The best way to plan for their school fees. Or university years. Is to spend a few hours educating us.

At Brewin Dolphin, we know that your family’s future comes first. That’s why we’ll take time to consider every detail of your financial life, from investing for your children’s education, to planning your retirement. When it comes to your finances, the first thing we earn is your trust.

Investment Management and Financial Planning

The value of investments can fall and you may get back less than you invested.
Simply the best

Why do even avowed egalitarians send their children to independent schools? About once a year, some left-leaning politician is found to be considering a fee-paying school for their child, even though publicly they have denounced the iniquity of private education. Nick Clegg the politician, for instance, says private schooling is ‘corrosive’ to society — but Nick Clegg the parent insisted that he had the right to give his child the best education money can buy.

Clegg eventually chose a state-aided faith school. But any parent who can afford the fees would be mad not to at least consider going private — even if it means being accused of hypocrisy. British independent education is, quite simply, the best in the world.

This supplement, kindly sponsored by Brewin Dolphin, aims to pay tribute to that excellence, as well as being a guide for those contemplating investing in an independent education. In these pages, then, Will Heaven gives parents his guide to school applications; James Delingpole tackles the bias against private schools; Ross Clark dissects the league table system; Tim Wigmore examines the International Baccalaureate; Aidan Bellenger looks at the advantages of a monastic education; Harry Mount and Jonathan Forster debate the pros and cons of traditional exams; and Mary Wakefield remembers being expelled.

That, and much more, all intended to amuse and inform. We hope you enjoy reading it, and please look out for our next supplement in September.
connections’, the days when Eton was thronging with thick, rich sons of the aristocracy are well and truly over.

The same applies to all the top independent prep schools and secondary schools. Fees aside — and we’ll come to that later — these academic schools are only for academic children.

But beware: from the outset, educating a clever child is not without its risks. Anthony Seldon, the Master of Wellington College, told me there’s a ‘double danger’ that parents must look out for.

‘First, they need to be wary of the risk that their child becomes bored and under-stimulated,’ he says, if the schoolwork isn’t stretching them. This boredom can foster a negative attitude towards learning, turn them off academic work, and can lead to bad behaviour in the classroom.

So if your child finds it all too easy, says Dr Seldon, go to the school and ask for more: ‘Request extension material.’ Every good school, state or private, should oblige.

But here comes the second risk — and one that’s becoming more prevalent. Many well-meaning parents become convinced that their offspring are brighter than they really are. ‘They hector the school, and don’t accept the teachers’ verdict,’ says Dr Seldon. Sometimes this is because of their own ambitions or experiences at school; sometimes, it’s based on a distorted vision of what their child should achieve, which only causes stress for the youngster. These parents, says Dr Seldon, ‘are not loving their child wisely’. So his advice is: listen to the school — the teachers will know what they are doing, and what they are talking about.

The latest edition of the Good Schools Guide bears out this second danger. It made headlines this year with the news that some London parents have been paying for professional interview coaching for their three-year-olds.

It prompts the question: why on earth are pre-preps interviewing prospective pupils? Well, the answer to that is simple: the best ones are massively oversubscribed. North London Collegiate Junior School (all girls, reception to year 6) selects 40 four-year-olds from about 200 applicants.

But the interview coaching isn’t worth the expense. Jo Newman, that school’s head, told the Good Schools Guide: ‘I always tell parents if they’re paying to coach three-year-olds, they might as well burn £20 notes. The only useful preparation is to talk to them, play with them and read them stories.’

Lessons for pushy parents

It’s natural to want the best education for your child – but don’t go mad, says Will Heaven

For Sloanes, life was much simpler in the 1980s, when The Sloane Ranger Handbook was published. According to that bible for the socially ambitious, if Henry wanted his baby son to go to Eton, he’d send his old housemaster a letter:

Dear Tim,

I am delighted to tell you Caroline gave birth to a son — our first! — yesterday. We are thinking of calling the brat James and — I know it seems premature, but I’ve heard you can’t do these things too early — we would of course love him to go to the old school. Could you please put his name down on a suitable list, and send me all the bumph…?

But even then, times were changing: the handbook warns in its ‘Sloane Education’ chapter that Eton is ‘hard work now, and very liberal compared to Daddy’s day’.

Thirty years on, the work is harder still — and getting into Eton will have very little to do with Daddy. ‘Eton turns away princes if they’re not academic enough,’ one prep school insider told me. Although the school notes that ‘approximately 40 per cent of our boys have OE connections’, the days when Eton was thronging with thick, rich sons of the aristocracy are well and truly over.

The same applies to all the top independent prep schools and secondary schools. Fees aside — and we’ll come to that later — these academic schools are only for academic children.

But beware: from the outset, educating a clever child is not without its risks. Anthony Seldon, the Master of Wellington College, told me there’s a ‘double danger’ that parents must look out for.

‘First, they need to be wary of the risk that their child becomes bored and under-stimulated,’ he says, if the schoolwork isn’t stretching them. This boredom can foster a negative attitude towards learning, turn them off academic work, and can lead to bad behaviour in the classroom.

So if your child finds it all too easy, says Dr Seldon, go to the school and ask for more: ‘Request extension material.’ Every good school, state or private, should oblige.

But here comes the second risk — and one that’s becoming more prevalent. Many well-meaning parents become convinced that their offspring are brighter than they really are. ‘They hector the school, and don’t accept the teachers’ verdict,’ says Dr Seldon. Sometimes this is because of their own ambitions or experiences at school; sometimes, it’s based on a distorted vision of what their child should achieve, which only causes stress for the youngster. These parents, says Dr Seldon, ‘are not loving their child wisely’. So his advice is: listen to the school — the teachers will know what they are doing, and what they are talking about.

The latest edition of the Good Schools Guide bears out this second danger. It made headlines this year with the news that some London parents have been paying for professional interview coaching for their three-year-olds.

It prompts the question: why on earth are pre-preps interviewing prospective pupils? Well, the answer to that is simple: the best ones are massively oversubscribed. North London Collegiate Junior School (all girls, reception to year 6) selects 40 four-year-olds from about 200 applicants.

But the interview coaching isn’t worth the expense. Jo Newman, that school’s head, told the Good Schools Guide: ‘I always tell parents if they’re paying to coach three-year-olds, they might as well burn £20 notes. The only useful preparation is to talk to them, play with them and read them stories.’

Lessons for pushy parents

It’s natural to want the best education for your child – but don’t go mad, says Will Heaven

For Sloanes, life was much simpler in the 1980s, when The Sloane Ranger Handbook was published. According to that bible for the socially ambitious, if Henry wanted his baby son to go to Eton, he’d send his old housemaster a letter:

Dear Tim,

I am delighted to tell you Caroline gave birth to a son — our first! — yesterday. We are thinking of calling the brat James and — I know it seems premature, but I’ve heard you can’t do these things too early — we would of course love him to go to the old school. Could you please put his name down on a suitable list, and send me all the bumph…?

But even then, times were changing: the handbook warns in its ‘Sloane Education’ chapter that Eton is ‘hard work now, and very liberal compared to Daddy’s day’.

Thirty years on, the work is harder still — and getting into Eton will have very little to do with Daddy. ‘Eton turns away princes if they’re not academic enough,’ one prep school insider told me. Although the school notes that ‘approximately 40 per cent of our boys have OE connections’, the days when Eton was thronging with thick, rich sons of the aristocracy are well and truly over.

The same applies to all the top independent prep schools and secondary schools. Fees aside — and we’ll come to that later — these academic schools are only for academic children.

But beware: from the outset, educating a clever child is not without its risks. Anthony Seldon, the Master of Wellington College, told me there’s a ‘double danger’ that parents must look out for.

‘First, they need to be wary of the risk that their child becomes bored and under-stimulated,’ he says, if the schoolwork isn’t stretching them. This boredom can foster a negative attitude towards learning, turn them off academic work, and can lead to bad behaviour in the classroom.

So if your child finds it all too easy, says Dr Seldon, go to the school and ask for more: ‘Request extension material.’ Every good school, state or private, should oblige.

But here comes the second risk — and one that’s becoming more prevalent. Many well-meaning parents become convinced that their offspring are brighter than they really are. ‘They hector the school, and don’t accept the teachers’ verdict,’ says Dr Seldon. Sometimes this is because of their own ambitions or experiences at school; sometimes, it’s based on a distorted vision of what their child should achieve, which only causes stress for the youngster. These parents, says Dr Seldon, ‘are not loving their child wisely’. So his advice is: listen to the school — the teachers will know what they are doing, and what they are talking about.

The latest edition of the Good Schools Guide bears out this second danger. It made headlines this year with the news that some London parents have been paying for professional interview coaching for their three-year-olds.

It prompts the question: why on earth are pre-preps interviewing prospective pupils? Well, the answer to that is simple: the best ones are massively oversubscribed. North London Collegiate Junior School (all girls, reception to year 6) selects 40 four-year-olds from about 200 applicants.

But the interview coaching isn’t worth the expense. Jo Newman, that school’s head, told the Good Schools Guide: ‘I always tell parents if they’re paying to coach three-year-olds, they might as well burn £20 notes. The only useful preparation is to talk to them, play with them and read them stories.’
It does all hint at the intense competition for places at good schools. These days, I’m reliably informed, successful working parents plan their children’s education as carefully as they plan their own careers. And they often start backwards.

