

Parent Power Schools of the Decade

NORTHEAST



Sedgefield Community College, the only 11-16 school on our honour roll, is gaining ground

A new building and committed leadership gave 11-16 college the double boost it needed to find a winning formula

The English region with the fewest schools overall in our state and independent rankings still manages to have a small number of the best schools in the country, achieving the highest grades at A-level and GCSE.

While many schools in the northeast score well for the progress children make, our rankings based on outright academic performance do few favours for schools in a region which also has the lowest progression rates to higher education in England.

The vast majority of children are educated in the state sector, with just 10 independent schools featuring in our rankings. Only one of them has been a regular in the UK top 100 over the past 10 years: the Royal Grammar School (RGS), Newcastle, the outstanding candidate to win our Northeast Independent Secondary School of the Decade award.

Examination results in 2019 were typically top-notch, with more than 86% of A-levels securing A*-B grades and just under 84% of GCSEs graded A*/A or 9-7. Competition for places is keen, starting at prep school level. RGS Junior School has also been a model of consistency, ranking in the top 10 of our prep school rankings for almost all of the past 10 years.

The school, which has 1,300 pupils, hit the headlines in October when pupil Theo Wride, 16, became the youngest person to be honoured in the delayed Queen's birthday honours. He was awarded the British Empire Medal for designing and manufacturing protective face coverings using a 3D printer.

RGS Newcastle draws its children from across the region and its fees of £4,625 per term are a snip compared with private schools in the south. A £1m bursary programme supports 81 boys and girls, paying 90% or more of the fees for 61 of the children.

Our Northeast State Secondary School of the Decade is the only one without a sixth form to win one of our awards. At the start of the decade, Sedgefield Community College moved into new premises in the Co Durham town of about 5,000 people, noted for being the former parliamentary seat of Tony Blair.

The lift provided by state-of-the-art premises allied to committed leadership by the recently retired head David Davies combined to propel academic results upwards over the past 10 years. In 2011, less than 15% of GCSEs were graded A*/A – but by 2019 the proportion had almost doubled to 28%. The 11-16 school was recently shortlisted for Secondary School of the Year and Davies was nominated for Head Teacher of the Year at the 2020 TES School Awards. Sedgefield Community College is now part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust in the northeast and has become the lead academy within the organisation for good practice in teaching and learning.

Durham Johnston – last year's UK Comprehensive School of the Year and a former Northeast State Secondary School of the Year – has achieved the best state sector exam results in the region at A-level and GCSE every year in the past decade.

The 1,700-pupil school on the west side of Durham has an intake more socially mixed than its location near one of the UK's top universities might imply. Many pupils are drawn from villages just outside the small university city where there are high levels of social deprivation.

Entry requirements to the sixth form are stiffer than most, but the A-level outcomes are stellar. Last year, 77% of A-levels sat at the school returned A*-B grades, results that ranked Durham Johnston higher than 100 selective grammar schools.

Durham is undoubtedly the region's educational hotspot. Two other high-performing state secondaries – St Leonard's RC and Framwellgate – and two leading independent schools – the co-educational Durham School and Durham High School for Girls – are also to be found in the city.

Durham School, the alma mater of Dominic Cummings, former chief aide to the prime minister, has staged an academic renaissance under head teacher Kieran McLaughlin, rising 90 places in our rankings. Its haul of A*-B grades at A-level has increased from 52.3% in 2013 to 71.1% in 2018. Durham High School for Girls, however, has fallen nearly 200 places in the national rankings since 2015.

TOP 13

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

North-east rank	National rank	Admissions	A-level (%A*-B)	GCSE (%A*/A/9/8/7)
1	124	Durham Johnston Comprehensive School	C 77.0	36.1
2	193=	Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham	C 65.3	34.9
3	210=	Teesdale School, Barnard Castle	C 66.7	29.0
4	285	Whitley Bay High School	C 59.4	28.0
5	287=	The King Edward VI School, Morpeth	C 56.1	33.9
6	295	Carmel College, Darlington	C 57.6	29.0
7	310=	St Leonard's RC School, Durham	C 55.5	30.3
8	356=	Framwellgate School, Durham	C 55.0	23.0
9	358	Egglescliffe School, Stockton-on-Tees	C 53.8	25.0
10	375	St Thomas More RC Academy, North Shields	C 52.0	25.0
11	389=	Ponteland High School, Newcastle	C 42.9	41.1
12	409=	Sacred Heart RC High School, Newcastle	PS 46.8	30.4
13	437	St Anthony's Girls' RC Academy, Sunderland	C 48.2	21.3

TOP 10

INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

North-east rank	National rank	A-level (%A*-B)	GCSE (%A*/A/9/8/7)
1	58	Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	86.4 83.6
2	130	Newcastle High School for Girls GDST	80.6 62.0
3	139=	Yarm School	77.4 64.6
4	213	Dame Allan's Girls' School, Newcastle	65.0 63.4
5	240	Dame Allan's Boys' School, Newcastle	65.0 53.7
6	268=	Durham High School for Girls	63.8 46.1
7	290	Durham School	60.9 40.9
8	339	Longridge Towers School, Berwick-upon-Tweed	51.9 28.4
9	348	Westfield School, Newcastle	43.9 40.5
10	364	Teesside High School, Stockton-on-Tees	35.0 33.1



RGS Newcastle is the standout winner among northeast independent schools

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www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk

NORTHEAST INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE DECADE