential.”

Increasingly schools such as Worth are giving extra independence to the oldest pupils, accommodating them separately while the lower sixth assume leadership roles in the main boarding houses.

Some parents see boarding as a final polish on a good day school says Mrs Moriarty. “It offers opportunities 24 hours a day to do things which will give young people an interest for life or look good on the university admission form. Schools are building better than universities. They aim to be a place where sixth formers want to be.”

Sixth formers in their own words



Richard Verrall was educated at a state grammar school in the north of Kent. He is an outstanding sportsman and represents the south of England at Rugby for his age group. He won the Findlay Sport Scholarship which is available to top sportsmen and women from state schools at the age of 16. He had never envisaged boarding, but the journey was prohibitively time-consuming and so he made the decision to board at Sevenoaks School.

September 2008 saw my first experience of a boarding house as I joined Sevenoaks from my state school. The reason for my change from a day pupil to a boarder was mainly due to the location of my house. The journey into Sevenoaks would have been too far to make each day and therefore boarding was ideal.

Once I had chosen to board, the realisation that my every day routines would rapidly change dawned on me. The initial thought of changing my lifestyle to adapt to the demands of a boarding house was quite daunting. However, as the time grew closer and the transition period began the daunting thoughts turned to more positive ones as I realised all the opportunities that could arise from living in a boarding house.

My reason for changing to Sevenoaks School was the generous offer of the Findlay Sports Scholarship so this was an opportunity that I would have found hard to turn down. Having settled in at the school, boarding has become an enjoyable experience. The social spirit within the community of the houses here, coupled with the ambitions to succeed, creates a great atmosphere and allows you to make friends easily. I think the experience of living as a day pupil as well as a boarder has been a good one and I would recommend boarding to someone who was unsure whether it's for them or not. The opportunities socially are enormous and, after all, it's a once in a lifetime experience!



Annalena Morris joined Kilgraston School, Perthshire, from Mount Anville School near Dublin. Kilgraston follows the Scottish examination system, and this year she is studying Advanced Higher in French and Spanish and Higher in geography and religious moral and philosophical studies. Before university, she is planning a gap-year when she will travel and spend time riding.

From a child the idea of boarding was always a dream of mine. Many hours were spent longing for the life of Enid Blyton's protagonists and even more planning all the fruitless escapades that I would govern had I ever been given the chance. I even had the menu planned for a perfect midnight feast!

I had to wait ten years for this dream to come true. Although it's more gruelling work than fruitless escapades we still manage to have the time of our lives. Being part of the beehive that is boarding life gives one a profound sense of belonging and the security of constant company. It allows you to gain the independence from home yet still grow and mature in a friendly environment. And it makes you appreciate home even more!

Being surrounded by your peers helps you grow in confidence because of the unwavering support that everyone shows. Some people may feel, when it comes to work, boarding is a drawback but when a year group share a studious atmosphere then a good personal work ethic is developed and maintained, a handy weapon when entering the unfamiliar world of university!

Having had the boarding experience, albeit for only two years, I feel that not only have I gained friends for life but also vital life skills. The reality of living with a group of very different people has taught me to enjoy and appreciate the variety of personalities that can be found in a single place. Boarding has enabled me to improve both my attitude to work and social skills. It is an experience that will remain with me always, and one that I would encourage everyone to consider. It has set me up for the life ahead. And thanks to boarding school I feel confident that I am well equipped with the skills required to achieve my best in life.



16-year-old **Grisha McKain** had been a day pupil at King's School, Ely, for three years when his parents' move abroad meant he started to board. Now he is studying politics, economics, classics and French and enjoys more personal time.

At the end of last year, my parents were expatriated to Turkmenistan for two years, and since then I moved from my old day house to boarding. The atmosphere and my view of school has changed profoundly, and I think I would be reluctant to change back.

Practically, the differences in routine have been minor; I have had extra time with my tutor, there are a few more routine formalities, however the amount of time that I have had to spend with friends, be involved in house excursions, take part in inter-house competitions and simply talk to the tutors who have taken on an almost avuncular role, have made life at school much more exciting, busy, and enjoyable.

From a practical side, there is much more time to settle down and do work; all resources and advice, pastoral and academic, are available. I have simply had more personal time than I have had in a day house, when I spent a lot of time travelling and being too tired to involve myself in anything once I returned home.

Work cannot lose out, and I have been able to spend more time in producing prep and reading around the subject than ever before, and, if not for the academic side, I recommend boarding to anyone simply for the closer friendship, the fun, responsibility and enthusiasm that can be gained, especially at the start of the sixth form.



Bartek Zakrzewski, now in the upper sixth, joined Rugby School in the sixth form, having previously studied at a state school in London, and has found that "anyone can fit in."

All my life I have attended state, community schools both in the UK and abroad. I never had the opportunity of studying at an independent school until September last year and being in a boarding community was totally new.

At first I was not quite sure whether Rugby would be suitable for me - I thought the pupils might be 'upper class' and I considered myself from a working class background. I simply was not sure whether I would fit in and whether I would enjoy being at the school. However, after spending a few weeks at the school I completely changed my view. There were three main areas that influenced my opinion of Rugby School and truly showed a great difference from my previous school.

The first is the amount time given to, and the quality of, school activities. Rugby School has an extraordinary amount of extracurricular activities, and being a boarder means I get the space and time I need to really get involved in them. The activity that has interested me the most is the Thursday afternoon social service. There are many possibilities to join different activities which involve some sort of a service to the community. I chose to do social service music. Every week our group performs concerts for people in primary schools, churches, hospitals and old people's homes. This not only is a great way to enjoy playing music, but also it makes us all feel very happy and proud that we can make others happy through our activity.

The second great difference is the time available to access teachers and facilities both during and after lessons. The teachers are available to any student at almost any time and so are the school facilities such as the IT centre, the sports centre and the library.

The teachers at Rugby pay a great deal of attention to every student and are generous with their time. All of my teachers seem very happy to give extra time to pupils and are exceptionally passionate about their subjects.

The pastoral care at school and in the houses is remarkable. In each house there is a Housemaster and Deputy Housemaster, and then there are tutors and matrons; altogether about ten members of staff are available to students. The older years (Year 13) also perform duties that, to an extent, involve taking care of the younger years. There is always someone to turn to if you need help with anything and from my personal experience, all the members of staff can be trusted with any personal problems.

Now, after studying at Rugby School for a little longer than a year, I have realised that anyone can fit in and anyone can enjoy it. It all depends on what you make of your time at Rugby. Being a boarder means that I have time to get involved in extra activities, extend my interests in the academic subjects I am taking, and take on extra responsibilities within the school and wider community.



Emma Denly, now in the upper sixth at Lord Wandsworth College, chose to start boarding in the sixth form largely through increasing pressure of work and finds weekly boarding suits her perfectly.

Boarding for me is very much a voluntary thing. Unlike many of my peers, who board because their parents live in far-flung countries or who are constantly on the move due to work, I live five miles away from LWC and have parents who would be very willing to ferry me to and from school daily. In fact, now that I have a car, it is even easier for me to go home, and yet I still board for four nights a week.

I only started boarding in the sixth form: until then, there really was no need, and I was quite happy going home every night. But as I got set more and more work, and as I was set more responsibilities as a sixth former, this became much more difficult. Getting up an hour later definitely has its appeal for a sleepaholic, and accessibility to the college's facilities all of the time set my mind at rest in terms of meeting work and extracurricular commitments.

That is a very clinical view on what boarding offers to a sixth-former. I've certainly found that I am much closer to all of my housemates; my roommate in the lower sixth is now one of my best friends, having never really spoken to her before. The boarding atmosphere, particularly at this age, cannot be recreated: it is truly something unique which not only gives you opportunity to study in a more stable and relaxed way, but teaches you skills that you won't forget for the rest of your life. I find also that I am more involved in events which happen around the house: one of us might go and get a Chinese and we'll all watch a film together, or we might undergo the more structured 'Christmas tree decorating' regime.

My parents might say that there are negatives in my decision to board four nights a week - they certainly see a lot less of me - but my argument is that surely I will learn to appreciate them more when I am at home (and they me!), something which will come in handy when I leave home next year. There is still the flexibility to go home whenever I want - for example I go to dancing lessons every Wednesday outside of school - which is a comfortable way of getting into the 'being-away-from-home' state of mind.

I personally would recommend sixth form boarding. It has changed the way that I think about things, prepared me for later life, and made me a better (more understanding) person.



Charlotte Wace was at Plymouth College prep school, and was originally going to board from 11, but wanted to stay where her friends and family were so went instead to Devonport High School For Girls, a grammar school, until she was 16. Last September she started to board at Sherborne Girls' School, two and a half hours from her Devon home.

Two years ago my impression of boarding school was of an old-fashioned and strict institution with too many rules to cram into a book. Having looked around several boarding schools and indeed joined Sherborne Girls in September I found it was totally the opposite - at the same time as being very different from my previous day school.

The school does everything it possibly can to give you space and make your life fun; from letting you out into the town after school to socials and events most Saturday nights. I've found it so much fun to be around friends all the time, as living in a remote area limited that previously, and I love the general independence and equality that boarding school gives you.

From an academic point of view, it is so much more convenient to be right next to the school with no 40 minute car journey, and to study in my room during free periods instead of messing around in a noisy sixth form centre. It is a more motivating environment to work in and there is always help around.

Obviously coming in the sixth form leads to worry as to how well you will settle in - but personally I think this is an ideal time to start boarding. You are mature enough not to get homesick, and by sixth form have more privileges, such as more freedom and larger rooms than younger years. It takes less time to settle in than moving to a day school as you spend so much time with people, friendships naturally form. Obviously this means friendship groups are very close, and you may find it difficult at times to form the same strong bonds people have built up over many years. However you often find people are just as eager as you to make new friends.

Sometimes I've missed the space I had before, and home comforts - but I've found the positives far outweigh the negatives, and have learned and gained so much more than I think I would have done if I had stayed at a day and state school - I'm glad I made the move.



***Etienne Melville** opted to be a day pupil when he first joined Strathallan School, Perthshire, but decided, when he got to the sixth form, that he was missing something.*

As soon as my name was down for Strath, the main topic for discussion over mealtimes in the Melville household was whether I should board right from day one in third form. After weighing out the pros and cons, I opted for the home comforts. This was fine for the first few years but, as the workload increased, I was losing an hour a day on travelling, time that could be spent more constructively.

However this was not the only reason for choosing to board. I felt I was missing out on something and it took me a while to figure out what it was;

simply the 'banter' that comes with living in a boarding house which stays with you for years.

Living close by did have its advantages as mum was never more than 20 minutes away if something needed to be washed urgently or I was low on cash/food and I could catch up on her chat as she was dropping the brothers off each morning if I ever got bored of Strath gossip, which was unlikely!

Since I started boarding in January, it's been hectic fitting a social life round a crammed academic timetable on top of extracurricular activities but it's a move that I've never regretted and the memories and friends will last forever.



***Daniela Kriegbaum** was at a state school in Germany until the age of 16 where she was not only academically successful but also a good musician. Like other German students, she came to Sevenoaks to study for the IB Diploma which enables them to go back and study at German universities if they wish, and for the extra-curricular opportunities.*

For many years it was my big dream to join the sixth form at a boarding school in the UK. Beside improving my English and studying at a school with a rigorous academic programme, another important reason for me was to live, to work and to make friends in a challenging global atmosphere. Sevenoaks School was always my absolutely favourite school and you can imagine how happy I was, when I got the letter of acceptance.

Of course it is not that easy to leave the sheltered childhood and home to enter an entirely new life in a foreign country. To be honest, besides all the joy and expectations there were also a little melancholy and some hidden tears at the farewell from my parents, sisters and my friends of the old school.

However, from the very beginning, the housemistress, tutors and all the staff are spreading a friendly and warm atmosphere, so you really feel very welcome. And then you meet all your wonderful fellow boarders from all over the world. To live together with all those great people is really something special and you make new friends immediately. It is really like living in a big global family.

