

# Parent Power

## Northeast



**T**he comprehensive Durham Johnston School proves its northeastern grit with a double win, taking the title of **Secondary School of the Year in the Northeast 2025** for the second year running and **State Secondary School of the Year for Academic Excellence in the Northeast 2025**, rising more than 20 places. The head teacher, Rosslyn McFadden, is proud to oversee a “really

**Pupils are never bored at Durham Johnston School**

comprehensive school in the widest sense of the word”. “Our school takes a lot of pupils from the former mining villages. We have admissions from 43 different primary schools.”

The range of post-18 destinations is just as comprehensive. Seven leavers began at Oxford or Cambridge University this year, four headed to the University of Edinburgh, three to the London School of Economics and Political Science and two to Imperial College London. Students also started degree apprenticeships with companies such as Nissan and Siemens and as far afield as Germany.

McFadden believes inclusivity allows the school’s guiding principle of social justice to shine through. “We pride ourselves in supporting all our students to be the very best version of themselves,” she says.

The Royal Grammar School (RGS) in Newcastle is consistently impressive, and has won the **Independent Secondary School of the Year in the Northeast 2025**. The co-ed day school, which celebrates its 500th anniversary in 2025, consistently tops the regional tables by some distance, ranking 56 nationally. Its dedication to means-tested bursaries – with one in sixteen children receiving a free education – has enabled 484 students to be supported since 2002.

“We make ‘levelling up’ a reality rather than a soundbite,” says the head teacher, Geoffrey Stanford. RGS runs at least 50 academic and co-curricular projects in partnership with more than 100 other schools from Berwick to Middlesbrough – covering a huge range of subjects, from

the sciences, technology, engineering, sport and robotics to art, languages, classics, debating and UCAS application mentoring. “The challenges facing education and young people at the moment can only be solved through partnership and collaboration,” Stanford says. “We have the ability to make a wider impact beyond the school walls with RGS partnerships and bursaries.”

Similarly, at Durham High School, named **Independent Secondary School of the Year in the Northeast 2025**, success is rooted in the community. The school leapt 61 places up the national table but still has big ambitions, and places significant focus on STEM subjects.

“We are not just a school, we are a legacy, empowering girls to lead, achieve and inspire for over 140 years,” Michelle Hill, the head teacher, says. “We believe in embracing sisterhood. When girls are empowered, the world changes”.

They are also competitive, taking part in chemistry and biology Olympiads and the Institution of Civil Engineers CityZen competition, in which eight sixth-formers worked on a digital game and video to improve local lives. Others secured prestigious Arkwright Engineering Scholarships.

At the co-ed Durham School, Kieran McLaughlin, the headmaster, credits “two strong year groups who have weathered the interruptions to their education and worked really hard to achieve their results” for the school’s climb of 23 places in the national league table, against relative falls elsewhere in the region.

**Jayne Dowle**

## TOP 8

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

| 1 | Durham Johnston School (155=)          | Regional rank | National rank |
|---|--|---------------|---------------|
| 2 | Emmanuel College, Tyne and Wear        | 183           |               |
| 3 | Ponteland High School                  | 213           |               |
| 4 | Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham    | 267           |               |
| 5 | The King Edward VI School, Morpeth     | 301           |               |
| 6 | Kings Priory School                    | 302           |               |
| 7 | Sacred Heart RC High School, Newcastle | 305=          |               |
| 8 | Carmel College                         | 316           |               |

### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

| 1 | Royal Grammar School, Newcastle (56) | Regional rank | National rank |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 2 | Durham High School                   | 126           |               |
| 3 | Yarm School                          | 173           |               |
| 4 | Newcastle High School for Girls GDST | 176=          |               |
| 5 | Dame Allan’s Girls’ School           | 190           |               |
| 6 | Dame Allan’s Boys’ School            | 232           |               |
| 7 | Durham School                        | 270           |               |
| 8 | Newcastle School for Boys            | 299           |               |

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