So, for example, a mother decides: I want my three-year-old daughter to go to Oxford. For the best chance of that, she’ll have to go to St Paul’s Girls’ School. A nearby feeder prep school for St Paul’s is Falkner House, so we’ll have to get her in there as soon as possible. That means taking her to an assessment day during the academic year of her fourth birthday. The mother logs on to Mumsnet straight away: ‘Er… how do you teach a three-year-old to do “show and tell”? ’

All this, of course, is before you consider the fees. In the 1980s, an academic prep school might have charged about £600 a term for day pupils and £1,000 for boarders. Now the Dragon School in Oxford, for instance, costs £5,830 a term for day pupils and £8,340 for boarders. Annual boarding fees at a top academic senior school like Westminster or Wycombe Abbey will be in excess of £30,000. And they’re only heading one way.

For parents of very bright children, then, it’s well worth looking at academic scholarships. Often, these won’t seem at all generous. At St Paul’s School (for boys), for instance, 30 academic scholarships are awarded each year at 13-plus, worth just £60 per annum. But don’t let that put you off: an academic scholarship gives a bursary application a real boost. And NB: St Paul’s says ‘all scholarships may be increased through a means-tested bursary to the value of the full tuition fee and, where appropriate, 50 per cent of the boarding fee’.

So what are the top academic schools — the top 20 in the league tables, say — really looking for in prospective academic scholars? I contacted Charles Milne, Eton’s tutor for admissions, who told me that King’s Scholars, as they are called there, are ‘boys with an original and enquiring mind, with the ability to go beyond the mere regurgitation of knowledge’. I also asked if there were any recurring weaknesses in applicants to Eton that he found frustrating. He replied: ‘The standard of written English is far more variable than 20 years ago: the vocabulary is less rich and varied; and there is a more slender grasp of basic grammar.’ But his general advice to parents of clever children mirrored Anthony Seldon’s: ‘Don’t hothouse them, employ tutors or cram every minute of their lives with preparation for the next stage of their education.’

Being academically ambitious for your children is plainly a good thing. Wanting them to go to a brilliant school doesn’t make you a pushy turbo-Sloane. But crucially, if you are going to fork out thousands of pounds on an academic independent school, you’ve got to be 100 per cent certain that your child is up to it. And that you are, in the words of Anthony Seldon, loving them wisely.
I should have worn trainers. I should not have worn black shoes. Not in the drizzle, not trudging through the mud and watching the rugby, speaking to the parents of public schoolboys: ‘I’m writing a piece for The Spectator’s independent schools guide.’ In muddy Clarks.

I recall my school days. At Ardingly, at quarter to four, in rugby garb: shinguards made of cotton and a five-year-old gumshield that tasted of boot. I would stand proudly in my itchy shirt, clean, unruffled, having spent the past hour lingering at the back, avoiding anything that even looked like soil. As I counted down the minutes, the whistle would blow. ‘Right, who’s clean?’ Gulp. ‘Luke?’ That’s me. ‘Dive in that patch of mud over there, will you?’

The headmaster assures me it’s different now. I am not so sure. Rugby still seems to consist of boys rolling about a rugby ball, as parents bark at them to ‘quick hook’. Each boy tackles differently: some block, some grab, most attempt a hug. The best employ the excellent technique of tugging on the opponent’s shirt.

The ones who enjoy it most are the parents. It’s just a bit of fun, I’m told, before a dad yells at a ten-year-old as he races around in Ravenclaw colours. Well done, Wilf! Good boyyy! Superb pick-up! Down the line! Eight well-spoken Sussex parents shout in unison as if it’s an Everton Cup Final. Then: ‘Are you all right in those shoes?’ I say I’m happy, but only because it’s too late to go back.

Dorset House School is one of the few small boarding preps left, comprising 144 pupils, boys and girls aged between two-and-a-half to 13. Some year groups contain fewer than 20 children and it is not rare for an 11-a-side to include all the boys of the year. ‘Do you know Christopher?’ one parent asks another. ‘Of course I know him,’ is the reply.

The headmaster knows parents by name. The teachers act almost like private tutors: ‘The teachers know straight away if there is a problem with the kids,’ says a happy mother. Little Oliver has more chance of getting a star role in the play (or choir) and less chance of being cast as Second Bystander. One mother tells me that parents and pupils are less gratingly competitive than they are in large schools. The children are more relaxed, she says.

Headmaster Richard Brown, a former Army man, is a chummy and approachable sort. One might expect him to be a little detached — heads often are — but he plays hockey with some of the dads and talks breezily with the parents. He takes a lenient approach to boarding, says a mother. This is good, she adds; you want children to enjoy boarding as much as they like home. Some boarding schools are oppressive. Not this one.

The smallness of the school doesn’t intrude on the quality of the facilities. The place has an outdoor pool, large playing fields, an amphitheatre, a barn and a nearby church, which is used for assemblies. The dining room is quaintly tiny, like a medieval canteen, with heraldic crests on the walls and (one supposes) occasional orange juice. The network of passageways and dormitories in the attic could have been built by shrews. The building itself dates from the 12th century and looks from the outside like a spa resort. One half expects a masseur to come in and offer a head rub.

Nor does the scale mean a lack of resources. The head is keen to say the school offers Latin from year five and French from reception. Ancient Greek was cancelled after only three kids came to the lessons. Mr Brown speaks, however, of conker competitions, Mandarin classes and racing-car building: like most public schools, Dorset House excels at extra-curricular activities. The countryside, too, offers a refuge for artists and geographers.

I return to the headmaster’s office. Does Mr Brown have any plans for expansion? Most successful schools do, after all. ‘Oh no,’ he says, ‘Size is our unique selling point.’ Speaking to the parents and children, I understand what he means. I get a sense of intimacy. Even if it is on a muggy Saturday afternoon on a rugby pitch.

We happy few

Bigger schools aren’t necessarily better, says Luke Smolinski

I should have worn trainers. I should not have worn black shoes. Not in the drizzle, not trudging through the mud and watching the rugby, speaking to the parents of public schoolboys: ‘I’m writing a piece for The Spectator’s independent schools guide.’ In muddy Clarks.

I recall my school days. At Ardingly, at quarter to four, in rugby garb: shinguards made of cotton and a five-year-old gumshield that tasted of boot. I would stand proudly in my itchy shirt, clean, unruffled, having spent the past hour lingering at the back, avoiding anything that even looked like soil. As I counted down the minutes, the whistle would blow. ‘Right, who’s clean?’ Gulp. ‘Luke?’ That’s me. ‘Dive in that patch of mud over there, will you?’

The headmaster assures me it’s different now. I am not so sure. Rugby still seems to consist of boys rolling about a rugby ball, as parents bark at them to ‘quick hook’. Each boy tackles differently: some block, some grab, most attempt a hug. The best employ the excellent technique of tugging on the opponent’s shirt.

The ones who enjoy it most are the parents. It’s just a bit of fun, I’m told, before a dad yells at a ten-year-old as he races around in Ravenclaw colours. Well done, Wilf! Good boyyy! Superb pick-up! Down the line! Eight well-spoken Sussex parents shout in unison as if it’s an Everton Cup Final. Then: ‘Are you all right in those shoes?’ I say I’m happy, but only because it’s too late to go back.

Dorset House School is one of the few small boarding preps left, comprising 144 pupils, boys and girls aged between two-and-a-half to 13. Some year groups contain fewer than 20 children and it is not rare for an 11-a-side to include all the boys of the year. ‘Do you know Christopher?’ one parent asks another. ‘Of course I know him,’ is the reply.

The headmaster knows parents by name. The teachers act almost like private tutors: ‘The teachers know straight away if there is a problem with the kids,’ says a happy mother. Little Oliver has more chance of getting a star role in the play (or choir) and less chance of being cast as Second Bystander. One mother tells me that parents and pupils are less gratingly competitive than they are in large schools. The children are more relaxed, she says.

Headmaster Richard Brown, a former Army man, is a chummy and approachable sort. One might expect him to be a little detached — heads often are — but he plays hockey with some of the dads and talks breezily with the parents. He takes a lenient approach to boarding, says a mother. This is good, she adds; you want children to enjoy boarding as much as they like home. Some boarding schools are oppressive. Not this one.

The smallness of the school doesn’t intrude on the quality of the facilities. The place has an outdoor pool, large playing fields, an amphitheatre, a barn and a nearby church, which is used for assemblies. The dining room is quaintly tiny, like a medieval canteen, with heraldic crests on the walls and (one supposes) occasional orange juice. The network of passageways and dormitories in the attic could have been built by shrews. The building itself dates from the 12th century and looks from the outside like a spa resort. One half expects a masseur to come in and offer a head rub.

Nor does the scale mean a lack of resources. The head is keen to say the school offers Latin from year five and French from reception. Ancient Greek was cancelled after only three kids came to the lessons. Mr Brown speaks, however, of conker competitions, Mandarin classes and racing-car building: like most public schools, Dorset House excels at extra-curricular activities. The countryside, too, offers a refuge for artists and geographers.

I return to the headmaster’s office. Does Mr Brown have any plans for expansion? Most successful schools do, after all. ‘Oh no,’ he says, ‘Size is our unique selling point.’ Speaking to the parents and children, I understand what he means. I get a sense of intimacy. Even if it is on a muggy Saturday afternoon on a rugby pitch.
Cardiff Sixth Form College

Ranked the Top Senior School A Level Provider, Top Co-Educational Boarding School and Top Sixth Form College in the UK for three consecutive years by Best Schools.

2012
99% A*-B grades / 94% A*-A grades

2011
98% A*-B grades / 84% A*-A grades

2010
100% A*-B grades / 91% A*-A grades

Students holding offers for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science have all been successful.

Exceptional record for placing Oxbridge candidates.