There are lots of new things to learn, but it is very helpful especially at Sevenoaks to be already in contact to an older student many weeks before school starts. This 'big sister' is a really good friend and supports me a lot. Especially between the freshers, there is a big exchange about the first experiences. Everybody is very supportive to each other and this welds everybody together. Also sharing accommodation with a fellow student in the first year is a big advantage as it allows you to help and exchange views with each other.

Although the rooms are quite small, they are very cosy and you can create a personal atmosphere by decorating them with your personal style.

Besides all the challenging academic programme and the great possibilities in extra curriculum activities like sports, music, theatre, art, *etc.* our boarding house is like an island during a busy day, where you can have a little chat or just relax a little bit.

On weekends we are allowed to go out for shopping or dining and the fast connection to London by train is very attractive. The highlights of a boarding life are – of course – the big parties, which we prepare all together. They are very special events and a lot of fun. After a half year of boarding I feel very happy as a boarder at Sevenoaks School. I made wonderful new friends and already had a lot of valuable experiences for my whole life – my dream came true.



Matthew Purssell, aged 17, is joint Head Boy of Abingdon School. Although he has boarded since he was 11, he thinks the sixth form adds a further dimension.

Having been a weekly boarder at Abingdon since I was 11, I had always looked forward to being a sixth form boarder and all the privileges this brings. The most obvious are the increased freedom and the attitude of the housemasters and other teaching staff. The relationship with them changes, becoming increasingly relaxed and you get to know each other on more equal terms. They appreciate the importance of independence and, provided you don't abuse the rules, they become increasingly flexible as you move up the school. Little things make a difference, you are no longer sent to bed, as long as you are in your room by 10.30pm, there are sixth form evenings and the routine is less structured.

Sixth form also brings added responsibility. Most of the upper sixth are prefects and have a 'duty night' where you have to supervise prep for the younger boys. It's nice to get to know the younger years, I remember it can make a real difference, as a first year, to 'know' the sixth-formers. It's the way boarding should work with the older boys looking out for the younger ones.

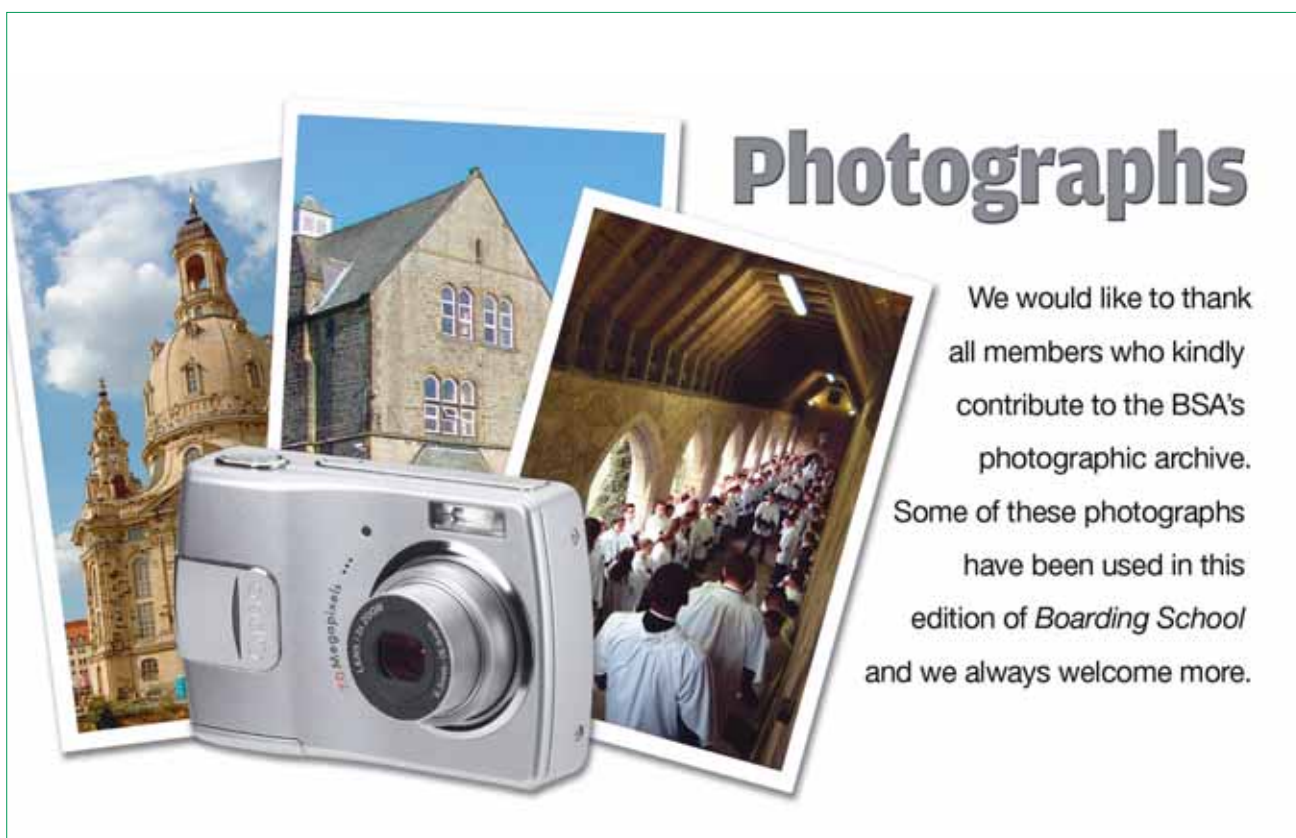
One of the best things about boarding, particularly in the sixth form, is the friendship. You go through a lot together and things like managing exam pressure is easier, revising with friends around is better and there is loads to do in your 'time-off'. Through living with people you learn to be tolerant, to compromise, to judge moods, when to joke and when to leave well alone. You share highs and lows.

Sixth form boarding is a good stepping stone to leaving home and moving on to university or a gap-year. The independence and self-reliance it teaches you have got to help with the transition from home life to moving away. I would say that the sixth form is the best time to board. Although it maybe more exciting in the lower years I think you get more out of it in the sixth form, the benefits are really tangible.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of boarding in the sixth form is the extra time. It's a very hectic two years, not only with A and AS levels but sport is taken more seriously and UCAS application and university and career choices mean spare time is precious.

People occasionally ask if boarding is restrictive for sixth-formers and I suppose in comparison to home life it could be. But I have never found it hard, as long as you don't abuse the rules you don't feel restricted.

Six years on, as I face the prospect of my last two terms at Abingdon, I can, without doubt, say I am glad I boarded. The few bouts of homesickness in the early years have been far outweighed by the fun, enjoyment, friendship and overall experience of being at the heart of the Abingdon School community.



Photographs

We would like to thank all members who kindly contribute to the BSA's photographic archive. Some of these photographs have been used in this edition of *Boarding School* and we always welcome more.

Three sixth form boarders at St Mary's, Calne, one previously at school in Nigeria, one joining from a co-ed state school and one previously a day girl at the school, describe their different experiences of enjoying boarding for the first time.



Araba Sagoe: Going to a day school wasn't an option when I was choosing a sixth form because I do not live in the United Kingdom. Boarding schools like St Mary's, Calne, give international students like me the opportunity to study in a new environment and acquire a sound education. My experience as a boarder over the last three months has been fantastic. I didn't expect to get so much support from the staff and students of the school but everyone has been very helpful and encouraging.

One of the things I've found very useful is the unlimited access to facilities such as the gym and libraries. Boarding school has also given me the opportunity to try new things such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and Young Enterprise which I very much enjoy.

I also find my dorm room very comfortable and, although it is not as big as my room at home, it has everything I need and gives me my privacy.

Since becoming a boarder, I think I have become more independent and I've also learnt to manage my time efficiently, which is good preparation for university.



Jessica Neville: I began boarding this year in UVI Form. This was a new and exciting experience for me because I had been a day girl at St Mary's for six years. I had always wondered what boarding would be like, spending more time with friends and doing fun weekend activities with the whole House.

I never felt excluded from my year as a day girl but as it was my final year, I wanted to spend as much time as possible with my friends. I also felt it would help me to adjust to university life when I go next year. Now that I am into my second term of boarding, I can tell it was the right choice for me. I love spending time with my friends and chatting to the Housemistresses in the evenings. It is a very different experience from being a day girl and I feel very much part of the school now; it has become a second home.

I have found that I have improved in my studies because I can pop over to different houses to see my teachers and spend time working with them on my subjects. I have also made a stronger bond with my year and the other years because I now know exactly what it means to be a boarder.



Rhega-Mai Ward: Starting boarding school at the age of 16 has influenced me in ways which college could not have, and all of these influences have been positive!

At first it was a slight shock to the system - there was not a parent immediately there when I felt I needed them, and I could not arrange to meet friends in the evenings like I used to be able to. Yet after a few weeks of settling in, I came to realise that the Housemistresses are there to help if you need them, and I did not need to arrange to meet up with friends, as they were all there all the time. My parents were only a phone call away, but since coming to St Mary's my independence has doubled... and the phone calls have halved!

I chose to come to boarding school for further education as I felt it offered broader opportunities for me, and I have not been proved wrong; I definitely made the right decision when I chose to go to boarding school.



Avoiding Bleak House

WINDLESHAM HOUSE SCHOOL IN WEST SUSSEX IS ONE OF THE HANDFUL OF MAINLY BOARDING PREP SCHOOLS LEFT. HEADMASTER RICHARD FOSTER WRITES ABOUT ITS DISTINCTIVE ETHOS AND WHY HE HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLS LIKE IT.

Windlesham House School is a rare find – I don't say that because I am its Headmaster but because it is a predominantly boarding model. We are a prep and pre-prep co-educational school nestled in the Sussex Downs, catering for four to 13 year olds. The main school, 7+ to 13, is 75 per cent boarding. Our numbers have steadily risen and they do continue to creep up now despite the current economic crisis and the worldwide downturn.

The situation is indeed a gloomy one – it is survival of the fittest and we must work even harder to welcome in new families in order to pull through. We cannot afford to coast along assuming our pupil numbers will rise by default. Yet I remain optimistic about the weeks, terms and years to come here at Windlesham. Showing confidence in our boarding and our way of life is of the highest priority as showing any weakness can ultimately signal your downfall.

As with all boarding environments, ours runs like a 'home from home' – indeed, school is more like home whilst home is never like school. Dormitories vary in size with eight to ten in the boys' accommodation while the girls' dormitories average six children. Busy days are so well planned that many of the normal stresses and strains are forgotten and, at the end of the day, a whole variety of activities keep them happily engaged – with not a PlayStation in sight.

I believe it is our ethos that makes Windlesham special. We don't mollycoddle the girls and boys – we allow them to find out why each and every one of them is unique and where their talents lie and the boarding environment lends itself to such a discovery. Our pupils love returning to school because they know there are exciting times ahead and if the child is happy then the parents will be too. Yes, there are the usual academic expectations in place, of course, but the ethos at Windlesham is such that it doesn't generate a hot house atmosphere but allows children to adapt at their own pace and send them on



their own unique way. Windlesham is simply a place like no other and our parents have found that once they walk through the door, they want to be a part of it.

In an age where more and more things are prescribed and children seem to be permanently fast tracked into an adult world, it is so refreshing to generate an atmosphere where children can be children. They are encouraged to explore and take informed risks within a perfectly safe and indeed beautiful countryside environment. Discovering what children enjoy doing and where their talents lie, whether inside or outside the classroom, is central to the successful boarding life at Windlesham. Having the highest standards of pastoral care and the desire to do best by and for each and every child who comes to us is our promise to parents that we can sustain the special boarding ethos.

What also helps bolster our boarding numbers is the perception that this life is no longer 'uncool' and trapped in the post-war era. The stigma which once attached to it has largely disappeared and, in our experience, both children and parents believe that boarding brings a school life that is magical and full of promise. It no longer divides family units; rather it brings everyone together sharing in an educational experience that provides an avalanche of nurturing and added value. The requirement for independent schools to demonstrate their public benefit has been one of the spurs to the continual improvement of boarding facilities; investment in school sites has the additional benefit of attracting more commercial income and advertising their attractive facilities to groups around their community.

