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# COMMUNITY SPIRIT



Larking about on the beach near Rossall School



Wise schools are offering bursaries to promising local youngsters to the benefit of everyone, says *Sally Jones*



ABOVE & LEFT: Developing seamanship skills; 1st XI Hockey at Gordonstoun

**K**iera sprints down the wing, the hockey ball seemingly glued to her stick and, after eluding two defenders, finds the back of the net with an expert flick. Her teammates crowd around her, delighted at the winning goal. For Kiera, it seems all in a day's work, but the bright, multi-talented 17-year-old has particular reason to celebrate: she is enjoying a coveted place at outdoorsy Gordonstoun School in north-east Scotland, thanks to a generous bursary targeted at fishing families in the area. Many of Kiera's relatives including her grandfather and many of her uncles are or were fishermen and she grew up in Buckie, a nearby fishing village.

'I applied for a sports scholarship but then Gordonstoun told me I was eligible for the bursary for fishing families,' Kiera explains. 'I couldn't have come here without this bursary as my mum is a single parent. Although I only came here for the sixth form, I've already been on a five-day sail training voyage and two expeditions.'

'I am the Captain of Hockey, the Captain of the Sports Centre and Physical Education, the Captain of the Sports Service, the Captain of Dialogue and the Captain of Juniors, which just goes to show the impact you can make in a short space of time!' She adds: 'I plan to study Sports Science and Physiotherapy at university – and I'm so grateful for the

opportunity this bursary gave me to come to Gordonstoun.'

Her award is one of thousands given by independent schools each year to enable gifted local youngsters from non-privileged backgrounds to benefit from a top-class education. With full fees at many boarding schools more than £30,000 a year and rising inexorably, it is an opportunity otherwise beyond all but the offspring of the well-heeled. Gordonstoun, as with similar schools, offers means-tested bursaries of up to 110 per cent of the school fees to academic, adventurous teenagers, capable of making a difference in the world. Those targeted include youngsters from local fishing families, from disadvantaged areas including Perthshire and mid-Wales, and in keeping with the school's ethos of service, members of the Grampian Fire and Rescue Service.

The benefits are not merely academic. The confidence boost and the chance to move in a far more cosmopolitan setting than most state schools can offer gives bursary recipients extra life chances, social awareness and the assurance that can make all the difference when aiming at a competitive university or career.

Gordonstoun is far from alone. Property tycoon, Peter Beckwith has endowed several full-fees scholarships at Harrow School for outstanding boys, many from the local area, who would not otherwise have a chance to go. It is no coincidence that these awards include two years at prep schools to help the scholars – many from deprived backgrounds – find their feet in what can at first seem a daunting environment.

Rossall School in Lancashire, close to some of the poorest areas in the UK, spends around £2 million a year on bursary provision and acquires many of its star performers via local awards, among them two members of its current team of school captains, Sam Ayoma and Tineka Jennings.

Sam, a brilliant academic and musician, whose father heads the regional Fishermen's Mission, was awarded a scholarship and a bursary, while Tineka, a bright, confident student and outstanding sportswoman who excels in hockey and football, received an all-rounder scholarship.

'Sam and Tineka are amazing and thoroughly deserve their awards,' explains Rossall's headmaster Jeremy Quartermain. 'Coming here gave Sam the chance to learn Greek and he hopes to read classics at Cambridge.'





David Goodhew  
in the library at Latymer Upper



Teamplayers at  
Rossall School

Tineka is very strong sports-wise and academically, and she and Sam are both great leaders. One big push for us is girls' football and our international academy now has several outstanding young football scholars from the local area. These include three girls who have had England Under 16 call-ups and are part of the Manchester City junior squad.'

Quartermain adds: 'It's vital we invest in the future and open up the school to the local community. We can't afford to be an island of privilege in a tough area.'

'I grew up in a single parent family. My father died when I was six and I benefited from an assisted place at an independent school, then read Music and History at Cambridge. That access to an outstanding private education was the making of me.'

David Goodhew, head of Latymer Upper, a diverse and successful day school in West London, likewise enjoyed a stellar academic trajectory. Comprehensive-educated and the first member of his family to go to university, he took a First in classics at Oxford. He is passionate about the transformative effect of bursaries and keen to overturn 'the perception that independent schools are inaccessible to anyone who isn't posh or

wealthy', stressing the need to encourage able children from poor families to apply. About one in five pupils at the school, almost all from the local community, receive substantial means-tested bursaries, and Goodhew is spearheading an initiative to raise the millions needed to increase this to one in four by 2024, Latymer's 400th anniversary.