Tel: +44 (0) 2920 493121
Email: enquiries@ccoex.com

Cardiff Sixth Form College,
1 & 3 Trinity Court,
21 – 27 Newport Road,
Cardiff, CF24 0AA, UK.

www.ccoex.com
Here’s a funny thing: in spite of our apparently never-ending economic slump, applications to independent schools keep rising. Middle-class parents are worse and worse off — and school fees went up by an average of 4.5 per cent last year — yet more and more of them seem willing to pay for private education. Why? What are independent schools offering that the state sector is so palpably failing to offer? Well, there’s prestige, of course, and facilities. Independent schools tend to have better buildings, libraries and sports centres. (Hence the amazing number of private school alumni we saw in Team GB in last year’s Olympics.)

If you do your homework, however, and you are able to wade through all the rants about fees and class division that Google throws up, you quickly find that those who actually work in the independent sector attribute their success to one thing: freedom. As Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas, the former Chair of the Independent Schools Council, put it: ‘Independence, governance and financial management [are] the essential DNA of the sector.’

While this independence was threatened by the last government, independent schools today still enjoy an extraordinary degree of freedom when compared with the state sector. State schools, obliged to obey the diktats of central and local government, force their teachers to spend hours on paperwork and wading through guidance produced by Whitehall (the last Labour government was able to produce 6,000 pages of teacher guidance in just one year). It has been estimated that head teachers in the state sector have to spend 15 hours a week on administration. Independent schools, by contrast, have few obligations, which means their teachers can spend time teaching your children. The reams of red tape that state teachers have to cut through are staggering. According to a recent report by the Department of Education, almost every aspect of school life, including inspections, self-evaluations, lesson planning and assessing pupils progress is riddled with bureaucracy.

But freedom isn’t just about what your child’s teacher can or cannot do. It determines who your teacher is. Independent schools have more choice as to who they can hire, which means they can attract the best teachers. This is partly to do with money, yes — of course talented teachers are going to be drawn to the better-paying private sector. But it’s also to do with freedom. State schools can — at the moment — only hire people with Qualified Teacher Status and have to conform to a national pay scale, which awards teachers according to how long they’ve been in the system.

Then there’s discipline. Independent schools, free to develop strategies for dealing with unruly pupils, have a range of innovative tactics for maintaining order. State schools enjoy no such liberty. In response to a consultation earlier this year the Department for Education had to admit that ‘teachers consistently tell us that their authority to deal decisively with bad behaviour has been undermined’.

You don’t have to be a free-market radical to see that state schools would be better off if they didn’t face so much government intrusion. Michael Gove’s ‘free school’ reforms may not be universally popular among the educational establishment, but the idea behind them is a simple and good one: freedom.

And freedom seems to be working; slowly and surely, more and more state schools are converting to academies, emancipating themselves from the dead hand of government. For those that choose to remain in the state sector rather than embrace academy status, the educational divide looks set to remain; later this year a new Teacher’s Standard will be introduced to all schools except independent schools, free schools and academies. The iron wall between state and private has taken a hit, but it’s still standing.

Where does all this leave parents? The independence that fee-paying schools offer may be attractive, but independence can’t be confused with success. Previous editions of The Spectator Guide to Independent Schools have warned readers of the need to visit prospective schools and to keep an eye out to see if the current intake look happy. Sound advice. Independent schools may have the freedom to educate your child, but it’s up to you to choose a school that applies that freedom responsibly.
Moreton Hall

Find out why Moreton Hall has been ranked
Number 1 Independent School in UK*

Open Day - Saturday April 27th

Boarding & Day  Girls 3 – 18, Boys 3 – 11
Weston Rhyn  Oswestry  Shropshire  SY11 3EW  |  t: 01691 773671
www.moretonhall.org

“Outstanding school and surroundings”
Tatler Schools Guide 2011

Malvern College
Co-educational Boarding and Day 13 – 18

Open Morning
Saturday 11th May
9.30 am – 12.30 pm

www.malverncollege.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 527578

Easter Revision in Oxford
Revision Specialists for over 16 years

A-Level · GCSE · IGCSE · IB

One, two or three weeks of revision starting on March 25th. Students can choose up to three A-Level modules or three subjects for (I)GCSE or IB per week.

- Small tutorial groups, average three students
- Exam practice and tutor reports for each subject/module
- Residential or day only at St Edward’s School in Oxford

Highfield & Brookham
Prep School Boarding & Day 8 – 13 Years  Pre-Prep & Nursery 3 – 7 Years

Surrey, Sussex & Hampshire Borders

“The combination of staggeringly beautiful grounds with very good common entrance results has caused numbers to soar”
Tatler Schools Guide 2011

www.highfieldschool.org.uk  |  01428 728000  |  Highfield Lane, Liphook, Hampshire GU30 7LQ

IN ASSOCIATION WITH BREWIN DOLPHIN | 16 MARCH 2013 | GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
IB or not IB?

The International Baccalaureate is less popular than it was, says Tim Wigmore, but it still has its merits

Tony Blair saw in the International Baccalaureate a qualification that would equip Britain’s most talented schoolchildren for the demands — the ‘global race’, if you will — of the 21st century. In 2006, he made a speech trumpeting the IB’s virtues, saying, ‘There should be at least one sixth-form college or school in every local authority offering students the choice of the IB’.

The mood of the times was encapsulated by leading independent school King’s College Wimbledon obliging all sixth-formers from the 2007 intake onwards to do the IB. Andrew Halls, the current headmaster of King’s College, explains how the decision came about. ‘There was a feeling that IB was an exciting exam that was seeing a growing constituency in the UK.’ This largely stemmed from concerns over the qualities of A-levels: they ‘had gone fully modular; every year we saw the percentage of A grades rise’.

So King’s College’s decision to reintroduce A-levels from September 2013 is revealing. Halls explains that improvements in A-levels — the introduction of the A* grade, which ‘the most selective universities have liked’; that ‘grade inflation certainly has stopped’; and, above all, the ‘much greater emphasis on rigour’ — triggered the move. While he says that there is no school pressure to do A-level or to do IB, he explains that ‘we think that there will be some pupils that will be really well suited to IB and some who are really suited to A-level’.

Of the current Year 11 cohort, two-thirds plan to take A-levels, a clear indication that the pendulum may have swung away from the IB. The national figures for pupils taking the IB suggest that King’s College’s decision is part of a wider trend: after a decade in which candidates have trebled to over 5000 a year, 2012 saw a slight decrease.

The attraction of the IB lies in the breadth of the course. Pupils take three subjects to higher level and three to standard level, with examinations (as under Michael Gove’s new A-level reforms) coming exclusively at the end of the upper sixth. During the course, students must complete an extended essay and a Theory of Knowledge assessment, as well as a ‘Creativity, Action and Service’ (CAS) element.

Patricia Kelleher is the headmistress of Perse Girls Senior School in Cambridge, which offers both qualifications. She explains that the IB was introduced because of a feeling that it ‘challenged and stretched pupils in ways that were far better preparation not just for university but for life’. Kelleher values the more holistic education provided by the IB. ‘We were asking “What is the purpose of education?”’, because there’s the danger, with this world of league tables, that you get focused on the process and achievement and attainment outcomes, rather than thinking about why you’re educating young people in the first place. We had a kind of eureka moment.’

But the IB’s demands mean it isn’t for everyone. Halls likens the six subjects studied to three A-levels and three AS-levels, and admits, ‘What we would notice is that we’d occasionally lose someone who was a brilliant tennis player or wonderful musician who knew that the IB just took up too much time. It does take precedence,
you have to take six subjects, you have to do two extra essays, and to be credited for all your extracurricular work, which isn’t a problem but is time-consuming.’

Do universities appreciate all the work the IB entails? Halls says that they ‘were very slow to realise just how much work IB involved’. Even now, different institutions have contrasting attitudes towards it. IB candidates who want to apply to Oxbridge would be best advised to choose Oxford, who regularly make offers of 38 points (out of a maximum of 45). Cambridge often requires candidates to get what Halls describes as a ‘slightly terrifying’ 42 points.

Yet there seems little merit in the notion that it is harder for pupils studying IB to get offers to the best universities: 55 of King’s College’s 150 current pupils in upper sixth have Oxbridge offers. And Patricia Kelleher argues that while there was once a ‘reluctance on the part of [university] admissions to get a grip of the IB, I think that’s changed a lot and they now understand the value of it’.

The all-round nature of the IB, and its international status, would appear ideal for students considering studying abroad. But Halls downplays this benefit. ‘Obviously the IB meshes very well with the liberal arts concept of an American degree, but our experience is that American universities are not terribly interested in the name on the qualification.’

Of course, the IB isn’t only extra work for students. For teachers, it means dealing with two very different syllabuses. Kelleher admits that there is a ‘timetabling challenge’ but argues that this is outweighed by the benefits of doing the IB. ‘Staff have really valued the opportunity to be engaged in both qualification paths. It’s been very good for them actually to understand there are these different ways of learning and different ways of assessing.’ Andrew Schalketon, the Director of Studies and IB co-ordinator at Fettes College in Edinburgh, agrees. ‘So much of A-level teaching is so prescribed — you just sort of teach to the syllabus. Whereas with the IB the syllabuses themselves are that much more interesting and there’s scope for greater input from the teacher.’

While running both A-levels and the IB has inevitable cost implications, Kelleher stresses that, ‘We’ve taken the view that we value the qualification so much that we’re prepared to support it.’ However, for non-independent schools, the financial burden of running two parallel sixth-form qualifications has often been too much: several of the state schools that once offered the IB have dropped it.

So the IB may never take off in the UK in the way Blair hoped: with the exception of some sixth-form colleges, it remains largely the preserve of independent schools. Even in schools that run both A-levels and the IB, most pupils favour the traditional qualification. But for those uninspired by A-levels and prepared to work hard, there are benefits in what Kelleher describes as an educational ‘gold standard across the world’.