Of course there will be many parents who decide that boarding isn't for them or the fees and looming recession push them out of the market but I always urge families to look ahead to the investment that they



would be giving their children. Marketing prep school boarding is more delicate than at senior school level but I believe our boarders leave Windlesham, at the age of 13, ready for all the experiences that life will throw at them. They are prepared both at an academic and social level. They have made friendships that will last a lifetime and their attachment to their prep school will be that more special.

The media spin on boarding has hindered schools' efforts in the past but boarding is on the rise and not even the broadsheets can ignore this. It is not so much down to the Harry Potter effect anymore; rather it is that positive boarding stories are beginning to receive their rightful place in the media spotlight.

It is essential to be quietly confident about the future of prep school boarding and here at Windlesham there is no reason why the prosperous times won't return again. In the meantime, we have knuckled down to the task in hand, educating youngsters and generally enjoying life.

www.windlesham.com



Independent, organised and happy

THE FIRST SURVEY OF THE VIEWS OF BOARDING PARENTS FOR A DECADE FINDS THEM VERY SATISFIED WITH THE DISTINCTIVE EDUCATION THEIR CHILDREN ENJOY.

Almost three-quarters of parents who chose boarding education believe that they offer good value for money.

And whilst more than 60 per cent of boarding school pupils board full time, nearly half of all boarders see their parents as much as once or twice a week during term time.

These were the major findings of the National Parents' Survey carried out by the Boarding Schools Association. Compiled from answers from 1,400 parents with children attending boarding schools, the survey's major findings were:

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) believe boarding education is good value for money.
- 70% of pupils made the decision to attend boarding school together with their parents, meaning that children are more involved than ever in the decision about where they go to school.
- Boarding schools have an increasingly diverse intake of pupils, with almost half (45%) of parents not having been to boarding schools themselves.
- Almost half the parents surveyed see their children once or twice a week during term time.
- Almost half the parents speak to their children at least once a week during term time.

BSA National Director Hilary Moriarty commented: "Modern boarding is a world away from how things used to be and the national parents' survey confirms this. No more are children packed off to school, only to be seen again at the end of term. Regular contact with parents, even for full boarders, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, mean that children are encouraged to develop in a safe and secure environment, where they can flourish without feeling unduly distanced from their loved ones."

BSA Chairman Melvyn Roffe added: "This survey illustrates the very positive experience that modern boarding provides. Boarding schools work with parents and children to provide an experience that all can benefit from. Families often report that, far from breaking family ties, boarding helps to strengthen the relationships between parents and children."

The survey records the views of individual parents:

- Daniela Harwood, whose two sons board, said: "My sons are more independent, more organised, and happier than they've ever been since they started boarding. The education they are getting is first class, with small class sizes and teachers that stimulate them. As a result, they've grown to be respectful, mature and more independent than their contemporaries who have gone to schools locally."
- Group Captain John Finlay Maclean: "I chose for my daughter to board because of the convenience and value for money. When you review the total package, including food costs, travel costs and the time wasted on school runs, plus the range of extracurricular activities available, boarding is excellent value for money."
- Kath Irvine, with a child at Woodhouse Grove School: "Modern boarding develops independence in a safe, secure environment. You learn to live with people from different backgrounds. My daughter has to share a room, wash up etc, so she's less self-obsessed, less pampered. She's living in the real world, not indulged."
- Mary Baker White, with a child at Wellesley House School: "Children learn to stand on their own two feet. They work as a team. Never forget that your children are on loan to you – they have to make their own lives. And the sooner that small break is made, the better, although we don't like it. There is a lot more engagement these days with your children than when I was at boarding school. We're encouraged to come to the school and watch our children play sport. Children aren't just dropped off and collected at the end of term, which was often the philosophy in my day."
- Celia Campbell: "Charles Dickens would not recognise today's boarding schools. There is certainly more freedom. The computer and mobile phones make keeping in contact with your family so much easier. There's no possibility of feeling neglected as a parent. Shopping lists for clothes, tuck, money fly freely across the airwaves. Kitchens in boarding houses make sure they can still enjoy their favourite foods. All facilities have generally improved."

The most rewarding job in teaching

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, MATTHEW GODFREY GAVE UP TEACHING AT A DAY SCHOOL IN ORDER TO BECOME A RESIDENT BOARDING HOUSEMASTER AT BRIGHTON COLLEGE.

Many of my colleagues could not understand my decision. As one of them put it, why give up the “basic human right” of being able to return to your own home after a hard day’s work to enjoy a peaceful evening without the fear of some teenager knocking on your door?

Some of my colleagues were against the idea of boarding altogether, and questioned why I would want to provide a service for parents who, in their opinion, were relinquishing their responsibility by paying for their children to board. They also wanted to know how, during term time, I could provide adequate care for 60 boys – not to mention how I would have time for my own children.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, none of these sceptics had boarded themselves. I boarded from the age of 12, so I knew about the fun, friendships and freedom that boarding can provide for teenagers. I also knew that parents seldom send their children to boarding school for selfish reasons and that boarding tends to enhance, not damage, relations between parents and their children.

Many of my colleagues also had an outdated view of boarding. They still imagined silent, stiff-lipped parents arriving at remote Victorian piles in their Volvo estates, unloading huge trunks and tuck boxes into massive dormitories, before leaving their tearful child with a brisk wave and not returning for months.

In fact, nowadays most boarders live within one hour of their school and they go home every weekend. Many of



my boarders at Brighton College arrive at school on Monday morning and go home on Friday, after school has finished. Mobile phones and email mean that the pupils can have daily contact with their parents if they wish.

Despite the credit crunch, there is a strong demand for this kind of weekly boarding, as it has obvious advantages

One of the reasons being a housemaster is so rewarding is that teenagers tend to show their best qualities – and occasionally their worst – as boarders.

WHY I CHOSE BOARDING

for families where both parents work, often with long hours and extensive travel. One parent said to me recently: “My husband and I both work hard so that we can afford to send our son to a good school. It is impractical for us to drive him to the school each day, and in any case boarding allows him to spend more time with his friends and to do his sport and other hobbies. We get to see him every weekend and he gets his space and freedom during the week.”

It may seem paradoxical that a teenager should find ‘freedom’ in a school environment, with its inevitable rules and regulations. Indeed, most parents agree that the routines for bedtime and homework in my boarding house are stricter than their own homes. But from a teenager’s point of view, spending every weekday evening with your peers and friends, rather than your parents, can be liberating and motivating. Also, the space and the facilities – academic, sporting and recreational – in a modern boarding school hold their own obvious advantages.

Parents often reap surprising dividends, too. One father told me recently that he talks to his son more since he started weekly boarding. “I see less of him, but we enjoy each other’s company more. He’s much more willing to talk to me at the end of a full week than he was at the end of every day, when he was a day boy. There’s more to tell me and I guess we’ve missed each other a little, too.”

Before I arrived at Brighton College, I completed a training course for new housemasters run by the BSA. I was told that being a boarding housemaster was the most all-consuming but also the most rewarding job available within the teaching profession.

I was warned – correctly – that there would be relatively few troublemakers amongst the boarders, but that they would take up a disproportionate amount of my time. I was also warned – correctly – that I would have very few problems with parents, because they tend

to accept and appreciate the responsibility that I take on during term time on their behalf.

One of the reasons being a housemaster is so rewarding is that teenagers tend to show their best qualities – and occasionally their worst – as boarders. In general, they want to have a good experience, and so they do their best to get on with each other, and also with me. They recognise the trust and investment that their parents are placing in them, and so they tend to want me, in *loco parentis*, to think highly of them.

Living on site and being, in effect, on call 24 hours a day, can be a burden. But the boarders are surprisingly respectful of my family’s privacy, and when one of them does knock on my door, it is usually a trivial, uncomplicated matter such as someone asking where the missing snooker cue has gone. I have had my fair share of dramas in my first year – including one serious case of homesickness and one very drunk pupil – but such cases are extremely rare.

Aside from the vocational rewards of the job, there are many practical perks, too. I do not have to commute, am provided with spacious, free accommodation and, like all teachers, I enjoy long holidays, too. A school campus is a great place in which to bring up a family. Also, the role has a great deal of credibility within the teaching profession because of the involvement with and responsibility over the pupils.

As a boarding housemaster, I have gained invaluable insight into the daily concerns, interactions and behaviour of teenagers – what upsets them, what motivates them. I have learned more about the teenage mindset in the past year and a half than I have in my previous eight years as a classroom teacher and tutor in day schools.

Boarding is not for everyone, for sure. But even though it is early days for me, I would not hesitate to recommend it to both prospective boarders and housemasters.

Before I arrived at Brighton College, I completed a training course for new housemasters run by the BSA. I was told that being a boarding housemaster was the most all-consuming but also the most rewarding job available within the teaching profession.

Space to grow and to play

RICHARD MACE, HEAD OF BOARDING AT S. ANSELM'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL DERBYSHIRE, DESCRIBES HOW WORKING IN A RURAL BOARDING SCHOOL HAS TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR HIS FAMILY.

My wife and I had to pinch ourselves as we drove south down the A6 peering out of the window at the Derbyshire countryside like a pair of Cheshire cats. Our two young boys, both under three at the time, had no idea but we had dramatically changed the course of their lives. What we had expected to be a tense day of harrowing interviews whilst we struggled to keep the boys in check and maintain a composed unruffled professional façade had in fact been a sheer delight. Together we had managed to land the head of boarding post at a prestigious prep school filled with delightful children in the heart of the Peak District and, quite frankly, we were overjoyed.

The master plan had begun nearly two years before, soon after the birth of our first child. Teaching in the depths of a city in the south-east, we were increasingly aware of the potential pitfalls and constraints that would be placed on our young children if they were to spend their younger years as urban dwellers. It was obvious to us that our children would lack time, space and freedom to roam. Cities often contain examples of wealthy but often time-poor, stressed-out parents struggling to attend to their children's needs and we did not want to join their

ranks. The papers were filled with references to soaring urban knife crime, youth alcoholism and drug taking. Similarly, the media plays on fears of child abductions so well meaning parents increasingly feel they have to wrap their children up in cotton wool. This is why some young children in inner cities have retreated behind computer screens, iPods and television. In some cases, I had seen precious years being lost as children strove to become adults too fast and were simultaneously being dogged by overbearing academic demands as they were being prepared for the rigours of the competitive urban careers they were expected to follow.

Yes, we were typical of new parents and I admit that our thinking was perhaps a little too alarmist. Nevertheless, we certainly felt that we had a stark choice facing us and the application to the new school had been made with our children's early years at the forefront of our thinking. I myself had grown up with my parents telling me stories of hopscotch and go-karting in the streets, scout clubs and lazy afternoons catching tadpoles and putting insects in jars. They had built dens and played games in the local woods and spent hours out and about cycling, bird watching and even train spotting! This was way back in





the 1950s and conjures up a childhood that would be entirely alien to most young people in the urban areas of England today.

As much as anything, what had us beaming at the other motorists on the A6 was the fact that our own children would attend this fabulous school. Here was an opportunity for them to grow up in the heart of a national park with space to breath and to play. Yes, the pupils at this school mess about with go-karts, make models, make dens in the school grounds, climb trees and partake in a whole host of activities that broaden their minds, help conquer fears, allay stress and banish the need to grow up too fast. The Peak District is their playground and every weekend the children enjoy outdoor activities such as canoeing, climbing, abseiling, orienteering or just going for long walks. They also have time to build models, play board games and learn to cook. Oh, and the academic results are not bad either!

As a boarding housemaster, I have been working some long hours. Young pupils in boarding houses need seven day a week, 24 hour, support and care. Not least, prep schools demand that their teachers really do get involved in every facet of school life (the headmaster regularly coaches rugby and runs the touchline). But the holidays are long and every third week the pupils go home to their parents for an exeat. Moreover, the parents see their children on Sundays too. So I know what these parents are buying into. By allowing their children to board they are giving them a chance to have a childhood that is full of adventure and excitement. Innocent fun, the great outdoors and the chance to forge wonderful friendships are just a few of

the opportunities that await them. Perhaps more importantly, the boarding parents really do see themselves as surrogate parents and attend to the children's needs with great attention to detail. The children return to warm houses that are not empty, having been fed and having completed their prep at school at a civilised time.

Rural full boarding preparatory schools of this quality are increasingly rare. Allowing children to board is not for every parent and, of course, it does come at a price. But what price for the gift of an unfettered childhood, when it seems that the precious memories many of our parents had are being denied to the next generation? With the increase in the myriad of modern ills that threaten our children it is my firm belief that boarding prep schools may well offer many parents the vital antidote they are looking for and is an opportunity that simply cannot be denied to their own children. Our own two young children are very lucky indeed.





Ruthin School was helped to recruit sixth form students overseas by the British Council

Recruiting students overseas

SOPHIE CANNON DESCRIBES THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S NEW SERVICES TO SUPPORT BOARDING SCHOOLS.

Welcoming international students to your school brings a world of benefits. As well as offering much-needed revenue, it's a unique opportunity for UK students to make friends with students from different countries and learn about new cultures. It is also vitally important to the UK as a whole, contributing a high proportion of the international students that go to the UK's universities and colleges.

However, recruiting international students can be a tough job. Many schools lack a network of agents, and overseas exhibitions and promotion can be prohibitively expensive. With the global financial crisis taking hold, it is a challenging task.

Help is at hand. The British Council has launched a range of new services to help UK boarding schools recruit international students more easily and cost-effectively.

Currently celebrating its 75th anniversary, the British Council is the UK's leading organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. Operating in 110 countries and territories worldwide, its purpose is to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide.

The Education UK Partnership is the British Council's membership organisation for UK schools, colleges and

universities, offering services to support members in their international education activities.

The new services for boarding schools were launched by the Education UK Partnership in September 2008. They are designed to help schools plan their marketing and recruitment activities more effectively, build a network of agents, meet parents and students at schools focused events, and gain valuable new contacts and ideas.

The services centre around key countries viewed as priority markets for UK boarding schools, and provide three main types of support:

Market evaluation:

- detailed country reports highlighting the market opportunities for UK boarding schools;
- attitudinal research exploring what parents and students are looking for from a boarding school education.

Marketing and recruitment:

- agent contact listings;
- agent fairs (where schools can meet overseas agents in the UK);
- overseas student recruitment exhibitions;
- promotion on www.educationuk.org and brochure display in British Council offices overseas.



Development and support:

- networking meetings;
- market news and updates;
- professional development and training.

Perhaps one of the most valuable benefits offered by the British Council is its global network offering invaluable local knowledge, facilities and contacts, as Ruthin School, in North Wales, found out last year.

Toby Belfield, Ruthin's Bursar, explains. "We wanted to find ten bright students to join our sixth form. We were offering the places as scholarships, however we knew it would be difficult to organise. We asked the British Council's Education UK Partnership team if they could help and they said they would be delighted.

"They sent information about the scholarships to British Council offices in 25 countries, who contacted local schools and organised scholarship entrance exams at British Council offices. The exam papers were passed directly to us so we could select the students and award the scholarships.

"The British Council staff, both in the UK and overseas, were incredibly helpful and keen to promote UK education. We would have found it very difficult to manage without their network and infrastructure."

So was it a worthwhile exercise? Belfield continues: "It was great for raising our profile in each country. Over 300 students applied for the scheme and it generated a lot of positive publicity. As a result, this year, we have seen a big increase in applications, and the number of international students at the school has almost doubled. The calibre of the overseas students has injected a healthy spirit of competition into the school, and everybody gains from the cultural diversity."

This year, the school is looking to increase the number of international students further. Belfield explains how the new services for boarding schools will help them achieve this goal.

"We have been members of the Education UK Partnership for some time now and I am delighted about the new services specifically for school members. We are already reaping the benefits. We are keen to enter new markets – including Thailand and Singapore. The market intelligence report for Singapore focuses on school age children and the potential for UK boarding schools in this market, helping us in our planning. We are now approaching agents in both these countries with an interest in representing schools and we plan to attend the schools mission in Thailand taking place later in the year."

The new services were developed in consultation with a practitioners' panel drawn from schools across the UK and researched with over 200 schools. They are designed to meet the needs of schools of all shapes and sizes, from those new to international education to those with well established strategies.

Ed Peters, Chair of the Association for Marketing & Development in Independent Schools (AMDIS), says: "AMDIS is delighted to have supported the British Council in its research among schools. AMDIS welcomes the Council's willingness to listen carefully to schools and to formulate its services according to schools' differing needs."

Accessing the services

If you would like to find out more about the services, visit: www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-partnership-boarding-schools.htm

To contact a member of the Education UK

Partnership team, email: educationukpartnership@britishcouncil.org.





AEGIS: Guardian angel for international students

Well-known to many in the boarding school world as the former headmaster of Downside School, Dom Anthony Sutch has recently become chairman of the Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS). *Boarding School* put some questions to him about the organisation and his reasons for taking on its leadership.

Fr Anthony was born in Jordan and lived his teenage years in Middle Eastern countries. “I was sent home to England for my education boarding at Winterfold House and then Downside,” he says. “When I was young, my parents used Universal Aunts to meet me at airports and ensure I was cared for and got to school on time and in the right frame of mind. So I recognise from my own experience how important guardians are in a pupil’s life and, when a boarder, one needs someone outside the school to whom one can turn and in whom one can confide. So for international boarders I have much sympathy and awareness. When a housemaster and a headmaster myself, I was particularly sensitive to the care of my international students.

“So I chose to be involved because of my own experiences but I am increasingly aware of the possible financial exploitation that can occur with international boarders. It is vital that pupils are truly nurtured and cared for and I want to be a part of a process that helps to that end.”

What is AEGIS?

AEGIS, which now has charitable status, brings together schools and guardianship organisations to promote the welfare of international students and also provides a forum for best practice through regular workshops and conferences. The welfare and well-being of international students at boarding schools have rightly become increasingly important to the schools themselves.

AEGIS is the authoritative association for inspecting and accrediting guardianship organisations in the UK in accordance with a strict Code of Practice and current

child care legislation. It was founded in 1994 by a group of established guardianship organisations and boarding schools and is an independent organisation inspecting and accrediting reputable guardianship organisations throughout the UK.

Who runs AEGIS?

AEGIS is an incorporated company limited by guarantee. It is administered by an advisory committee which I now chair and which is made up of 14 highly experienced educational professionals from both boarding schools and guardianship organisations. This committee reports to a board of trustees, also made up of individuals with many years experience of leading boarding schools, guardianship organisations and similar.

How does it work?

It works by bringing together all those – that is, boarding schools and guardianship organisations – who have a responsibility of care for overseas students at UK boarding schools.

By becoming members of AEGIS, guardianship organisations (GOs) commit to operating according to the AEGIS Code of Practice. This includes being regularly inspected and accredited by impartial, objective inspectors who have had Ofsted or ISI training. They can then demonstrate to boarding schools and parents of overseas students that their organisation offers proven best practice in all areas of guardianship including their own business practices and finance.

AEGIS has the support of all the independent schools associations – BSA, HMC, GSA, SHMIS, SBSA, IAPS, ISA and the Independent Schools Council – as well as the British Council, social services, the DCSF, the DTI and Child Safe. So all concerned may be sure that its members are true professionals experienced in both childcare and education.

Schools’ membership ensures that boarding schools can be secure in the knowledge that, by recommending their

overseas' parents work with AEGIS-accredited guardianship organisations, their pupils will be safe and cared for by carefully-vetted host families who fulfil all the criteria required to comply with the Children Act and the DHSS. Member schools also have recourse, via the AEGIS secretariat, to extensive and solid support from sector professionals when in need of information, guidance or help with problems. They may also attend AEGIS conferences and seminars at a reduced rate and appear on the map on AEGIS' website which allows visitors to the site to see where member schools are situated in the UK.

What are the key issues for AEGIS?

Keeping international boarders safe, secure and well cared for when they are not able to be in school – eg during exeat weekends, half-term holidays and when illness, enforced school closure or suspension require them to be with guardians.

Ideally, all guardians should provide a happy, caring and secure environment and be a home away from home for the students. For a variety of reasons, sometimes cost, sometimes unfamiliarity with the guardianship system, sometimes naivety, some overseas parents still entrust

the care of their children to family friends, distant relatives, acquaintances and, even worse, organisations found by internet searches and whose credentials they have not verified. In many instances, the standard of care offered by these hosts falls far short of that which the parents would wish for their child.

AEGIS would like to see all GOs and UK boarding schools working together to ensure that no young person from overseas who joins a UK boarding school runs the risk of being lodged with an unsuitable host family or individual.

Who are the members of AEGIS?

At the moment we have 66 schools and 18 guardianship organisations in membership – but, given the challenges of international boarding now, these numbers are growing weekly. I honestly think that boarding schools cannot afford NOT to be members!

For more information or an application form just log on to www.aegisuk.net or call Janet Bowman, Administration Manager on 01453 755160 or email: secretary@aegisuk.net

Pathfinder: The work goes on

HILARY MORIARTY REPORTS ON THE ENCOURAGING VERDICT ON THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PATHFINDER PROJECT - WHICH AIMS TO HELP VULNERABLE CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM BOARDING EDUCATION - BUT ARGUES THAT MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE.

The year 2009 opened with the publication of the Thomas Coram Institute evaluation of the two year Pathfinder Project, begun in November 2006 to enable more vulnerable children to find their way to boarding schools via their local authorities.

At the start of the project, some 50 boarding schools, both independent and state maintained, and ten local authorities from all over the country were signed up to be part of the project. In no time, with the backing of former schools minister Lord Adonis, a very efficient part time project officer at the DCSF, and a lot of support from educational charities such as The Royal Wanstead Foundation, the Joint Educational Trust and the Frank Buttle Trust, the schools numbered more than 81. Since the start of the evaluation period, interested local authorities have risen to 20.

The official evaluation was generally positive about the project. The media too responded reasonably well to the figures and comments it contained. There was acknowledgement that, even with high level support within the local authorities themselves, it was never going to be a quick fix, getting boarding schools on to the list of

options considered by any front line social worker as a solution to any vulnerable child's problems.

It was disappointing but perhaps not surprising that the total number of pupils placed by local authorities involved in the project, and still in place by the end of the two year evaluation, was only 11. The project was fortunate that the media did not headline this as relative failure – perhaps an indication of how much natural goodwill the underlying proposition enjoys.

So placements may not be easy, but they are more likely if the authority and the school – or schools – have already built the bridges, so that the social worker really knows what it's like in the boarding school, and what a difference a boarding education can make for a disadvantaged child, because the social worker has visited, and talked to pupils themselves, as well as staff, and seen the bedrooms and tried the food.

Much of this work was certainly done during the two years, though it is painfully clear that many schools, willing to consider children sent to them by a local authority, will feel cheated of the fruits of their good intentions. Let us hope that such schools will keep heart

and continue to make themselves an option for hard-pressed social workers trying to devise the best solution to a child's problems.

For though the first phase of the project ended with the formal evaluation, the work goes on. The DCSF has declared that the next challenge is to bring on board more local authorities as well as to increase the number of children placed by each authority.

So expect local and national events to help spread the word and share experience. And if your school has articles or case studies which might make useful promotional material, or experience to share of the practicalities of making this project work for the benefit of many more children, please get in touch.

For the DCSF: denise.eacher@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

For BSA: director@boarding.org.uk

“... it was never going to be a quick fix, getting boarding schools on to the list of options considered by any front line social worker ...”

Media coverage of the Thomas Coram unit's evaluation of the Pathfinder Project was mixed.

The Times, under the headline 'Boarding plan for vulnerable children fails to take hold', reported that, although young people who took part found it very beneficial, '...only a small proportion of those identified by local authorities as potential candidates got through the selection process to take up a place'.

Some schools were not prepared for the 'levels of difficulty' presented by some children, said the paper, but there was also a 'need to challenge the view held by many social care professionals – as well as young people and parents – that boarding schools were only appropriate for those from more privileged backgrounds'.

There was much more sympathetic coverage in *The Guardian*, which led its story: 'Local councils should consider sending children at risk of being taken into care to boarding school, a government review recommends.'

It said that the review 'found that where children who faced family breakdown were carefully matched to a suitable school, boarding offered a range of advantages. According to the evaluation of 17 young people from ten local authorities who were placed in boarding school, 11 were still there showing "clear indications of both educational and social benefits" and it was helping "alleviate strained and complicated family situations".'

The *Local Government Chronicle* took a more positive line, too. 'Local authorities are being told that boarding school can be the right place for some vulnerable children to flourish. According to an evaluation of a two year Government 'pathfinder' programme, councils placing young people who are faced with family breakdown or being put into care should consider the option.'

And it reported Schools Minister Sarah McCarthy-Fry's announcement that government will fund other

local authorities across the country who wish to introduce the option.

A week later, *The Guardian* reiterated its support with a story under the headline 'So much potential, so little help'.

'The government's latest scheme to place vulnerable children in boarding schools has received a broadly good press. But specialists in the field argue that ministers have not gone nearly far enough,' it opened.

The government-sponsored evaluation report of Boarding Pathfinder, it said, concluded that boarding school can be an environment where some vulnerable children will flourish. 'But uptake has been slow: in the two years since Pathfinder's launch only 18 local authorities have signed up and just 23 children have been placed - of whom six have already dropped out.'

Quoting Colin Morrison, chairman of the Royal Wanstead Foundation, the paper pointed out that a boarding place costs up to £20,000 a year, while a place in a children's home costs about £2,500 per week: 'Assisted boarding can help prevent children being taken into care. With 70,000 looked-after children, the figure of 2,000-3,000 potentially avoiding care becomes more significant.'

And there was more positive reporting in some regional papers. *The Eastern Daily Press*, for example, reported that: 'East Anglia's boarding schools are ready to open their doors to children in care after some of the region's neediest youngsters made strides during a pilot placement project.'

Reporting interest from Gresham's School, Wymondham College, New Eccles Hall School at Quidenham, Langley School, Riddlesworth Hall School, Culford School, Framlingham College and the Royal Hospital School at Holbrook, the paper also quoted Terry Cook, head of Norfolk's virtual school for children in care: "It's a very positive project that potentially could be most rewarding. We've made a good start and we've got to build steadily on it."

Boarding across the pond

BSA CHAIRMAN MELVYN ROFFE FOUND HIMSELF FASCINATED BY THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOARDING IN BRITAIN AND THE USA AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICA'S ASSOCIATION OF BOARDING SCHOOLS IN BALTIMORE.

Along with *Parliamentary Democracy*, *habeas corpus*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and the three pin plug, boarding schools are amongst Britain's great contributions to the world. Until quite recently there was a tradition of reciprocal visits between the officers of the BSA and its sister organisations in other parts of the world and one of my aims for my year as BSA Chairman has been to revive and strengthen our links with those associations. It makes sense in a globalised world that our conception of boarding schools should also be global. Whilst we compete with our colleagues in Australia, New Zealand and the United States in the market for international students, we nevertheless have much more

to gain than to lose by stronger cooperation with them.

This academic year has seen BSA National Director Hilary Moriarty address the conference of the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) in Canberra, and we hope to be joined by the Chairmen and National Directors of ABSA and the New Zealand Boarding Schools' Association at our own heads' conference in May 2009.

In December, Hilary and I were both guests at the TABS (The Association of Boarding Schools) conference in Baltimore, Maryland. Outside New England, boarding schools

'motivational' speakers of a high quality. Breakfast was taken standing up amongst the many exhibiting sponsors – not, I suspect, an innovation that would prove popular at BSA conferences – and at the end of the day delegates drifted away in their own groups to restaurants and bars away from the conference venue. We missed the collegiate feel of our conferences but left in no doubt of the value of such reciprocal visits.

Much is familiar to British eyes about the American boarding school scene. Children are children wherever they are. Western civilisation with its fast-moving interconnected culture that is heavy on celebrity and overly light on values, raises similar issues in Denver to those it raises in Devon. But whilst much is familiar, much is also different – and both the similarities and the differences are instructive.

Free of the restrictions of a national curriculum and external testing, the regimes and routines of individual boarding schools differ more even than they do in Britain. Similarly, the schools themselves differ even more markedly than do ours. From small girls' schools in Vermont, to a school set on a 2860 acre ranch in California.

Military schools figure significantly in the ranks of TABS members, but so do alternative, progressive schools. Disciplinary codes vary, but in many a student 'honor code', policed by a student board with the power to impose sanctions is a central part of the boarding ethos.

For most schools, fundraising is a central function – and not just for big capital projects. The hefty fees paid by parents of students at one large boarding school in Massachusetts account for little more than 30% of its revenue spend. The rest is provided by alumni and past and current parents on a voluntary basis, aided by a supportive tax regime.

I attended one session with the headmaster of what must surely be the most generously endowed school in the world. The Milton Hershey School educates some 1500 students from disadvantaged backgrounds for 365 days a year with nearly 1200 staff. Parents pay nothing as everything is funded from the extraordinary benefaction of the man who founded the Hershey chocolate bar empire. Even after the depredations of the economic crisis, the capital sum alone would keep my school running for over 450 years! You might think that the head of such a school would have few problems, but not so. His account of bringing the school out of a period of decline during which the whole organisation had badly lost its



How TABS advertises boarding

are few and (often very) far between in America. Nevertheless, the TABS conference was a mammoth affair catering for everyone in the boarding school community. Thus, unlike most of our conferences, the 800 delegates comprised a mixture of heads, bursars, deputies, house staff, development officers and many others with boarding on their agenda.

Most of the business of the conference took place in a series of concurrent sessions (seminars), mainly led by staff from boarding schools, on an extraordinary range of subjects. Plenary sessions were kept to a minimum with

The TABS conference hotel at harbour side



way, confirmed that there are more important things than money when it comes to running a good boarding school. Without a sense of purpose and mission, and the determination to deliver it, even the wealthiest school will lose its way.

Having been so closely involved with the embryonic Boarding Pathfinder scheme for vulnerable children, I was struck by how much effort was being made by many of the other schools represented, and by the huge number of charitable trusts who were also at the conference, to make boarding education available to a wide range of children. Several charitable schemes not only provide a means for vulnerable children to gain admission to boarding schools, but also lay on familiarisation events and summer schools and provide mentoring for children throughout their time at the school. Being in the voluntary sector, these schemes are free of the bureaucracy that has slowed the Pathfinder process in England, and are entirely focused on ensuring that the child (and sometimes the child's home community, too) can benefit from and achieve success in a boarding school placement. Local authorities should note.

From a personal point of view, the most valuable sessions that I attended were on the subject of the Residential Curriculum – 'ResLife'. American boarding schools are much more likely than their British counterparts to define the boarding experience in terms of a complementary curriculum and to be explicit about expectations of personal, social and ethical development within the boarding community. Whilst such an approach could have obvious dangers if taken to an extreme, it is clearly a useful way of articulating the purpose

of boarding to students – and parents – for whom the ethos of a boarding community is increasingly counter-intuitive and counter cultural. It will certainly inform the way we develop our boarding aims at Wymondham.

I found my attendance at the TABS conference fascinating and I hope others will in future also benefit from the experience of seeing the familiar through different eyes. We have agreed, in outline, to make each association's training courses available to the other's members on a reciprocal basis. Whilst at present this is unlikely to lead to a great deal of transatlantic traffic, in better times, and with the pound worth rather more against the dollar, these are opportunities that I would strongly recommend to Heads and their boarding staff.

USS Constitution in Baltimore Harbor



Ten Years On – Harrow in Asia



A DECADE AFTER ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST FAMOUS EDUCATIONAL BRANDS MADE ITS APPEARANCE IN THAILAND, HARROW INTERNATIONAL'S DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, MATTHEW RILEY, LOOKS BACK AT THE LAST TEN YEARS AND FORWARD TO EXPANSION PLANS ACROSS ASIA

In 1998 one of Britain's most famous schools, Harrow, granted an agreement to open Harrow International School in Bangkok. Ten years later this seems a simple statement to make, but opening a boarding school based on a western model only a year after the Asian financial meltdown proved a much trickier proposition.

The rationale behind Harrow setting up its first school outside England came partly from the strong links between Harrow and the Thai royal family. Fourteen members of the revered monarchy have been to Harrow in England and, whilst the current prime minister may be an old Etonian, there is also a strong network of Harrovians across Asia. The long tradition and history of Thailand which, whilst never colonized by the West, also had consistently positive relations with it, was also a pull factor for the original group of investors who may have seen a condominium by the Chao Priya river, but dreamed of a sister to "the school on the hill" on a greenfield site.

The idea was also to ride the 'Asian Tiger' with its seemingly endless success stories in Japan; was the Nikkei really over 30000 points then? Even before the phenomenal growth in China, the axis of world economies appeared to be shifting East. As many of our target audience were parents who owned large national and multinational companies, the combination of success and history appeared to be a marriage made in heaven.

Amongst other things Bangkok is a byword for impossibly static traffic, so boarding also seemed the best way to promote the extensive activities programmes; the

time to enjoy them being provided by a fledgling boarding environment. That too may seem a simple and obvious statement to a UK clientele familiar with the boarding tradition. What proved a challenge in Thailand was the extremely strong bonds in Asian families. Children often leave home to attend university before, at the end of the course, returning to live *en famille*. Boarding was clearly going to be a difficult sell to some families. But, despite a rollercoaster first few years, Harrow had the advantage over those other schools also trying to find their feet, of a clear sense of identity from its English cousin.

Harrow International, even through those difficult early years, stuck to its core brand values. After 436 years, if Harrow did not know what it was by then, it never would. The easiest course of action for us would have been to cash in the Harrow chips and sell the name like a Big Mac to the highest bidder. Instead, an attitude (of helping others), a character (of being a leader) and an atmosphere (of community) have been developed so that we now have a strong position from which to develop.

Sitting here in 2008 we have two full boarding houses with plans for a third, a 60% non-Thai makeup and several projects in the pipeline both here and abroad. Without the support system that such a strong brand created we could have been another statistic of the post 1997 fallout, but instead we can prepare for the future with confidence and pride.

So what does the future hold for the Harrow brand? The current Head of Harrow Bangkok, Dr Mark

Hensman, will be the Executive Head of the developing Harrow brand across Asia, where a school in Malaysia will be opened in 2010, closely followed by Dubai and a site currently being explored in India. A network of schools can offer children of multinational workers the chance to enjoy a consistent standard of education and thoroughly boarding based experiences. Parents can also be confident that Harrow England has the necessary faith in the project for them to give it their blessing.

In future, the question may no longer be: "where will the kids go to school?" but rather, "does it have a Harrow?"



www.harrowschool.ac.th

Thanks for a unique opportunity

ANNA MAJDIŠOVÁ AND EMÍLIA CHORENDŽÁKOVÁ ARE FROM SLOVAKIA AND ARE STUDYING THIS YEAR AT ST TERESA'S SCHOOL, EFFINGHAM, SURREY, THANKS TO A SCHEME ORGANISED BY THE BSA. THEY TELL *BOARDING SCHOOL* WHAT THE OPPORTUNITY HAS MEANT TO THEM.

Anna and I were thrilled when we got this chance to stay and study here in England as part of the new scheme organised by our own Slovakian Government and the British Boarding Schools Association. We had to enter a sort of competition to write a letter about how the chance to study in the UK would change our lives and the students who wrote the best letters were chosen. This was the first time anyone we knew in Slovakia had had the chance to study in a new school miles away from home and we were really surprised when the Slovakian Government let us know that we had been chosen to come to England and stay for whole year!



When I came here with Anna in September last year we both were very excited to get to know a different way of life. We were also very happy to be in a school where everybody seemed to care about us as well. My school in Stará L'ubovňa is a very caring school and I did not think that I would be lucky and find such a school in England. But I have!