Over the years, these life-changing opportunities have created hundreds of success stories, for youngsters like Oyin, a brilliant child from a disadvantaged family who cried with excitement when she received a bursary to Latymer Upper in Year 7.

After a chemistry teacher told her she was the best chemist she had ever taught, Oyin – who is also a gifted linguist – gained the confidence to apply to a string of top universities. All accepted her, including Cambridge, and she has chosen the renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology, aiming to become a toxicologist in future and run her own company. 'I think without that moment I wouldn't be doing what I am now,' Oyin admits, attributing her success 'to the best teachers who pushed me to be the best I can be.'

Oyin also loved her community service, she says, teaching Latin at a lunchtime club in a local primary school. 'It made me realise just how lucky I was to be at Latymer as I wouldn't have been able to do that at any other school – teaching kids about a subject I find extremely interesting. If this sparks an interest in classics in even one child that I taught there, that will be really amazing.'

In a similar community outreach project by Rugby School pupils at a local primary inspired Skye Slatcher, a bright, intellectual girl to apply for a Foundation Award bursary, aged 11. A group of sixth form students came on Wednesdays to help at her primary school as part of their Community Action Programme and Skye was hooked. 'Coming from a single-parent household, the idea of attending an independent school seemed like a dream,' Skye, a would-be lawyer who excels in Italian and Latin, explains. 'I was astounded to be awarded the Foundation Bursary and have had amazing opportunities, being pushed academically, enjoying fascinating co-curricular experiences, making local and international friends.' She has

revelled in her chances, taking part in the Independent Schools Creative Writing competition in Italian, and in Latin-speaking competitions. She is a CCF member, has written the opening pages of a novel for a Rugby School competition and visited Italy. She says: 'My bursary has been life-changing, giving me a world-class education and confidence in myself as a Rugbeian and a citizen of the world.'

Taking a slightly different approach, Canford School in Dorset has forged a 10-year partnership with the Bourne Academy, a nearby state school in Kinson, a deprived area of Bournemouth. Each year two hard-working Bourne pupils attend Canford sixth form with full financial support, bursaries that inspire many talented Bourne pupils at the Academy to up their 'academic game' and achieve the high GCSE grades that boost their chances of securing a place.

One Bourne scholar, Sidney, left last year and is now reading Philosophy at Kings College, London. 'Coming to Canford boosted my confidence in myself,' Sidney says. 'It taught me I must try to push myself as much as possible and strive for what I really want to achieve.' At Canford, the bursaries benefit everyone, not just the Bourne scholars, as their presence adds to the life experience of the whole school community.

In the Midlands, the high-flying independents King Edward's School and its sister school King Edward VI High School for Girls in Birmingham have raised millions in local bursary provision, partly through the generosity of Old Edwardians, many of whom received

free, or heavily subsidised, places themselves. Distinguished alumni from the previous Direct Grant era, including actor Lindsay Duncan, philanthropist Sir Paul Ruddock and former KES Chief Master John Cloughton, made the most of their chances and went on to success made possible by this world-class, all-round education.

I was lucky to enjoy a similar opportunity, developed a love of sport and poetry thanks to outstanding teaching and read English at Oxford. I was the first of my family to go to university then trained at the BBC before a varied career as a writer, broadcaster and sportswoman.

At the end of the summer term, a group of sixth-form girls and boys, some of them bursary recipients and most bound for top universities, contact Old Edwardians and school supporters during an annual fund-raising telethon. The student callers share updates from the schools to ensure former pupils still feel connected and provide information on how to support the Assisted Places programme.

For Oyin from Latymer Upper, bursary programmes confer wider benefits than giving a leg-up to a few gifted children. 'There are many other young people out there who deserve to have the amazing opportunities I have enjoyed at Latymer,' she insists. 'I'm so grateful to the donors who gave me and so many like me, this wonderful education. Local bursaries make an impact that stretches far further than the one child being sponsored.' ■

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**Jeremy Quartermain, headmaster of Rossall School**



In Biology class at King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham