

NORTH & SCOTLAND

ARDVRECK ●●
CRIEFF, PERTSHIRE PH7 4EX
 Website ardvreckschool.co.uk
 Head **Dan Davey** Pupils 125 day and boarding; 69 boys, 56 girls Faith Inter-denom Ages 3-13 Term fees Day: £4,655; boarding: £6,997
 Ardvreck's new head is called Dan Davey: sounds rather like a superhero, doesn't he? He reckons his pupils are superheroic too – 'gutsy individuals', he calls them. The entire school took on the Ard Challenge (and was it 'ard – an 11-mile hike with fiendish tests along the way), and the pipe band played at the top of Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain. This is Scotland's only full-boarding, stand-alone prep (ie, not attached to a senior school), with a single exeat either side of half term. Pupils scoop an average of 13 scholarships each year to the likes of Merchiston and Uppingham. 'At Ardvreck, unless you are told you can't, you can,' says Mr Davey. To infinity and beyond.

AYSGARTH SCHOOL ●●
BEDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE DL8 1TF
 Website aysgarthschool.com Head **Rob Morse** Pupils 147 boys, day and boarding Faith C of E Ages 8-13 Term fees Day: £6,100; boarding: £7,490
 They believe in letting boys be boys at Aysgarth, the only English single-sex boarding prep north of Oxford. Worried mums are reassured by newish head Rob Morse (who likes to trumpet boys awake) and his



artistic wife Lottie, who consider this 'a home that has a school built around it'. Boarding is encouraged, and all 147 boys snuggle down under the same roof – handy for whole-school pillow fights. Entry is non-selective (get that name down at birth) and learning fun (maths teacher Mr Bullas has been known to dish out pork pies as prizes), with more than 50 activities, from scuba diving to origami to keep these muddy-kneed, national-prep-school cross-country champs busy. We're told housemasters at Eton, Harrow and Uppingham are eager to have Aysgarthians in their mix. 'Teaching staff really can find the Shakespearean actor in the rugby player,' says one marvellous mother.

BELHAVEN HILL ●●
DUNBAR, EAST LOTHIAN EH42 1NN
 Website belhavenhill.com Head **Henry Knight** Pupils 129 day and boarding; 69 boys, 60 girls Faith Inter-denom Ages 7-13 Term fees Day: £5,150; boarding: £7,359
 'It's like leaving them with a family friend,' sighs one mother. 'I only wish they could stay there until they're 18.' Praise indeed for this tippy-top Scottish prep school, which bids adieu to dynamic duo Innes and Sandy MacAskill in the summer. Fear not, for in swoops southern spark Henry Knight, former head of Woodcote House, Surrey, to continue the good work. This little bunch impresses us big time: a crop of scholarships to Oundle, Ampleforth and Rugby last year, top prizes at the IAPS athletics national final and unbeaten U11



DID YOU KNOW?

It's said that Baldersby Park, the home of Queen Mary's School, inspired Julian Fellowes to write *Downton Abbey* – he knows the area well having been a student at nearby Ampleforth.

rugby and cricket teams. Full-boarding for all in the last two years ('the girls' house is gorgeous,' gushes our mole), and we reckon there may soon be more dogs than teachers. In fact, pooch Bramble the Bedlington is a local celebrity. Follow him @BrambleBeddie.

CARGILFIELD SCHOOL ●●
GAMEKEEPER'S ROAD, EDINBURGH EH4 6HU
 Website cargilfield.com Head **Rob Taylor** Pupils 303 day and boarding; 183 boys, 120 girls Faith C of S Ages 3-13 Term fees Day: £5,040; boarding: £6,185
 This may be Scotland's oldest prep, but it's definitely not its shabbiest. The changing rooms boast underfloor heating, and the roaring fire in head Rob Taylor's study means

Cargilfield could be mistaken for the smartest of country clubs. Standards are high (check out that spotless uniform), as are the stakes in hotly contended rugby matches against northern rivals – the U9 team has just enjoyed an unbeaten season. They're ahead in the classroom too: over 26 scholarships and awards were won last year, and more than half of leavers headed south to Oundle, Rugby and Wycombe Abbey. Energy is expended via the annual 20km Pentland walk, and kayaking and sailing in Port Edgar – and then replenished via the favoured form of reward: chocolate cake. The flexi-boarding system is every parent's dream: Matron only needs a couple of hours' warning for a midweek sleepover.

CUNDALL MANOR SCHOOL ●●
CUNDALL, NORTH YORKSHIRE YO61 2RW
 Website cundallmanorschool.com
 Heads **Amanda Kirby and John Sample** Pupils 359 day and boarding; 203 boys, 156 girls Faith C of E Ages 2 ½-16 Term fees Day: £4,925; boarding: £6,475
 'They're like the mum and dad of our school,' exclaims one peppy pupil about head duo Amanda Kirby and John Sample. Cundall is thriving under this dream team, with nine scholarships, an ISA-award-winning production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and a Guinness World Record for the largest hockey lesson (500 people, no less). 'We are an eclectic mix of pupils and parents,' says the school – and activities, we'd add: the chocolate-cake race is brilliantly bonkers and the wackiest trip last year was a ghost tour of York. Numbers are up, and the flexi- and weekly-boarding is extremely popular with parents. 'But we are predominantly a day school,' says Cundall. Leavers skip off to Ampleforth, St Peter's and Uppingham, sad to leave their Jack Wills-esque uniform behind.



