

School debate

The merits of full boarding versus a flexi approach



The king of instruments

The wonderful world of the school organ



Group movements

The schools seeking safety in larger numbers

THE WEEK

Autumn/Winter 2025

Independent Schools guide



ABOUT THE BOYS

The schools building modern men

PLUS | Best of the best senior-school special ● School eccentrics
● Top music reads ● A composer's schooldays at Hurtwood House

The best of the best

Having been inundated with a record number of entries this year, **Sophie Pender-Cudlip** and **Amanda Constance** are proud to present the best senior schools of 2025



Our sincere thanks go to all the schools that participated in Best of the Best senior schools 2025. We know how much work goes into all your submissions. A special thanks to our judging panel and consultants, including Sophie Oakes of Oakes Education and Louise Hitchen of 134marketing, for their contributions.

Malvern College pupils

Best for entrepreneurship and innovation

St Paul's School

Start It is an enterprise pathway that spans primary school to Year 13 across the 10 schools of the West London Partnership, which was founded by St Paul's. Through workshops, games and structured courses, pupils are encouraged to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, backed by alumni, parents and business partners who provide mentoring. Success is evident with pupil start-up, Canopy, a 3D-printed, self-watering plant-pot venture, recently winning Best Overall Company at the Young Enterprise London Finals. For leavers, the new Ester Incubator offers up to £10,000 per founder plus legal and financial support. Thirteen alumni businesses, from healthcare data platforms to organic ginger beer, are progressing to further funding rounds. stpaulsschool.org.uk

Other contenders:

Loretto School

Francis Holland School, Sloane Square



St Paul's School



Highgate School

Best for pupil voice

Highgate School

At Highgate, pupils don't just learn, they lead. Every year group has a pupil action committee, backed by lower school, sixth form and anti-bullying councils, rocketing ideas from playground to boardroom. Last year's heads of school, turned a podcast on racial microaggressions into staff training and whole school assemblies. Eco-champions banned single-use water bottles, launched meat-free Mondays and grew Christmas trees on site. Sixth formers joined a MetGirlz project with the Metropolitan Police, pitching safer city ideas for girls and women across London, now backed by senior police. The wellbeing, inclusion and safeguarding committee shaped the school's anti-sexism plan, while regular PSHE makeovers are co-designed by boys and girls, ensuring every student's voice is heard. highgateschool.org.uk

Other contenders:

Ibstock Place

Cheltenham College



Stonyhurst College

Best for boarding

Stonyhurst College

Boarding at Stonyhurst, based on a 1,000 acre country estate in Lancashire, is shaped by Jesuit values of care, community and kindness. Pupils live in horizontal, year-group houses, rare in independent schools, so each stage receives age-specific guidance from dedicated pastoral Heads, deputies and resident teachers. Houses differ in personality yet share warmth and fun. Inspirational houseparents, such as Maggie Strain, who has spent over 20 years taking care of sixth form girls, exemplify this co-ed Catholic school's compassionate ethos. Stonyhurst stands out for its pioneering approach to wellbeing. As a BSA Sleep Champion, it has transformed its boarding spaces and routines to support better rest and overall health.

stonyhurst.ac.uk

Other contenders:

Malvern College

Queen Anne's School



South Hampstead High School, GDST

Best for music

South Hampstead High School, GDST

South Hampstead hums with music. Its concert hall, tech suite, recital room and percussion studio give pupils space to explore sound. All students are welcomed to join choirs, orchestras or bands, and every Year 7 gets free lessons on endangered instruments (hello bassoon!). The Chamber Choir was GSA Choir of the Year 2024 and Barnardo's Traditional runner-up. Musicians hold places in the National Youth Choir, Orchestra and Jazz Orchestra with one reaching the BBC Young Musician 2024 final, while another will solo with the London Mozart Players. Orchestras recently tackled Beethoven's and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphonies, while 40 scholars play at diploma level. More than 50 concerts, outreach projects and European tours keep music thriving at this London day school.

shhs.gdst.net

Other contenders:

Lancing College

Malvern College