‘With the IB, the syllabuses are that much more interesting and there’s scope for greater teacher input’
Are exams good for children?

**Yes** says Harry Mount

Until a few years ago, I used to suffer from the classic exam nightmare: I’d be about to start an exam I hadn’t done any work for.

It never happened in real life. I was a neurotic, work-obsessed child, terrified of exams despite being good at them. Actually, that’s the wrong way round: I was good at exams precisely because I was terrified of them.

The reason why exams work — and why continuous assessment, or any tests that don’t involve sitting in an invigilated room with no way of cheating, don’t work — is the same reason why progressive educationalists take against them. They’re difficult, they’re scary and they tell you who’s clever and who’s stupid.

Take away the terror, rules and rigour of exams, and they not only lose their power; they also become open to abuse. Who can blame the 125 Harvard students, accused of cheating in a history ‘take-home’ exam in January? A take-home exam isn’t an exam at all.

As always, *1066 and All That* is spot on. History is what you remember, wrote W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman. Without exams, you don’t remember anything because you never bothered learning anything in the first place. It’s not just history you won’t remember, either: it’s maths, French, Latin, Greek, physics... Anything worth studying, in fact.

Like their parents, children are simple, Pavlovian animals who respond well to carrots and sticks. When it comes to exams, though, only sticks are effective — it’s the scariness and difficulty that make children work hard.

Take away the stick, and children won’t revise or learn, unless they’re from the small percentage of self-propelled swots who generate their own terror without the need for exams. Give children the carrot of inflated grades and untesting assessments and they won’t do the work, either.

Tell children their exam results will be extrapolated from work done at home or uninvigilated at school, and they will lift stuff from books and the internet, or get their parents to do it for them. You try smuggling a middle-aged father into an exam hall.

Opponents of exams say they encourage rote learning — erm, what’s wrong with that? — and discourage thought. Rubbish. If you don’t know anything, you can’t think; or you can’t think in a sophisticated way. Increased knowledge of facts walks in lock-step with more sophisticated thought.

Miss out on childhood cramming and you’re crippled for life, like the subject of Philip Larkin’s poem, ‘Ignorance’:

Strange to know nothing, never to be sure
Of what is true or right or real,
But forced to qualify or so I feel,
Or Well, it does seem so:
Someone must know.

You can see that relationship between factual knowledge and complex thought in old exam papers. The further back you go, the more facts you’re expected to know, the more complicated the expected thought processes.

All praise to Michael Gove for beefing up modern exams, but he’s got a long way to go before he matches the gold standard of the old days. In 1946, classicists taking the Oxford entrance exam had to translate from Lysias, Euripides and Plato and answer questions like: ‘Illustrate from any speech of Demosthenes the ancient conception of forensic oratory.’ Now, Oxford entrants aren’t expected to know any Greek or even have heard of Demosthenes.

Even the jokey exam questions in *1066 and All That*, published in 1930, are now beyond practically all GCSE pupils, most A-level pupils and a lot of history undergraduates:

1. Would it have been a Good Thing if Wolfe had succeeded in writing Gray’s ‘Elegy’ instead of taking Quebec?

2. Refrain from commenting on the Albert Memorial, the September Massacres, the Dardanelles, the OBE or any other subjects that you consider too numerous to mention.

Far from being wrong to stuff children’s heads with facts, it is wicked not to. In childhood, our brains are at their spongiest and most absorbent. Given enough discipline, it’s when we’re most obedient, too. Once we develop the free will, laziness and rationed free time of adulthood, who would choose to learn the pluperfect passive of audio, Hooke’s Law or what the South Sea Bubble was?

How civilised school life is. A church service, French and history in the morning; Latin, physics and football in the afternoon. Then we grow up, get jobs and it’s quadruple law, plumbing or butchery in the morning; more of the same after lunch.

Life only grants us a brief window — 20 years or so — to learn for learning’s sake. It’s criminal not to spend that time stuffing our brains with as much information as possible. And the best way of testing and examining how full those brains are is with tests and exams.

*Harry Mount is the author of How England Made the English* (Viking).
No says Jonathan Forster

Writing end of term reports recently, I reflected on the purpose of all the testing students endure. Does it improve performance or hinder? I was tested to destruction and loathed every minute of it, mainly because I kept failing my O-levels and had to repeat them to be let into the Sixth Form (Latin four attempts, maths three).

Do I conjugate Latin verbs more accurately having finally achieved a pass grade? Do I use my slide rule with greater confidence now that I have learned how to multiply three times two under exam conditions, the proud possessor of a grade 1 CSE maths, 1973?

Seeing that the old-style O-level with one final exam was a flawed system of testing for many students, the government tried to fix the problem by introducing GCSEs with lots of coursework. But then that was criticised for making life too easy, letting children re-take GCSEs and A-level modules ad nauseum until they finally get the grades universities have requested.

Mr Gove’s latest solution, having fallen at the radical EBacc hurdle, is to return to the old-style O-level.

The concept of focusing years of education on appeasing the examiner is completely flawed. Instead, we need a much closer relationship between schools, universities and professional bodies to ensure that the exams are appropriate to universities’ requirements. It’s essential, too, that we seek the advice of the business and professional worlds. So some courses at school would be content-heavy, some more practical or skill-based, but all focused upon encouraging students to think creatively.

Instead of schools being required to teach students how to pass exams, time would be better employed teaching students what they need to know and how to use that knowledge, making exams and assessments ‘fit for purpose’.

Testing inhibits the creative processes of young minds and uses up far too much time at school and university. In the past, those of us privileged to be educated at the taxpayers’ expense knew that we would get a job if we got a degree. But this is manifestly not the case today and the processes of teaching and learning at school and university need an even more radical overhaul than the self-styled ‘radical’ Secretary of State for Education envisages.

It is time for Mr Gove to sit down with a blank sheet of paper with schools, universities and professional leaders — and some young people too — to plan a system that measures all kinds of intellectual ability, including the creative, ensuring the acquisition of the essential knowledge and skills that students need in these challenging times.

If my performance at O-level had been a true indicator of my abilities, I don’t suppose that I’d be doing what I do today — and, I hope, reasonably successfully, after 20 years as a headmaster.

We now need a proper review of school assessment, unhindered by the political timescales imposed by general elections, because the ‘quick fix’ hardly ever works.

Jonathan Forster is headmaster of Moreton Hall School.

Traditional values have their rewards

Buckingham is unique. It is the only independent university in the UK with a Royal Charter, and probably the smallest with around 1,700 students. Honours degrees are achieved in two intensive years of study. We keep class sizes small, with a student: academic staff ratio of 10:1 and the Oxbridge style tutorial groups are often personalised and exhilarating.

Applications through UCAS or online via our website www.buckingham.ac.uk

For more information please contact our Admissions Office, University of Buckingham, Buckingham MK18 1EG. T: 01280 820313 E: info@buckingham.ac.uk
There is just one thing missing from the mountain of data put before parents as they choose their children’s schools: a league table of league tables. Just how is one supposed to select a school for little Algernon and Fenella when it is so hard to tell which of the many league tables published in the press is the best-performing and which are the stragglers?

As if there were not already enough league tables, the Department for Education muddled the waters even further in January by publishing its new preferred measure of how schools perform at A-level: the percentage of pupils who achieve AAB or better in at least three ‘facilitating subjects’. It would have been a little less confusing if the department explained clearly on its website what it meant by a ‘facilitating’ subject. It turns out that this is a list of subjects preferred by the Russell Group of Universities, and includes Maths, Further Maths, English, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, History and Languages (ancient and modern). Some might complain about the exclusion of certain subjects like economics, but let’s pass on that.

One thing is for sure: school league tables are not all the same. They may purport to show the same thing — ranking schools according to their exam results — but when you actually start to study them you realise that they are measuring slightly different things in each case, while some are far more complete than others. One league table’s top school is another one’s also-ran. All league tables have their strengths and all have their own quirks. They are all good in their own way, but for the benefit of people who might be thinking of looking up a league table, I have done my best to produce a league table of them. Just to demonstrate the problem, these are the top five independent schools for A-level results in 2012, through the eyes of various league tables:

**FT.COM**

**DAILY TELEGRAPH (SEPT 2012)**
1. Wycombe Abbey, 2. King’s College School, 3. Haberdashers’ Aske’s (Girls), 4. Magdalen College School, 5. Haberdashers’ Aske’s (Boys)

**DAILY TELEGRAPH (JAN 2013)**
I ought just to note that the FT, BBC and Daily Telegraph (January) league tables combine the results of independent schools with state schools, so for the purposes of comparison I have removed the state schools which appear in their lists. But otherwise, the league tables are supposedly measuring the same thing, so why do they pick out such completely different schools as their top performers? The FT league table claims to include every independent school which enters at least 20 students for an average of at least two A-levels. It then produces its own points score based on points per candidate and points per exam entry. But this includes core subjects only, as defined by the University of Cambridge. It would be helpful if it went on to state what is core subjects only, as defined by the University of Cambridge website, but I think we can assume it excludes surfing studies.

The Daily Telegraph, in common with the Times, publishes a league table assembled by the Independent Schools Council (ISC) every September. There is one obvious fault here: it only includes results in schools which are members of the ISC, about two-thirds of independent schools. But it also excludes several well-known schools such as Eton and Westminster which choose not to supply their A-level results to the ISC. The results used are very simple: they are the percentage of A-level entries which resulted in the award of grade A or A*.

The BBC uses a different measure: the number of points per pupil at A and AS level. Again, it would be helpful if the BBC website explained what exactly these points mean. But on the assumption that the league table uses the standard point scores used by the Department for Education, that means 300 points for an A*, 270 points for an A, 240 points for a B, 210 for a C, 180 for a D and 150 for an E. It looks impressive to see a school listed with an average points score of over 1,000, for a D and 150 for an E. It looks impressive to see a school listed with an average points score of over 1,000, but is it really a mark of achievement? Schools can prop themselves up this particular league table by entering pupils for a large number of subjects, none of which they need do especially well at. A pupil achieving AAB plus an E in general studies would actually score more highly on this scale than a pupil achieving A*A*A* — even though the former would have missed out on the chance of a top university. Point scores tend to flatter the results of state schools, which is perhaps one reason why the corporation has chosen to use it.

In January the Daily Telegraph published a new league table of schools ranked by A-level results, this time using the Department for Education’s latest release of data — which included the preferred new measure of A-level attainment: the percentage of pupils achieving AAB or better in at least three facilitating subjects. You can find out this information from the Daily Telegraph’s latest league table, yet schools are not actually ranked by the new measure: they are ranked by the old A-level ‘point scores’, as used in the BBC league table.

Theoretically the top five schools should be the same in both tables, but they are not. The BBC table uses data provided by the schools themselves immediately after the data was published, while the Telegraph league table uses government data, compiled after appeals.

The Best Schools league table, like the Times and Telegraph tables, use the simple measure of the percentage of A-level entries which result in an A or A* grade. The difference is that it includes results from all independent schools and sixth-form colleges: information which Les Webb, managing director of best-schools.co.uk, says is gleaned from information published by the schools themselves.

As a result, it includes a number of small, specialist institutions which are excluded from the other tables. Top place, in fact, goes to a non-ISC member, Cardiff Sixth-Form College, which last year entered 50 mostly international students in a small range of subjects based mostly on science and mathematics.

Of course, his and the other tables do rely on schools correctly reporting their results and not conveniently overlooking some of their bad results. Webb does say, however, that in the face of questions from other schools, he audited Cardiff Sixth-Form College’s results and found them to be correct. The college has also published its full results, along with the name of each pupil and the university to which he or she went on to study at its website.

I did ask Cardiff Sixth-Form College why it didn’t join the ISC and so be able to see its name right at the top of the league tables. Their director of strategy, Nadeem Sarwar, told me that to join the ISC would cost £10,000 to £15,000 a year and that the college didn’t regard it as a worthwhile use of money. Julie Pitcher of the ISC said that as ‘grossly inaccurate’, saying it would be more like £400 a year.

For the purposes of ranking the league tables, I have used two criteria: the usefulness of the information being provided and the completeness of the data. I have ranked both out of 10. This produces the following league table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Completeness</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>best-schools.co.uk</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Telegraph (September)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Telegraph (January)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It isn’t easy to find out what Cambridge regards as a core subject, but we can assume it excludes surfing studies.
Make the grade at A level

At CIFE we’re not just about getting the right grades or getting you into the best university. We’re about bringing out the best in you as an individual. That’s why our 2-year A level courses have so much choice and flexibility built in. In fact it’s what our association of highly accredited independent sixth form colleges is all about. Yes, we’ll help you meet others’ standards – but fulfil your own promise too.

To discover how CIFE can enable you to achieve your full potential, call 020 8767 8666 or visit www.cife.org.uk
Private pride

It’s absurd that parents who pay for their children’s education are made to feel ashamed, says James Delingpole

‘Why do public school heads feel hated? Because they offer an immoral advantage that is getting ever more exclusive.’

— David Aaronovitch, *Times*, January 2013

Let’s ‘unpack’ that statement, shall we? What this caring, lefty commentator is saying is that hatred of public schools is not merely understandable but actually justified. On moral grounds. Yes, that’s right. Britain’s private schools may be the envy of the world; they may give 615,000 children a year the very best possible start in life with an education which leaves them happy, confident, well-balanced, healthy, knowledgeable and intellectually grounded to a degree almost unknown in the state sector. But it’s OK to hate them all the same because what they do just isn’t ‘fair’.

Well, I suppose if ‘fairness’ is your criterion, you could make the same argument about pretty much anything. Why should ruddy hedge-fund managers be allowed to have breakfast every day in the Wolseley, when I can’t? Why does Richard Branson never allow kids from inner-city estates free holidays on Necker Island? Why do rock stars get to have more sex with more hot chicks in a month than I’ve managed in my entire miserable life? It’s so not fair. Really, the government should intervene.

Of course, if you wanted a truly fair system, you’d do pretty much the opposite of what Aaronovitch seems to want. Instead of abolishing private schools, you’d enable the free market to create more of them by issuing vouchers to every parent — which they could spend on whatever kind of education they wished, topping up any extras out of their own pocket.

Those parents who wanted the Findus lasagne basic model could spend their voucher on the nearest bog-standard comp, perhaps even earning a rebate for their parsimony. Parents after a superior product would simply act in the way most of us do in any other walk of life where there’s something we’d like but can’t easily afford: either they’d work harder to earn more or they’d make sacrifices elsewhere so as to save up enough money to pay the quality premium. It’s what you’d do for a 50-inch flat-screen TV or a new Range Rover Sport or a fancy holiday or a bigger home. Why should your kids’ education be any different?

This oughtn’t to be a question that even needs to be asked. In any rational world, parents prepared to sacrifice almost everything they had for their children would be hailed as moral exemplars — not pilloried as selfish, socially divisive greedheads. Those schools topping the educational league tables, meanwhile, would be viewed not as pariahs but as tremendous success stories to which all lesser competitors should aspire.

But it’s not the world we live in, unfortunately, as I was reminded again the other day when I appeared on *BBC Question Time*. A question about whether Nick Clegg should educate his son privately at Westminster came up, and what astonished me — for *Question Time*’s standards this was a moderate and reasonable audience — was just how widespread the general antipathy towards our independent schools now is.
BAROMETER

Who goes private?

Nick Clegg, who described the divide between private and state schools as ‘corrosive’, was reported to be considering sending his eldest son to a private school, though he is now said to have chosen a state one. Some unlikely parents who have sent their children private:

— **Tony Benn** sent son Hilary to Westminster Under School before sending him to Holland Park Comprehensive
— **Jim Callaghan** sent daughter Margaret to Blackheath High School, an independent girls’ school
— **Harold Wilson** sent sons Robin and Giles to University College School, Hampstead
— **Diane Abbott** sent son James to the City of London School
— **Ruth Kelly** sent her son to Bruern Abbey, a prep school in a country house near Bicester.

**Ethnic backgrounds**

Independent school pupils tend to come from higher income brackets than state school pupils, but how do they compare in ethnic origin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White British</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent schools</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State schools</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ISC*

**Spoil the child**

The average annual fees in independent schools are **£13,788**. What could you treat young Algernon to with this money if you decided to send him to a comprehensive instead?

- **Honda TRX90 Kids’ quad bike** .............. **£2,394**
- **RK Cadet go-kart with helmet, boots, gloves and suit** .............. **£2,349**
- **Phillips 55-inch 3D TV** ....................... **£1,679**
- **Seven nights at the Caribbean Beach Resort hotel, Disneyworld, Florida** .............. **£1,552**
- **Two weeks in five-star family resort in Majorca** .............. **£946**
- **Three nights at Santa’s Lapland, plus flights** .............. **£903**
- **Big Mac and fries plus large milkshake three times a week for a year.** .......... **£797.50**
- **JS Revolution surfboard and Billabong Kids wetsuit** .......... **£634.98**
- **Three pairs Nike Air Max Shox Turbo Trainers** .................. **£450**
- **iPhone 5, yearly contract** .................. **£432**
- **iPod (64MB)** ................................ **£329**
- **Weekly trip to a Vue cinema, with VIP seats and popcorn** ........... **£738.40**
- **Xbox 360 250GB with Forza essentials** .............. **£209.99**
- **Season ticket (under 16) Manchester United** .............. **£190**
- **Five kids’ hoodies and pairs of jeans from TKMaxx** .............. **£175**

**Total** .................................. **£13,779.87**

It’s time to tell the bien-pensant middle-class parent where they can shove their smug, chee-sparing drivel

My neighbouring panellist, comedian Dom Joly, jumped through hoops in order to illustrate just how embarrassed he was to have been educated in a system devised — as he put it — to train people to run India; so too did the *Guardian*’s Zoe Williams (Godolphin & Latymer). Not even the Conservative MP on the panel, Baroness Warsi, could quite bring herself to speak up for one of the few remaining areas of the British economy that remains genuinely world class. But then they were doing no more than reflecting their audience’s prejudices: even in decent, sensible, robustly-Tory-voting Lancaster, it seemed, an appreciation for private schools was the kind of love which dared not speak its name.

Well, almost. I did speak up for private schools, but not nearly as forthrightly as I would have liked. My excuse is that this point in the show coincided with one of those hypoglycaemic crashes I sometimes get when I haven’t eaten enough, thus rendering me a bit floppy and braindead. But it could also quite easily be the case that I had been seized by a momentary and unexpected panic which seems to afflict more and more of us these days when broaching the delicate topic of our darling ones’ privileged education. We know in our hearts there’s nothing wrong with it. Damn it, we’re good people who are just trying to do the best by our kids.

Yet for all that, the chippy, bitter, communist viewpoint expressed in that David Aaronovitch article is so prevalent these days, it’s as if we’ve been bullied and brainwashed into conceding it has some validity.

It doesn’t. And I think it’s about time we stopped allowing communitarian rabble-rousers like Aaronovitch to walk all over us. It’s time we showed a bit more contempt for David Cameron, every time he publicly cringes with embarrassment at having been blessed with the best education in the world. It’s time we made much more fuss about the Stalinist arrangement whereby a Fairness Commissar is able to embed injustice in our higher education system by forcing admissions tutors to discriminate against privately educated candidates.