Belhaven Hill

MOWDEN HALL SCHOOL ●●
NEWTON, STOCKSFIELD, NORTHUMBERLAND NE43 7TP
 Website mowdenhall.co.uk Head **Neal Bailey** Pupils 166 day and boarding; 81 boys, 85 girls Faith Non-denom Ages 3-13 Term fees Day: £5,550; boarding: £7,630
 Two years into his headship, and Neal Bailey is ensuring Mowden remains in excellent nick. We love the all-pervading spirit of enthusiasm, whether it's playing 12 hours of non-stop football for charity or staging a pirate kidnapping by Captain Hack Barrow (aka Mr Bailey). And with all the bell-ringing, sausage-making and ice hockey on offer, no wonder over 90 per cent board. All Mowdenites spend a full term at Sauveterre, the Cothill Trust's chateau near Toulouse, polishing their French and sampling the local food, plus there's half-term skiing in the Pyrenees. Last year, there were bucketloads of scholarships, and all leavers won places at their first-choice schools, Shrewsbury and Ampleforth to name a couple. Everyone gets the chance to represent Mowden in sport, and one pupil was recently poached for the U14 England rounders team. Next up, a new all-weather pitch, meaning even the wild climes of the north-east won't stop the fun.



Aysgarth School

right into this outdoorsy school, set around an 18th-century mansion, where real dogs roam classrooms, ever hopeful for homemade cake. Weekly boarding is the popular norm: no one wants to miss mattress-surfing down the grand staircase. Traversing the Great Hall across scaffolding poles or swimming in the River Swale also help to develop the girls' robust, can-do attitude, all within a Christian culture of kindness. Around 100 pupils ride (12 have their own horses). And they're pretty nifty at rounders. Every leaver achieved their first-choice school last year, with sports scholarships to Uppingham and Sedbergh. Arts and sports

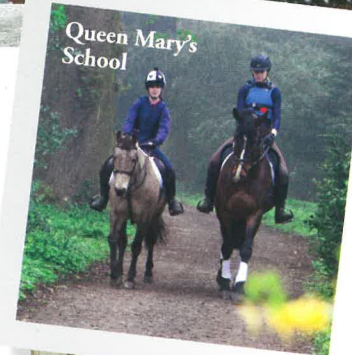
facilities could do with a facelift. We hear that's next on Mrs Cameron's list, now she's spruced up the uniforms and – thank goodness – the food.

LITTLE SIBLINGS

The schools listed below also have prep schools. For their full listings, see the **North & Scotland Public Schools** section, page 68

- AMPLEFORTH ●●
- FETTES ●●
- GIGGLESWICK ●●
- GORDONSTOUN ●●
- KILGRASTON ●●
- THE KING'S SCHOOL, CHESTER ●●
- LATHALLAN SCHOOL ●●
- LORETTO ●●
- MERCHISTON CASTLE SCHOOL ●●
- ROBERT GORDON'S COLLEGE ●●
- ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS ●●
- ST LEONARDS SCHOOL ●●
- ST PETER'S SCHOOL ●●
- SEDBERGH ●●
- WITHINGTON GIRLS' SCHOOL ●●

ST MARY'S MELROSE ●●
ABBEY PARK, MELROSE TD6 9LN
 Website stmarysmelrose.org.uk Head **Liam Harvey** Pupils 162 day and boarding; 79 boys, 83 girls Faith C of S Ages 2 ½-13 Term fees Day: £5,040; boarding: £5,697
 The long-awaited railway line linking nearby Tweedbank to Edinburgh has opened, and prospective parents south of the border are starting to hop on board. Liam Harvey heads up a small, close-knit community bursting



Queen Mary's School



Terrington Hall

with staff prepared to 'roll their sleeves up', including much-loved Chef. The annual Bang Goes the Borders science festival is unforgettable (especially when you get to dissect a pig's eyeball), and pupils from local primaries regularly pop in for action-packed team-building days. There are school trips to France, walks along the River Tweed with the resident golden Lab, Oscar, and gold medals from the National Prep Schools Athletics Championships. Boarding is weekly or flexi. Mr Harvey offers a softly-softly approach to pastoral care, and parents are encouraged to feel involved via the boarders' blog. Leavers leap off to the likes of Fettes, Loretto, Winchester and Kilgraston.

TERRINGTON HALL ●●
TERRINGTON, YORK, NORTH YORKSHIRE YO60 6PR
 Website terringtonhall.com Head **Stephen Mulryne** Pupils 144 day

and boarding; 82 boys, 62 girls Faith C of E Ages 3-13 Term fees Day: £4,440; boarding: £5,940
 In a recent production of *Peter Pan*, Stephen Mulryne's fairy godmother received a riotous reception from pupils and parents: with a sense of humour like that, he's our kind of head. There's fizz aplenty at this North Yorkshire prep, even if pupils have been told to pull their socks up since Mr M took over last year. There's now a mantra of the week to keep the youngsters focused, greater links with senior schools (piano competitions at Loretto, for example), and a new head of games, ex-professional rugby player Alex Crockett, who led the U13 sevens team to victory. Greek is popular in Year 8 and last year scholarships were won to Queen Margaret's, Sedbergh and St Peter's York. Flexi-boarding is a hit with parents – almost as welcome as chef Izzy's mindblowing homemade brownies and legendary Victoria sponge cakes.