

## Find the best value private schools in your area

Look up fees, exam results and facilities at Eton, Harrow and your local school, amid Labour's VAT raid

By Ben Butcher, Data Editor



Private schools have been hit by Labour's VAT raid, forcing up fees. It means that getting good value for money is therefore more vital than ever for parents.

The Telegraph's tool allows you to balance fees against the things that matter. For the first time, the analysis takes into account both academic success and facilities, among other metrics. Our full methodology is explained below.

Independent schools come in all shapes and sizes, with fees ranging from less than £10,000 a year to in excess of £60,000 for boarders at the most expensive institutions.

Labour's tax raid vastly reduced the options for parents of more modest means. In 2022-23, around 58pc of Year 13 day fees were less than £20,000 a year. The introduction of VAT in January means that today just 25pc of schools are below that threshold.

With higher fees, parents will be conscious about whether a school produces results that are worthy of the investment.

### Which is the best private school in the UK?

This year, Cardiff Sixth Form College

recorded the best results among fee-paying schools with over 94pc of exams being awarded the top grades of A\* or A at A-level. However, with fees of more than £30,000 a year for its day pupils, the school will be out of reach for many.

Once you compare academic success relative to fees, lesser-known schools produce similarly impressive results – but at a fraction of the cost, according to Telegraph analysis.

For example, St Michael's School in Carmarthenshire performs well on this metric, where fees are £14,000 cheaper than Cardiff Sixth Form College, but 80pc

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of exams are awarded the top grades.

Similarly, Withington Girls' School in Manchester has 93pc of GCSEs and 74pc of A-levels at A\* or A, based on exams taken in 2025. But its fees are among the lowest in the country, at £17,892 a year, even after Labour's VAT change.

## What really makes a good private school?

For many parents the value of independent schools goes beyond academic achievements; they want a well-rounded experience for their children, that includes opportunities in sport, performing arts and music.

This is why a school like the James Allen's Girls' School in London, which has excellent academic pedigree but also fees of close to £30,000 per year, is able to perform well in the league table. The school has nine of the 11 facilities accounted for in the score, including an on-site theatre, squash court, recording studio and a climbing wall.

This applies to many of the stalwarts of the public school system, such as Winchester, Tonbridge and Radley, which produce excellent results, albeit at a high price. They argue that their value goes well beyond the classroom.

Eton, for example, with fees of £63,300 a year, recently opened a £20m sports facility complete with an indoor pool, climbing wall, squash courts and fencing salle.

A spokesman from the Independent Schools Council (ISC) said: "Independent schools take a much wider view of education than just exam results. Boarding schools, in particular, offer a wide range of activities outside the classroom and subjects inside the classroom."

Every parent and every child is looking for different outcomes from private education. The Telegraph's private school tool gives parents the power to start that journey.

## Our methodology

The Telegraph collects the fees of around 1,200 independent schools across the country on an annual basis. They are traditional independent schools, so tend to exclude special, alternative provision and religious schools.

The fees presented in the table are the latest published on each school's website as of late June, with the vast majority being fees for the upcoming 2025/26 school year. Some fees will be January 2025 fees, and fewer still will be September 2024 fees. These will be updated as schools publish their latest fees.

The value for money score is, effectively, a fee:grade ratio, calculated by looking at A-level and GCSE grades for each school and the annual fees paid. However, a number of adjustments are made for comparability.

These include whether school lunches are

included in the fees, the relative average income for an area (which impacts staff salaries and also affordability for parents), and whether a school is boarding only, which will necessarily have higher fees than day schools. For the first time, selective and non-selective schools are graded separately, to highlight an inevitable differentiation in educational outcomes.

Additionally, this year's value-for-money score makes some minor adjustments for facilities. The Telegraph conducted its own research to certify whether each school has any of 11 key amenities. These are: a squash court, indoor pool, gym, theatre, tennis courts, rowing facilities, stables, Combined Cadet Force, a recording studio, golf course and climbing wall. In every case, the criteria was to ensure these are on-site, although many schools offer the ability for students to use facilities off-site.

The examinations used are GCSEs and A-levels only, meaning schools that only provide Scottish Highers or International Baccalaureate will be unlikely to have a score. The sources for exam results are from the ISC, the Department for Education or the schools themselves. Due to the nature of examinations at a younger age, there is no value-for-money score for Year Eight and below.