It’s time, at the next dinner party when some bien-pensant middle-class parent tries boasting about how they managed to walk all over us. It’s time we showed a bit more arrogance and braindead. But it could also quite easily be the case that I had been seized by a momentary and unexpected panic which seems to afflict more and more of us these days when broaching the delicate topic of our darling ones’ privileged education. We know in our hearts there’s nothing wrong with it. Damn it, we’re good people who are just trying to do the best by our kids.

Yet for all that, the chippy, bitter, communistic viewpoint expressed in that David Aaronovitch article is so prevalent these days, it’s as if we’ve been bullied and brainwashed into conceding it has some validity.

Almost everything Britain used to be good at it now does badly. Our military has been emasculated and humiliated; our financial sector is a mess; our industry has disappeared; our civil service is politicised; our National Health Service is an embarrassment. An education at one of our superb private schools is about the only thing left that foreigners still queue up hungrily to buy — and rightly so, for they are justly the envy of the world. Those who seek such an education for their own children have nothing to apologise for. It’s the people who attack them who should be ashamed.
Godolphin & Latymer

We are committed to offering an outstanding education for all, regardless of income. We have a wide choice of subjects, excellent teaching and results, personal guidance and a friendly, supported learning environment.

For more information on assistance with school fees, please contact the Bursar.

IB Diploma and A Level

A prospectus can be obtained by telephoning the Reception Office

For further information contact: registrar@godolphinandlatymer.com

The Godolphin and Latymer School
Iffley Road, Hammersmith
London W6 0PG
Tel: 020 8741 1936
Fax: 020 8735 9520
Registered Charity No. 312699
www.godolphinandlatymer.com

Open Day
Saturday 11 May 2013

Leading independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11 to 18 years
Please visit www.st-marys-shaftesbury.co.uk for more details or Tel 01747 857111
Taken on faith

Not all religious schools are the same, says Aidan Bellenger

Education today is dominated by targets and regulations as well as by rapid and often ill-considered change. Individual needs and school identity are neglected, especially as equality and multiculturalism make their demands. Within this confusing moral and educational landscape, the so-called ‘faith school’ has become for many a model of excellence. In maintained schools, academies and in the independent sector, ‘ethos’ is seen as increasingly crucial, and the special educational contribution of ‘faith’ as central.

‘Ethos’, like ‘faith’, has become a rather empty word, and has sometimes been so watered down as a concept as to be little more than a nod to a school’s historical origins or an attempt at a marketing strategy. If a school is described as being ‘in the Catholic tradition’ or ‘based on Christian values’ this has little to say about its present life or aspiration, except perhaps that there is some attempt at discipline and maybe a distinctive dress code. Vagueness and fudging are as characteristic of the ‘ethos’ of ‘faith’ schools as of others with a more overtly secularist inclination.

The Benedictine ethos is, I hope, something much more creative than that. A Benedictine school has a very special character. It differs from other Catholic schools. Unlike the Jesuits, founded 1,000 years after St Benedict, or the 19th century Salesians, the Benedictines do not have a fully articulated or generally accepted system of education. Indeed most Benedictine monks and nuns across the world do not have a specifically educational vocation. What they have is perhaps more precious. In the sixth century Rule of St Benedict they possess a short, pithy and Gospel-filled epitome of living in communion which provides a framework not only for education, but also for life. The ‘School of the Lord’s Service’ it proposes is a place of lifelong learning, a preparation for eternal life, the ultimate ‘value added’.

The Benedictines have four well-established schools in England at Ampleforth, Downside, Ealing and Worth, some now under lay management, as well as responsibility for a number of voluntary aided primary schools in their parishes and a university hall at Oxford. All of these places share a common tradition but each has its strong sense of local identity. One of the Benedictine monastic vows is ‘stability’ and this roots the schools geographically and personally. A continuing community is one of the hallmarks of Benedictine education and affords a profound sense of hospitality to all who seek its care.

The famous ‘moderation’ of the Benedictine way, personalised for many in Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, conceals its tougher implications. If Benedictine education seeks to get to the core of things, it does so through rigour and hard work. St Benedict saw idleness as ‘the enemy of the soul’ and, although the idea
that ‘to work is to pray’ is never explicitly stated in the Rule, this does not reduce the importance of work in the Benedictine scheme of things. Indeed, St Benedict, in sanctifying work, is moving in a very important direction away from the idea that work is a necessary evil or even a path to enrichment.

The chief work for a monk or nun in St Benedict’s Rule is the Work of God and this means the office of the Church, the services that mark each part of the day. The Work of God also includes what is described as Lectio Divina, sacred reading, which also contributes much to the Benedictine ideal of education. A thoughtful, meditative reading of texts, listening to their meaning, perhaps reflecting with others on their ‘echoes’, may point to a definition of Benedictine education. In an age of the quick fix and the short cut — made so much easier by the internet — the more measured and contemplative Benedictine approach can provide a fuller understanding of what education really means.

At Downside we have identified eight aspects of the Benedictine Rule which affect our education — welcome, reverence and humility, listening, teaching and learning, personal discipline, stewardship of gifts, concern for the individual and building communion — and these form the basis of our philosophy of education. It always remains a work in progress. Renewal is always as important as tradition. St Benedict’s vision of the unity of all things makes clear the force of what has become the Benedictine motto, ‘Let God be Glorified in All Things.’ St Benedict’s Rule is profoundly incarnational, seeing and experiencing God in all aspects of our life.

As long ago as 1981 Alasdair MacIntyre, writing in After Virtue, contrasted ‘our own disturbed time with a crucial turning point in earlier history when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman Imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that Imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead — often not recognising firmly what they were doing — was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness.’ MacIntyre concluded that, ‘This time the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another — doubtless very different — St Benedict.’ If we were to look again at St Benedict’s Rule we might find that St Benedict still has much to say about our current predicaments and may indeed prove as significant for the 21st century as for the sixth.

The Rt Rev Dom Aidan Bellenger is Abbot of Downside.
Maximum flexibility

Francis Holland headmistress Lucy Elphinstone tells Camilla Swift about preparing girls for complicated careers – like her own

What are the most important lessons for modern-day schoolgirls? No, not the ‘three Rs’, or how to get four A*s at A-level, but flexibility and resilience. The 21st-century girl will have to be able to reinvent herself throughout her life her circumstances change, and she needs to learn the skills that will enable her to do just that.

This is the gospel according to Lucy Elphinstone, headmistress of the London day school Francis Holland. The Chelsea girls’ school is already notorious for doing a good line in society ‘It-girls’, with an alumni list that reads like the society pages of Tatler. Names like Goldsmith, Ecclestone and Delevigne are all there, present and correct. But Elphinstone, who took up her role at the beginning of this school year, is determined to shake things up and bring new challenges to the table.

Academia is not the be-all and end-all of her aspirations. ‘Just getting good A-level results is not enough. It’s incredibly important, but those alone won’t equip girls for life in the next decade of the 21st century,’ she says.

In a world where girls, and of course women, are likely to have to earn their own living whether or not they decide to have children, Elphinstone predicts that the next generation of girls won’t have conventional career paths. Instead they will have to adapt constantly to changes in their situations and family lives. ‘Asking girls who are making their GCSE choices, “What do you want to be?” is the wrong question,’ she says. ‘Women aren’t going to “be” something except for themselves; what girls need to think of is the skills they will learn from their education and ask: “What subjects will give me maximum flexibility?”’

The reason Elphinstone thinks this way might have something to do with the career path that led her to Francis Holland, a route she describes as ‘characterised by opportunism and barefaced cheek’. After working in publishing in London, and then as a ghost-writer in rural Scotland, she took up a role running a local Montessori school. From there — having taken her PGCE by long-distance learning — she went on to teach in prep and senior schools across the country ‘from the north-east of Scotland to the south-west of England’, before joining Downe House School in 2007 as Head of Sixth Form.

And all of this while bringing up her own four children.

Elphinstone’s experiences have taught her to grab every opportunity with both hands, and it’s this versatility that she thinks girls need to get the hang of. But how can a school teach its pupils to be flexible and make the most of their abilities?

The first step is for girls to accept that their professional lives might not be a chain of simple promotions, but rather a ‘series of uneven dips, troughs and even plateaux’. Then, says Elphinstone, it’s a case of making the most of those slumps by developing other skills.

In a school, activities such as Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards are particularly good for helping girls make the most of the talents and skills they already have. The very flexibility that women and girls often have naturally is ‘the ace in our hand’, she believes, but girls are famously bad at selling themselves. Boys, on the other hand, are ‘much better at blagging — and I think we need a bit of that’.

This is where the debate between single-sex and co-ed education comes into play. Having seen both sides of the coin (she taught solely in co-ed schools before moving to Downe House), Elphinstone is now ‘a total advocate of single-sex education’. Girls behave differently in mixed environments, a trait that isn’t always beneficial. ‘People say that girls are bitchy,’ she says, ‘but I think they’re only bitchy and cliquey when you introduce boys, as then the sisterhood will turn against each other.’ Academically as well, girls tend to thrive in an all-female environment, as they can ‘find it hard to assert themselves and achieve highly’ in co-ed schools.

When it comes to the age-old boarding versus day argument, she’s not quite so black and white about things. Boarding schools, she says, can be restrictive as the raft of activities available on tap stops pupils from learning independence, or how to juggle their own lives.