At first it was sometimes very hard to know everything important and a lot of things were difficult to understand but there always were people who were able to help us with the language gaps and to help us to adapt to being here. We have ESL lessons and these have helped a lot. We are both studying the AS courses in German and geography and Anna is also studying business studies and I am taking maths

We've also met lots of new people – teachers and girls – and have made many new friendships. That is the best thing, when you know you can trust someone new; someone you actually have never met before. The boarding staff have been a big help for us. The team of boarding mistresses and the head of boarding are here every day and they are so helpful and such fun. At weekends and after school there are many activities and outings and we have been to London, Guildford and many other places too.

We love being in an English boarding school because, although it is traditional, it is very modern too. We were both very excited when we heard that we had been chosen because we had both read *Harry Potter* and we hoped that St Teresa's would be like Hogwarts! (It isn't!). It is also the first time we have been in a girls' Catholic school in our whole lives; not even in Slovakia! People are really friendly here but we found it funny when some of the girls didn't know where exactly Slovakia is.

We also like the surroundings of this school and English lifestyle. The countryside is very beautiful here but we are also quite near to London so we can go there at weekends. We also like English food very much. We still think that wearing a school uniform is funny, but the girls here say it is good not to need to think about what to wear each day. As we are sixth-formers we do not wear uniform every day but just dark blue suits on special days like prizegiving and open days.

It was a very big deal to spend one year in a foreign country and have the chance to improve our English which is the main reason why we are here. It has changed our lives and will definitely change our futures.

Thank you to everyone who has given us this unique chance.

A right royal occasion – in wellies

THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT OF BRYMORE SCHOOL WAS THE VENUE FOR THIS YEAR'S STATE BOARDING SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, WHICH WELCOMED A ROYAL VISITOR AND HAD A PRIVATE PERFORMANCE OF THE ALL BLACKS' FAMOUS HAKA. BSA NATIONAL DIRECTOR HILARY MORIARTY REPORTS.



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal addressed over a hundred staff and governors of the state boarding schools at the State Boarding Schools' Association Annual Conference, held this year at Brymore School of Rural Technology in Somerset.

Chairman Malcolm Lloyd, Headmaster of Brymore, was delighted that the conference coincided with a royal visit arranged to open new boarding and classroom accommodation at the school. Her Royal Highness took the opportunity to speak briefly about her own time as a boarder – apparently the pleasures of boarding school, which were many, were not necessarily uppermost in her

mind the night before she returned to school, but she was always completely convinced of them within a day or two of term starting.

In her role of Patron of the Royal Wanstead Foundation educational trust, The Princess Royal thanked the state schools in her audience for their support of the Foundation. 20% of children placed in boarding schools by the Royal Wanstead attended state boarding schools; evidence of the positive effects of such placements was overwhelming.

The new boarding accommodation in particular, according to Headmaster Malcolm Lloyd, had brought



Brymore straight from nineteenth century into the twenty first century. Benefitting from the government's last tranche of funding to improve and expand state boarding, Brymore had constructed boarding houses with highly attractive four-bed dormitories for their 13–16 year old students, and spacious classroom accommodation.

The SBSA conference is unusual in that delegates attend for most of two days but only one night. The night is spent in a hotel, but the conference itself, including the Conference Dinner, is held, one year in two, in the Chairman's school. Delegates therefore had ample opportunity to explore a school which, as the Chairman



'Bring your wellies'

and legend, who managed to inspire as well as entertain and alarm – the *haka* is quite impressive even when done solo by a genial gentleman in a dinner suit.

told them, took pupils for whom mainstream education might be completely wasted, gave them a great grounding in rural technology, including blacksmithing, market gardening and animal husbandry, and produced well rounded, happy citizens ready to pursue agricultural and related degree courses and work in the farms and forests of Britain. Not for nothing was the title of this year's conference, 'Bring your wellies'.

The after dinner speaker this year was Sean Fitzpatrick, the New Zealand All Black Captain and legend, who managed to inspire as well as entertain and alarm – the *haka* is quite impressive even when done solo by a genial gentleman in a dinner suit.



Original articles on boarding issues are always welcome.

If you have a story please contact:

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The deadline for the next edition of Boarding School
(Issue No.30) is 28 August 2009.

Copy for this edition should be sent to the Editor at the above address.

License to lead

THE LICENSED VICTUALLERS' SCHOOL IN ASCOT HAS GROWN OUT OF ALL RECOGNITION FROM ITS MODEST BEGINNINGS TWO CENTURIES AGO IN SOUTH LONDON. ASSISTANT HEAD AND HEAD OF BOARDING, CHRIS SEAL, WRITES ABOUT THE SCHOOL'S CONTINUING AMBITION TO BE A MARKET LEADER.

In times of financial difficulty, all schools look at their budgets and tighten belts accordingly. The Licensed Victuallers' School in Ascot will be no different and indeed there will be a special resonance at this unique establishment. Completely owned by the well-resourced Licensed Trade Charity, LVS has a direct link to the recently suffering drinks trade. The charity has received a sharp increase in applications for assistance from publicans, and families associated with the trade due to the harsh climate and the relentless closure of pubs, particularly in rural areas.

The tradition of educating sons and daughters of impoverished trade members stretches back to February 1803, when six boys and fourteen girls were chosen, from

those already receiving assistance from the Friendly Society of Licensed Victuallers, to attend a new school on Kennington Lane, Lambeth. Hard to believe now, but Lambeth was nothing more than a village then, and suited the first society bye-law "that a school be established in a wholesome and airy situation".

So the school, co-educational from the start, and now grown to 900 pupils, was begun. All the original pupils were boarders; supervised by Mrs Wilkinson, they were supported by a cook, domestic servants, a schoolmaster and an apothecary. It doesn't sound too far removed from the labour-intensive boarding establishment of the 21st century does it? Ofsted, however, might be concerned if we continued to serve ale to the pupils for breakfast, as

happened in the early 19th century.

In the 1830s, following the increased traffic over the newly built Waterloo Bridge, the school was rebuilt on Kennington Lane and, due to the increased prosperity of the licensed trade's newspaper *Morning Advertiser*, Prime Minister Lord Melbourne laid the foundation stone for a school that would soon hold 250 students. The *Advertiser* had first appeared in 1794, and with only *The Times* and *The Morning Chronicle* as competition, it soon reached good levels of circulation and highly profitable status. Indeed the LTC still retains a healthy stake in this venerable publication, as well as other important assets.

Whilst in London, the school built a heated swimming pool in 1891 for the princely sum of £3248, and regularly used the Kennington Oval as its playing fields. This established a tradition of the school being ahead of its time. Even now, the school's purpose built facilities in Ascot have a thoroughly modern feel and, in some areas such as the



magnificent theatre and state of the art pool, LVS can claim to be a market leader.

By 1920 London no longer provided that airy environment that the trustees desired and so plans were made for a move. Having borrowed money from Barclays Bank, the school moved to Slough in 1921. Incredible though it seems now, Slough did, in those days, offer the right surroundings and with the purchase of the adjacent Wellesley Estate, playing fields were also secured. Many a happy year was had on the Slough campus and the school thrived and struggled in the usual cyclic way that all independent schools do. Headmaster Coleman's reputation suffered after systemic bullying was uncovered in the mid 1930s, Headmaster McDowell and his matron were sacked so that the trustees could appoint a married couple to cover both roles at a saving, and both world wars provided challenges for the school due to power shortages and Luftwaffe bombing.

It was with the headship of Charles Hart that the school began to grow consistently. In 1955 he opened the door to pupils from outside the drinks trade and at a stroke secured the long term future of the school. Hart and successive heads built impressive new facilities, and ensured that when Slough became less than the 'wholesome and airy' environment that we are now comfortable with, LVS had a valuable site to sell. Almost all of the £17 million that had been raised, was ploughed into the purchase and development of the London Road site in Ascot, where royalty had once attended prep school.

So now the leafy 26 acre site holds around 50 pupils directly from the licensed trade, and supported by the Welfare Division of the LTC. Two hundred of the nine hundred students, are boarders, and the school has once again found itself in an airy environment. Yes, the roads are busy. Yes, London and Heathrow are close. But, the campus is quiet and green, and the environment conducive to learning, and the proximity of M25, M3, M4 and the largest airports in the country also have enormous benefits.

Learning is, of course, the *raison d'être* of all schools of this type. But the non-selective entrance policy, based on the needs of the student rather than that of the school (a cornerstone of LTC policy), has survived. LVS therefore puts itself in an interesting and vibrant segment of the boarding market. As a consequence the boarding population is enormously varied. There is a proportion from the 'trade', many from armed service families, some overseas students (though no more than a fifth of the overall boarding population), and also pupils from families that value boarding as a crucial part of a youngster's educational development.

Arguably, the flexibility and adaptability of this organisation puts it in a sound position to take on the financial difficulties to come. The LTC remain passionate about the importance of boarding and have backed this passion with a £150,000 investment for 2009 in Guinness House. Fifty five boys will receive new furniture, carpets, curtains and decoration. To underline



their commitment to riding out this uncertain period, the trustees recently agreed to a long term refurbishment and rebuilding programme of the other houses named after significant trade names; Carlsberg, Bass and Gilbey (gin, in case you were wondering!). This at the same time as undergoing a £3 million investment in Hassocks, a special needs school under the LTC brand in Sussex, and a rebuilding project on The Elvian School in Reading, another recent acquisition by this forward looking group.

If any group of schools is ready for the change and challenge of the current situation, and to maintain its commitment to boarding, this one is.

A partnership of difference

FOR NEARLY TEN YEARS, ST MARY'S ASCOT, A SMALL GIRLS' BOARDING SCHOOL, HAS COLLABORATED SUCCESSFULLY WITH A LARGE NEARBY MIXED COMPREHENSIVE. YET, AT FIRST GLANCE, THE TWO SCHOOLS COULD HARDLY BE MORE DIFFERENT...



For almost ten years now, Charters School, a large mixed comprehensive with 1600 students in Sunningdale, Ascot, has worked in close partnership with St Mary's School Ascot, a small girls' Catholic boarding school with 350 students.

At first glance, it would appear that there is very little similarity between the schools: one mixed, one single-sex; one a day school, the other boarding; one comprehensive, the other selective; one in the state sector, the other fee-paying; one non-denominational, the other Catholic

However, over the past decade, we have found many ways of successfully working together in partnership.

The first collaboration between Charters and St Mary's came from necessity for both schools. They each had two pupils in the lower sixth who wished to study A level drama. At the time, the Board required that a minimum of four pupils were needed to run the course, because of the nature of the performance coursework. The Heads brought the drama departments together and they agreed to run the course jointly – two pupils from St Mary's and two from Charters (a boy and a girl). The year was so successful that word spread among the pupils and the following year both schools were oversubscribed for drama – so there was no need to share the course! However, both schools enjoyed and benefited from the experience and the departments continued to share expertise and resources.

As the year progressed, the schools found other ways of helping each other. The more obvious examples – sharing facilities – went very well, with Charters using St Mary's swimming pool and AstroTurf, and St Mary's using Charters' squash courts, floodlight netball courts and multi-gym. More imaginative examples sprang up during discussions between the two heads and from bringing together heads of departments from both schools.

An 'Oxbridge and Medics Afternoon' was planned for November 2002. This involved twelve potential Oxbridge and medical candidates from Charters joining twelve St Mary's Oxbridge hopefuls at St Mary's. The afternoon began with shared lunch and then presentations from admissions tutors and students from Oxford and Cambridge and from a medical admissions tutor. This was followed by group activities, and individual interviews and feedback with the admissions tutors and with staff from St Mary's and Charters. The heads both took part and gave practice interviews in their specialist subjects to each other's pupils. This collaboration is now in its seventh year and regularly involves up to 40 pupils, and is run by the heads of sixth form.

The list of other collaborations and joint initiatives is now a long one:

- A visit from an Ofsted inspector to St Mary's as part of the Charters' inspection;

- Professional development exchange between heads of PE;
- A St Mary's pupil studying AS level PE at Charters;
- The head of Charters joining the selection panel and interviews for St Mary's deputy head;
- St Mary's providing written support for Charters' successful application for Sports College status;
- The head of Charters delivering INSET to St Mary's senior management team on the use of Midyis and target setting. This INSET led to us developing our own target setting system for pupils which has been very successful and is now in its fifth year;
- A Charters/St Mary's staff hockey match;
- St Mary's Latin teacher attends Charters for a lesson once a week to offer GCSE Latin as part of the Charters Gifted and Talented programme;
- St Mary's provides an alternative venue at short notice for large scale events in the case of an emergency for Charters (eg power failure);
- Charters has welcomed one teacher from St Mary's on the GTP programme to gain experience by having a quarter timetable at Charters;
- NQTs from St Mary's have visited Charters as part of their professional development;
- Both heads have observed lessons in each other's schools;
- Information from Charters to St Mary's on successful government initiatives and how they are implemented, for example the drive for improving nutritional standards in catering;
- Charters pupils joining St Mary's for Modern Foreign Languages Club.

And new this year:

- Collaboration between head girls from St Mary's and head girls and boys from Charters;
- Joint programme of Chinese Mandarin lessons for able pupils at KS3 and 4.



Charters' head,

Marcia Twelftree, writes:

I have really enjoyed working with Mary Breen over the past years. It has surprised me how many of our issues are shared ones and our pupils and staff have gained much from our informal partnership work.

Charters students have gained confidence from knowing that students from private schools

are no different, no better, just equal in terms of their hopes and aspirations for the future. For St Mary's girls, it has been a welcome opportunity to interchange with a mixed school and see things from a day student's perspective.

St Mary's have helped to satisfy their charitable status by providing some assistance for Charters with our Latin teaching and we are about to start a joint provision in Mandarin for able students from both schools, and again this is funded by St Mary's. For us, this is true



Textile recycling at Charters School

partnership, working for the benefit of the community. Surely this is better than some of the Government ideas that private schools should offer free scholarship places to children in their location? We feel that all this would achieve is to strip some of the comprehensive schools of some of its brighter pupils. In our partnership, our brighter pupils are enabled to work together and gain from each other.

Many times you read about the wonderful facilities at private schools compared with state schools and certainly St Mary's has beautiful grounds and buildings. However, up until 2005, they came to use the Charters School fitness gymnasium because they had no provision such as this, and many of Charters facilities are just as good as those found in the private sector.

Partnership working is about learning from each other, using the links to raise teaching and learning standards and gaining from professional dialogue between colleagues from two outstanding schools. Is this not good state/private partnership?

St Mary's Ascot headmistress, Mary Breen, writes:

The essence of a successful collaboration is that the two Heads enjoy each other's company! It is also vital that each school is benefiting from the links – that it is not just a one way stream.

When Marcia and I met we soon discovered that we have a great deal in common. We are both science teachers, both of us enjoy our teaching very much and we each enjoy working with other schools. There was no sense of threat in either of our minds, nor was there any feeling that one school is better than the other. Perhaps we are fortunate in that the schools are so very different. But what we have in common is more important: each school strives for excellence in all that we do.

Whenever we plan any joint venture, the education and welfare of the pupils from both schools are at the forefront of our minds. We have been delighted with all the work we have jointly undertaken.



From buddy system to peer mentoring

IT WAS HER OWN EXPERIENCE AS A MOTHER WHICH LED HELENE COMPAIN HOLT, HOUSEMISTRESS AND HEAD OF LANGUAGES AT TETTENHALL COLLEGE, WOLVERHAMPTON, TO APPROACH THE INTEGRATION OF NEW ARRIVALS IN HER BOARDING HOUSE IN A NEW WAY.

When my two young daughters started school in England the aspect I struggled with the most was the endless list of kit required for all the different activities. Different colour socks, shorts, PE pants, art apron, science apron... The level of organisation required was overwhelming and I was paranoid about sending them with the wrong kit and being labelled as inefficient.

We had just arrived from Germany where they attended a small kindergarten with no specific request for any specific equipment. I would drop them at 6.30 am and collect them at 2.00 pm if they were awake, if not later.

The more rigid organisation we had to adopt when coming back to England was, retrospectively, an excellent preparation for my future role as housemistress. I experienced as a mother the reactions to my daughters' exposure to new food, new tastes, new language, new daily routine, new norms, and basically, a new way of life. What my four- and six-year-old daughters were telling me I was going to hear a few years later from twenty teenage girls at school. The questions have been endless: "Why am I in a different House, we all sleep here?" (referring to the House system); "What does it mean 'Entering me for an exam?'"; "What is prep?"

To absorb so many new concepts and understand the new meaning of familiar words is a big step for anyone and, to make this step easier, I introduced a buddy system. As soon as a boarder enrolls and the school has all her details, a current boarder contacts her via email. This enables new girls to ask any question about the boarding house and boarding life. The fact this exchange takes place between peers is also more conducive to open inquiries. On arrival, the newcomers have a familiar name and face to meet and for the first two weeks, their buddy is available and escorts them to their lessons and different activities.

Whenever possible I try to pair girls from different nationalities. It is part of a wider scheme to engineer their integration. It may of course sound slightly naïve to believe that the natural tendency to gravitate to people

from similar linguistic and ethnic backgrounds can be countered. When carefully planned and orchestrated, however, interactions between the different nationalities can be improved.

I always present the following scenario to the girls whenever I notice a tension likely to develop: imagine that you are in Australia or in India or any country where an English and a Chinese boarder feel strangers and ask yourself the following questions. Who would you turn to for help? Who would you feel more at ease with? Gradually it helps each girl to realise that that they have more in common than they were aware of. Their differences may outnumber the things they have in common at school but in a new situation the bond they have is deeper and outweighs their differences.

I see my role as the housemistress as being to create a substantial bank of common experiences so that the girls feel part of the same team. Outings and house events help to achieve that aim. The buddy system consolidates this process and has led to a peer mentoring scheme.

Currently a group of volunteers in Year 12 follow a training programme delivered internally in school. The main aspects of what mentoring entails are covered; we do role plays so that students have the opportunity to practise the basic principles of listening skills. The training lasts a term, after which the students follow a rota in pairs to hold a drop-in session at lunch time. An assembly is held once a term to promote the importance of these sessions so that pupils are always aware of the service. I meet the mentors once a month to review the arrangements – location, timing and so on – and remind them of the importance of speaking to the Child Protection Officer should they encounter a situation listed as difficult. This is also an opportunity to create a feeling of togetherness and belonging between the mentors.

The scheme has recently started and already Year 12 are asking me when their training will start. It is interesting to see that the majority of the mentors are boarders. The latest are already sensitive to the values of the mentoring programme because they are part of the training they follow as House Prefects. As boarders they are also more aware of the importance of having somebody to talk to.

The aim is now to introduce a qualification which is nationally recognised. Already one student who is a mentor and head of boarding house has been inspired by the experience to apply to do a degree in counselling and psychotherapy.



Catering for hard times

RISING FOOD COSTS ARE A MAJOR HEADACHE FOR BOARDING SCHOOLS IN CHALLENGING ECONOMIC TIMES. CONSULTANT EDWARD HALL SAYS THAT A RADICAL APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF CATERING COULD BE WORTH THE EQUIVALENT OF SEVERAL BOARDERS' FEES.



“Times is ‘ard.” And going to get harder for independent schools, as parents increasingly find the £20,000 to £25,000 annual boarding fees more and more of a burden. But you know that already.

If the school roll drops as a result, the bursar is going to find balancing the budget a real challenge. That is not exactly an original thought either. You are well aware that there may be no surplus at the end of the year to fund the new tennis courts, the refurbishment costs of the sixth form common room or an updated telephone system. Those and similar projects will all have to be put on hold, possibly indefinitely, unless someone does something and does it now!

That someone is you! Headmasters and headmistresses usually flourish in financially successful schools but, when the cash dries up, something has to give. I believe that, before facilities are reduced and long before structural change is contemplated, some simple good housekeeping can help to keep the wolf from the door.

Would you fly with an airline that had a policy of economising on maintenance? Do you expect parents to send their children to a school that has a policy of

reducing the quality and quantity of its food? If you answered ‘Yes’ to either of those questions, read no further and make speedy application to the Flat Earth Society.

School catering is, however, one area in which significant economies can be made without any deleterious effect upon the quality of the cuisine. The key is, in a nutshell, to ‘buy smart’ and this brief article tells you how to do it.

First, face the facts. The cost of food is high, but it is a fundamental overhead in the administration of a school. It may not accelerate a pupil’s passage to Oxbridge but good food, cooked and presented well, is initially a recruiting incentive and later a retention factor.

Food costs are increasing: by 10.7% over the 12 months to November 2008, for example. Just think about the impact that this one single statistic will already have had on a boarding school – your school for example. A very broad formula for the annual cost of food in boarding schools was to multiply the number of boarders by £1100. It follows that a school with 300 boarders spending circa £330K in 2007/8 now faces the prospect of spending



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around £365K in 2008/9, an increase of £35K simply because of food inflation. As we all know, market conditions mean that you can't just put up the fees to meet this, and other, rises in costs. The need to arrest this upward spiral is obvious. Doing nothing may be comfortable but it is, most emphatically, not an option.

All boarding schools have the potential to save between £25K and £50K by spending shrewdly on food provision. In a large school the realisable savings could be as much as £100K. This equates to the fee income of four or five boarders, the salary of, say, three members of staff or, more prosaically, those new tennis courts, nets included.

How do you realise these magical savings? Some ideas to whet your appetite:

- Are you procuring your food stuffs at the best price – and how do you know?
- What comparators do you have? If none, what are you going to do about it?
- Ask your bursar when he/she last properly 'benchmarked' food prices.
- Enquire when your catering arrangements were last audited and checked; who checks that food invoiced to the school is actually delivered?
- Your caterer may be a jolly good sort but is he/she efficient?
- Does your school manage individual food supplier invoices within the accounts department and if so why? Central billing is available at a fraction of the cost.
- How can you or your bursar understand the cost of your food consumption if the value of stock (normally thousands of pounds) is not being calculated at least monthly? The school's money is tied up on the shelves; is this stock held at the right level?

All this is part of a process to ensure that your school is obtaining accurate, relevant and current financial information to enable it to focus on making the right decisions at the right time. That small list was just for starters. Now to some advice that will involve effort and an acceptance that changed circumstances, such as we have today, require a changed approach. To make a start, separate the cost of materials from the cost of catering labour, and then invite the bursar to make two separate buying decisions. These are:

- How is your catering management service to be provided (in-house or contractor)?
- What is the best and most cost effective basis for food procurement – not necessarily the 'most convenient'? Convenience costs money – lots and lots of money.

In my experience, more and more schools are taking this approach, splitting their buying on catering and adopting 'best buying practices.' By this, I mean realising cost savings. It's about paying the right price for products and services from suppliers who are honest, committed, trustworthy and particularly, as far as food is concerned, safe. They must be able to produce all the acquired

accreditation certificates, as well as having effective traceability procedures in place - where do you stand personally if your school is supplied with hazardous food and children suffer? And they need to be reliable – it's no good having the right price if deliveries are always late. Require a can-do attitude from your suppliers.

How do you find the right supplier? You could expect your school-employed caterer to trawl the market place, local and national, and negotiate best terms. (It is great to support local suppliers, but not at any price.) Or you could trust completely the judgement and probity of your catering contractor. In this scenario, you have to be utterly confident that your contractor charges you the right price for food bought on your behalf. You need to know if there are 'kick backs' from their suppliers and if you are not sure make enquiries.

Alternatively you could engage an expert food broker to work with your bursar and caterer (school- or contractor-employed) to deliver savings from transparent and operationally sensible and sensitive best buying practices.

Your food bill of £300,000-£500,000 is big business to contractors, local suppliers, and catering managers. Your school's level of professional buying expertise and tiers of ordering authority deserve close and detailed attention.

Perhaps you think your bursar already does all of that, or the catering manager sees to all that on his behalf. Perhaps they do, but there may be a great deal of money to be saved here and you really can't afford to say, 'the time is not right'. Change is uncomfortable. I know bursars who, despite awareness of major savings on offer, have deliberately decided to pay the increased costs in order to avoid the minor domestic turbulence that a change in food sourcing may require. 'The time is not right' is an easy route to take, and saves upsetting the apple cart. It may only be a matter of time before apples, cart and horse become the responsibility of the receiver!

As a food broker it is my job to know how best to marry the needs of boarding schools with food markets and suppliers. I know that savings of at least 10%, and in many cases much more, can be achieved on your food bill right now.

But the savings will not happen in your school unless you are receptive to both objective opinions and 'managing change'. Times is 'ard at the moment and will get much harder, especially if you do choose to nothing.

Edward Hall has been involved with providing business services for over 25 years to the independent schools sector. He is Managing Director of allmanhall, an expert food-broking organisation that provides purchasing consultancy and complete buying management services exclusively for independent schools:
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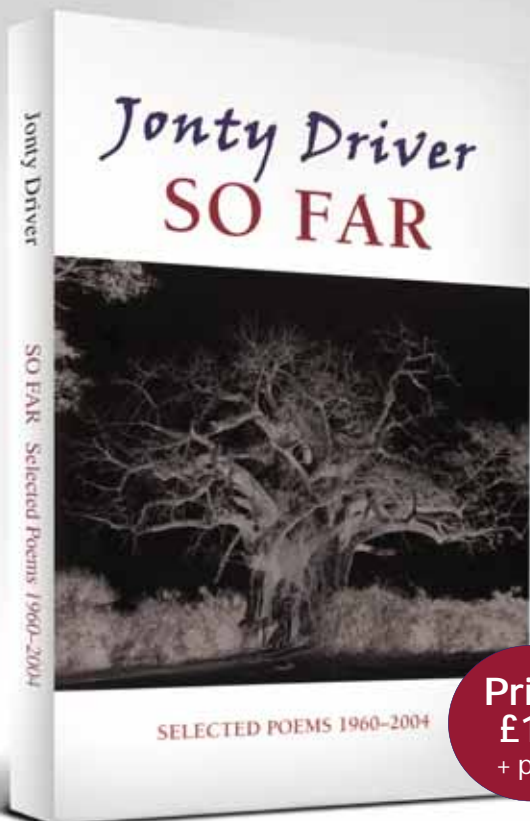


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Stamped with distinction

A group of pupils and staff from Dauntsey's School, Wiltshire, have had the great, and probably unique, privilege of having their photograph featured on a national stamp. The stamp, issued by the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, shows a group photograph with a stunning mountain backdrop, and is worth 10 ngultrum (the Bhutanese national currency).

In December 2005, 17 pupils and three members of staff from Dauntsey's School made the history books by becoming the first ever school group to visit the remote Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. They spent two weeks in the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', exploring the country's cultural heritage and meeting local people, and on a six day trek in the Jumolhari mountain region. It was during the trek when the group photograph was taken: little did the English school pupils know at the time that their faces would be immortalised on the Bhutanese national stamp!

Independent travel to Bhutan is not permitted, and visitor numbers are strictly limited in order to protect the culture and environment of this special country, famous

for having 'Gross National Happiness' as the key aim of the national government.

Dauntsey's headmaster, Stewart Roberts, said: "This is a real honour. It was a great privilege for our pupils and staff to be allowed to visit this special and remote corner of the world. We are delighted that what was such a memorable event has been commemorated by the Bhutanese people in this most significant way."

The printing of the stamp coincides with the forthcoming Dauntsey's School Expedition and Mountaineering Society's second visit to Bhutan: another group of pupils and staff are due to visit in December 2009.





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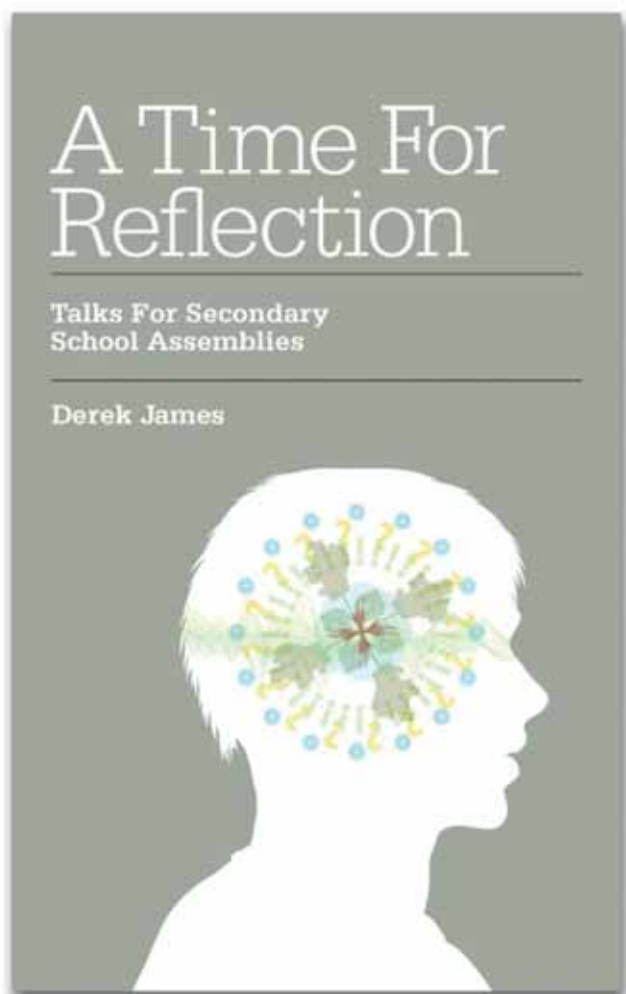
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Making connections in assembly



A TIME FOR REFLECTION: TALKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

BY DEREK JAMES

BOOK GUILD PUBLISHING £8.99

REVIEWED BY LESLEY FALCONER,
HEADMISTRESS,
ST TERESA'S SCHOOL,
EFFINGHAM

Headteachers have many things in common, and even more differences, but the continuous quest for the memorable assembly must be very near the top of the list! We have all taken an assembly with which we were satisfied: the content and delivery seemed to work in that both staff and pupils were interested. We even dare hope that they were inspired. We also encourage other members of staff to lead assemblies which have a variety of audiences: whole school, a specific year group.

It is for these reasons we all welcome a publication like *A Time For Reflection*. As James rightly says in his introduction, we often err on the side of caution and assume pupils leave their curiosity and intellect at the door of the assembly hall. Whether we are experienced at public speaking or new recruits it is useful to remember that successful assemblies encourage pupils and staff to reflect. Ideas and tips on presentation and timing are always worth sharing.

James provides a range of assembly topics to enable an exploration of worthwhile issues in various interesting guises. The collection includes moral and religious themes with a separate section for sixth-formers. James has an engaging way of personalising his talks: on reading a tribute in his school magazine to a former pupil who had died at the age of 13, he was introduced to a quote

from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (What Makes a Man). He also admitted to his love of the sea (Calming the Storm) leading into a discussion of passages from the Bible. Vital to maintaining the interest of a student audience is that they learn about the speaker; that discovery encourages a connection to develop.

The stories James selects are varied and are drawn from different cultures and religions, history and the Bible. There are relevant quotations which can be used to develop assemblies for the individual speaker. This would seem to be James' intention; his talks are very much for his use but can be easily adapted to suit most speakers and occasions.

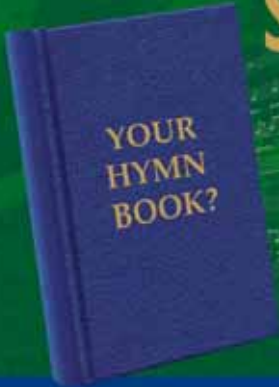
An example of James developing his idea of encouraging audiences to reflect is found in his sixth form assemblies. In an assembly titled Tradition he utilises a teenager's need to be indifferent until won round in his introduction.

As Head of a girls' school it seemed to me that the themes, in many instances, were explored in a way most likely to appeal to a male audience. I am sure, however, that both sexes would pay attention to a talk entitled Frogs in a Bucket of Milk!

I am more than happy to add this collection of original thoughts and ideas to my assembly armoury.

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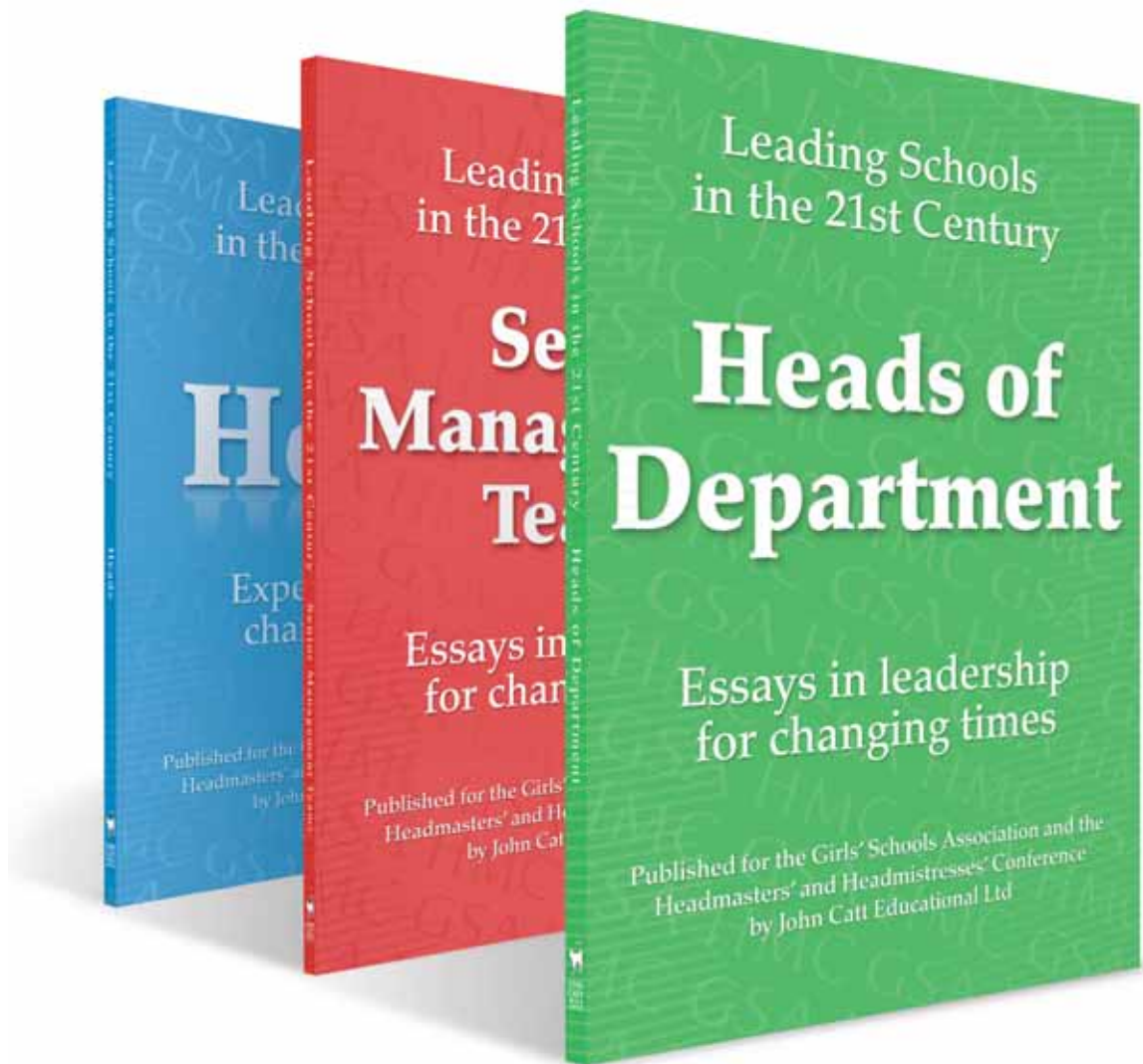


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