However, Elphinstone has to admit that there are some things that London day schools can’t do as well as rural boarding schools, and one of those is sport. She confesses to missing the ‘rolling lacrosse fields’ of Downe House, but is on a mission to improve all of the school’s extra-curricular activities, from sports to charity work. The Carmel Hall performing arts centre helps clinch the school’s reputation for producing prima ballerinas, with compulsory ballet for the younger girls, optional ballet for all others, and a ballet teacher who is the envy of London. And with Battersea Park on the doorstep, tennis is already big, and there are plans to introduce soccer as well.

Elphinstone’s aim, she explains, is to create a learning environment that cultivates ‘flexibility, enterprise and resilience’, which she sums up in one word: grit. The streets of Belgravia might not be gritty, but this headmistress certainly is.
It’s never too early to learn: teaching children to be money-savvy

It’s never too early to get children familiar with money, for them to understand the complexities of spending and saving, how the economy operates — and what they could do to pre-empt financial adversity in their own futures.

Simple lessons can provide them with a valuable code to follow throughout their lives: not spending more than they can afford (a mantra governments could do well to follow to curb future crises) and being aware of the significant effects of compounding.

There are more and more ways for kids to learn about how to save and manage their money successfully, offering clear benefits for them — and often serving as a convenient reminder for adults. Many well-known websites dispense advice (and invariably books and various subscription deals) to put children on the path to financial knowledge in an easy-to-understand way.

Some sensible lessons they can learn early will stand them in good stead for the future.

Encourage them into the saving habit. Why not set up a children’s savings account for them? They will possibly get a gift (like a piggy bank) and they can shop around to see who offers the best interest rate — thus learning about the value of returns, too!

The magic of compounding. When interest (or dividends) is added to a capital sum each year and it is reinvested, then the next year’s interest is slightly higher, and so on. Over time this can add up significantly — in fact, Einstein called it ‘the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it… he who doesn’t… pays it’.

Help them to set goals. If there is something children really want, show them the merits of saving up regularly to pay for it.

Show them the value of earning. Highlight the correlation between working and rewards so they understand how to pay for holidays, a new car or things for the home. Perhaps give them a weekly pocket money allowance in return for chores around the house or for keeping their room tidy.

But they should be mindful of...

The corrosive effects of inflation. In a low interest rate environment (like now), it’s not enough for money to merely be deposited in a savings account, especially over the long term. Inflation can eat into returns and neutralise growth, therefore it’s wise to impress on children that it’s astute to make money work hard — ideally by investing across a wide range of assets and opportunities.

The best way to face the future is to have the insight to prepare for it. Children learn the value of good habits, to think about the consequences of their actions, and they also develop an aptitude for numbers, a head start that could bring them benefits for many years.

Judicious foundations now may elevate children towards a favoured position, which according to Warren Buffett is when they have ‘enough money so that they would feel they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing’.

The value of investments can fall and you may get back less than you invested.

The opinions expressed in this document are not necessarily the views held throughout Brewin Dolphin Ltd. You must also refer to www.brewin.co.uk for other important disclosures.

To find out more call Brewin Dolphin on 020 7246 1000 or visit brewin.co.uk

BREWIN DOLPHIN
Investment Management and Financial Planning
My expulsion shame

Mary Wakefield didn’t enjoy being kicked out – but she’d never trust a school that was scared to take the final step

I only realised I’d actually blown it this time 24 hours after it was already too late. I’d been caught boozing in the woods again and sent to the head, who’d said, more in exhaustion than anger, that I’d had my last chance and, this time, I’d really have to go.

It’s difficult for your average rebel (of the commonplace, attention-seeking sort) to understand when they’ve pushed it too far. Downe House boarding school for girls was, as far as I was concerned, life. I’d been there since the Remove where I’d arrived, aged 11, in a dress with smocking on the front. Four years later I’d swapped smocking for better weekend gear: DM boots and a nasty tin peace sign on a black leather string. I was happy. I didn’t want to go.

In desperation, I deployed the usual tactics. I lied through my teeth. I blamed other girls, mentioned peer pressure. I hinted at a home tragedy and pulled out a special sad look that spoke of a secret suffering. It took those six cans of Stella just to soften this inner pain, said the look.

But the look cut no ice with the head. And even then and there, in the grip of desperation, I could see her point. The term before, I’d been a part of an over-excited outdoor drinking party in Newbury park that had ended up in hospital, and in the papers. Other parents, driven mad by fee-paying and deluded into thinking their own darlings teetotal, had been so full of rage they’d targeted my mother: ‘It’s disgusting that your daughter’s still at the school,’ they hissed into her voicemail. ‘You should be ashamed.’ Mum cried. I will never forgive them. This is the first piece of advice I can give you prospective parents, from the dark side of boarding school: never assume your little dear is any better than the rest. Never blame her ‘friends’. She’s quite capable of making her own bad decisions.

The second is: look for a school that is actually prepared to expel a troublesome girl or boy. It didn’t occur to me then, but I see now how easy it would have been...
Never blame her ‘friends’

Never assume your little dear is any better than the rest.

As for me, it was only the day after, when mother was on her way to school to collect the disgrace she’d bred, that the reality of being expelled began to bite.

No natural-born weasel accepts defeat easily, so I thought and thought in hope of dreaming up a useful lie. No dice. Even contrition was impossible because I’d said it all the term before. ‘Honestly Mum, this time I’ve learned my lesson.’

An hour from crunch time, I climbed out of my bedroom window onto the roof where we smoked Marlboros and contemplated the hypothetical existence of God and boys. I thought about how much I loved all those things, and how much in fact I enjoyed this school. I hadn’t realised that before. So I sat on that rooftop, with my red wool tights catching on the rough faces of the down-sloping tiles, and wondered whether I should jump. I shuffled my bum an inch forward, peered down the down-sloping tiles, and wondered whether I should make my lesson.

I’m 14 and last year I got into a fight with a boy my age, broke my wrist, and was sent home. My poor parents thought it would be good to try verbal reasoning instead of violence to make my point. So in October, they packed me off to ‘Debate like a world champion 2012’, organised by Debate Mate and hosted at St Paul’s Girls School.

Don’t be fooled by the cheesy slogan: ‘Empowering the youth of today. Creating the leaders of tomorrow.’ Debate Mate is an excellent charity that aims encourage social mobility and teach inner-city kids to channel their energies towards public speaking and debating. But they are not restrictive, and independent schoolchildren are welcome too.

At 9.30 on a Wednesday morning, hordes of (mostly public school) boys and girls appeared at the doors of St Paul’s. We were met by an array of LSE, King’s College and UCL alumni who guided us into the huge auditorium where we heard these young academic speakers take part in a debate entitled ‘This house would ban countries with poor human rights records from holding major sporting tournaments.’ After hearing both sides, the audience of 60 voted overwhelmingly for the opposition.

After this ‘display debate’, we split into different groups. Each group was ‘mentored’ by one of the young academic types. We then spent the morning studying Barack Obama’s speech to the 2008 Democratic National Convention, and learning how to master the debating skill in the ‘British Parliamentary Style’. And after lunch, we looked at the four types of speaker: the Firebrand, the Professor, the Statesman and the Conversationalist.

Thursday was the day of the competition. Everyone was put into pairs, then each pair was pitted against another. The first debate was ‘This house would reinstate corporal punishment’, the second ‘This house would ban violent video games’, and the third ‘This house would ban child celebrities’. Following these debates, there was a grand final in the auditorium mentioned. Here the ‘crème de la crème’ of ‘Debate like a world champion 2012’ battled against each other over the motion ‘This house would create a national service for all school-leavers’. All speakers spoke expertly and had evidently learned a lot over the two days.

I didn’t win, but despite being dragged out of my bed on a Wednesday during half term, I still loved the course. Who wouldn’t want to speak like Churchill or Obama?
Remember them well

As the centenary of the Great War approaches, Alan Judd hopes students will hear the full story.

Next year’s centenary of the outbreak of the first world war will provoke a barrage of media coverage, much of it informative and truth-seeking. But much of the rest will be a rehearsal of received opinion: that the war was avoidable and futile, bad generals sending brave soldiers to senseless slaughter, the appalling carnage of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the gruesome incompetence of Gallipoli, the great war poets as the true voices of the suffering soldiery, not so much a war to end war as a peace to end peace, culminating in Passchendaele. There’s some truth in all that but it’s only part of a much bigger truth that modern scholarship is gradually revealing. And there’s still time — just — for school history lessons to make that bigger truth known.

So far, government plans to commemorate the war appear to be drawn largely from that bank of received opinion: that the war was avoidable and futile, bad generals sending brave soldiers to senseless slaughter, the appalling carnage of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the gruesome incompetence of Gallipoli, the great war poets as the true voices of the suffering soldiery, not so much a war to end war as a peace to end peace, culminating in Passchendaele. There’s some truth in all that but it’s only part of a much bigger truth that modern scholarship is gradually revealing. And there’s still time — just — for school history lessons to make that bigger truth known.

Next year’s centenary of the outbreak of the first world war will provoke a barrage of media coverage, much of it informative and truth-seeking. But much of the rest will be a rehearsal of received opinion: that the war was avoidable and futile, bad generals sending brave soldiers to senseless slaughter, the appalling carnage of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the gruesome incompetence of Gallipoli, the great war poets as the true voices of the suffering soldiery, not so much a war to end war as a peace to end peace, culminating in Passchendaele. There’s some truth in all that but it’s only part of a much bigger truth that modern scholarship is gradually revealing. And there’s still time — just — for school history lessons to make that bigger truth known.

So far, government plans to commemorate the war appear to be drawn largely from that bank of received opinion, focusing on defeats and disasters. Perhaps it felt impolite or vainglorious to mention the fact that, militarily, the war was decisively won and that the principal instruments of defeating the enemy in 1918 were the armies of Britain and its Empire. Just as we annually commemorate 1 July 1916, the first day of the Somme when we suffered around 20,000 losses, so we annually forget 8 August 1918, the day the final British offensive began, when German casualties are thought to have been roughly equivalent to ours at the Somme. That was the day that Ludendorff, the German commander, called ‘The black day of the German Army’, when he realised they had lost the war. Mention of it need not — should not — be celebratory, but it should be acknowledged because it was the more decisive battle, leading to victory. It might also be commemorated as an example of international co-operation, with British, Australian, Canadian, French and US troops taking part in what would nowadays be celebrated as a truly Commonwealth, European and transatlantic joint venture.

Even if we were to limit our commemorations and teaching of that war to failure and disaster, we should do it better. How often do we hear, for example, that the first day of the Somme was the 132nd of Verdun, where the French were bleeding to death? Or that it was fought at neither a time nor place of Haig’s choosing, or that it was actually the first of a series of battles lasting until November and leading to the 25-mile German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in order to avoid more of what they called ‘Somme fighting’. Figures numb the mind, but a useful corrective to our annual vicarious wallowing in Somme mud is to remember that we were not the only people there: British and Dominion armies suffered some 419,654 dead and wounded in those battles, the French 204,253 and the Germans — who ever thinks of them? — probably more than half a million.

Of course, a degree of Anglocentricity in teaching and commemorating the war is perfectly reasonable, but if we confine ourselves only to what happened to us we lose proportion and context. Most of us know that...
British and Irish dead totalled about 725,000 overall, but how many appreciate that the French lost around 1.4 million and the Germans around 2 million — not to mention the Italians, the Russians and the Austrians? No general on either side found a cheap way of fighting because industrialised warfare inevitably incurs a high butcher’s bill. (Casualty rates during the second world war Normandy campaign equalled those of the trenches, but we’re less aware of them because the campaign was shorter.) Fighting continued until the last minute of the last hour on the last morning, with more than 800 British soldiers thought to have killed by 11 o’clock — nearly twice the number killed in a decade in Afghanistan. Yet, taking the war as a whole, your chances of survival were better than you might think: roughly seven-eighths of those wearing British Army uniform survived.

The question schools need to ask themselves is: are we equipped to teach the wider issues raised by that war? The emphasis on personal experience, heavily influenced by those wonderful but not always reliable poets, obscures the fact that very many who fought thought it terrible but worthwhile, that they had done a good and necessary job. As C.E. Montague notes in his book Disenchantment: ‘But the war had to be won: that was flat. It was like putting out houses on fire, or not letting children be killed; it did not even need to be proved.’

The disillusion that we take as almost conventional was arguably more a reaction to post-war hardship, fuelled decades later by 1960s iconoclasm as exemplified by Oh! What a Lovely War, that brilliant but patronising and misleading entertainment. As for the argument that we need not have gone to war, would the alternative — to have left Belgium and large parts of France in the hands of the invader — have been acceptable?

Also largely ignored now is the worldwide blockade of Germany enforced by the Royal Navy, which brought the German war economy to its knees and reduced many civilians to near-starvation. All too often we nod our heads when told that the peace, with its crippling reparations, was responsible for Hitler and his National Socialists, but how far is that true? The reparations were mostly unpaid. As Niall Ferguson comments in The Pity of War: ‘The economic consequences of the Versailles Treaty were far less severe for Germany than the Germans and Keynes claimed.’

There is plenty of good work being done on improving our understanding of this great cataclysm, including that by the British Commission for Military History, which is considering producing information packs for teachers and schools. There’s little doubt that Michael Gove would support anything that deepens and broadens historical awareness among teachers and taught in this area. But the short time available means that the initiative will have to come from schools themselves. There’ll be much talk next year about what we owe that 1914–1918 generation; at this distance what we owe them above all, surely, is a serious effort to understand not only what they suffered, but what they achieved.
For the Tory half of the coalition, immigration is not a subject for soft or nuanced rhetoric. David Cameron and his colleagues have an aspiration, you see, and that’s to reduce the level of net migration from the ‘hundreds of thousands’ to the ‘tens of thousands’ in time for the next election — and they hope to achieve it through sheer force of policy. Caps have been set on the number of immigrants who can enter the country. Tougher restrictions now abound.

This approach is certainly a crowd-pleaser: recent opinion polls suggest that around three-quarters of the British public are in favour of reducing immigration. But before we all cheer ourselves hoarse, it’s worth remembering that not all immigration is the same. Tougher rules may keep out freeloaders and con-artists and terrorists, but they can also keep out the sort of people we might want — even need — around. I’m talking, in particular, about students.

In the year up to last September, 210,921 visas were given to foreign students, says Peter Hoskin.
issued to foreign-born people coming to study in Britain. That might sound like a lot, but it’s actually a 26 per cent reduction on the previous 12 months. The regulations introduced by the government — including stricter English language requirements — are already having a shuddering effect on the statistics, and there could be more to come. According to a report submitted to the Home Office two years ago, the number of non-EU students allowed into the country will have to fall by 60 per cent to meet the Tory leadership’s overall aspiration.

But why should we care if there are fewer Chinese or Indian students in our libraries and exam halls? Easy — because they’re not the only ones who benefit from their being here; Brits do too. As one British-born student put it to me, ‘I’d feel seriously impaired if I wasn’t in a cosmopolitan environment right now.’ With globalisation clattering ever on, there’s much to be said for classrooms that mirror the variety of the world outside. The kids from London may be working alongside — certainly competing with — the kids from Shanghai and Delhi in future.

And there are more quantifiable benefits, too. As it stands, higher education is a mightily profitable export industry for the United Kingdom. It makes the country about £8 billion a year — a figure which is expected to rise to £17 billion by the middle of the next decade — and this, in turn, supports many thousands of jobs. Yet by whittling down the number of foreign students the government is endangering this cash-flow. The UK Border Agency reckons that the restrictions on foreign students could cost our economy £2.4 billion over the next four years. It’s a stark reminder that money doesn’t just talk — it emigrates.

And what about Britain’s universities and colleges? Just as the economy draws in money from foreign students, so too do they. If that lucrative source of funding dries up, then some institutions may face a choice between cutting spending on teaching and research, or turning completely private in order to raise more cash. Heads, British students suffer academically. Tails, they suffer financially, with tuition fees far in excess of the £9,000 a year that currently prevails.

None of this is to say that the student visa system doesn’t need tightening up in parts — the phenomenon of bogus students entering the country to ‘study’ bogus courses still persists, for instance — but it could also do with loosening elsewhere. There’s one regulation by which visa applicants have to achieve a certain level of funding for a 28-day period. Yet, as John Southworth, the Principal of Lansdowne College, explains, ‘in one case the visa was refused because currency exchange rates had changed, which meant that during the period of 28 days the student’s funds dipped slightly below the required amount for a few days only.’

A decent first step would be to remove foreign students from the figures for net migration. Not only would this alleviate the political pressure to keep the numbers down, but it would also recognise the fact that students are a different class of immigrant. Unlike many others who decamp to Britain, those carrying textbooks tend to leave after a set period of time. In pure statistical terms, reducing student immigration today achieves little more than reducing emigration tomorrow. It’s a special case, and ought to be treated as such.

In her speech to last year’s Conservative party conference, Theresa May defended the government’s caps and restrictions on the grounds that ‘a nation is more than a market, and human beings are more than economic units’. Her point — correct in itself — was that immigration has social effects too. But, still, when it comes to foreign students, a bit of hard-headed economic realism wouldn’t go amiss. Keep them out, and we’ll all feel the pain in our wallets. Open the doors, and we’ll have a better chance of growth. Class dismissed.
End of the boom

Ysenda Maxtone Graham on Michael Nevin, Winchester’s recently retired English master

One of the great sounds of Winchester is no longer to be heard. It is the ‘Poon boom’. ‘Poon’ was the nickname of Michael Nevin, the great don who was himself a Wykehamist and who taught English and ‘Div’ at the school from 1974 till his retirement last summer. His ‘boom’ was the sound of his strongly projected voice as he read Dickens aloud to his class.

‘It was riveting,’ one of his ex-pupils remembers. ‘The way he read the stories just carried you along. He would bob his leg up and down with excitement if we were talking about Dickens.’ ‘If we were doing a Shakespeare history play we’d enact whole scenes,’ said another. ‘If the king was speaking to his subjects, he’d make the king stand on a desk.’ It is a well-known fact that just because a teacher loves a subject, it doesn’t mean that he can or does communicate that love to his pupils. But Michael Nevin did. How?

I think it was because his enthusiasm for the texts, for the words, for the meaning, for what the author was trying to do and say, was mixed with a lack of fear of actually teaching. ‘What you don’t need, as a 15-year-old,’ another of his ex-pupils said to me, ‘is to be made to listen to another 15-year-old in your class (usually the one who most loves the sound of his own voice) holding forth at length on his own reaction to the text. What you do need and do relish is a teacher who has studied and thought about every word and who tells you — yes, tells you — what he knows.’

There are two forms of English literature teaching at Winchester. One is the unexamined kind, called Div, in which a don is allocated a set of boys to see every day for a year and is given free rein to teach pretty well whichever texts he likes. At its glorious best — and Michael Nevin did it at its best — Div introduces the boys to a wide range of English literature, from Dickens to Shakespeare, from Milton to Wordsworth, from Albee to Ondaatje, and the fact that the works chosen are not official ‘set texts’ means that a huge amount of literature can be covered at a fast pace. The other is the examined kind, which happens in the Sixth Form in preparation for the Pre-U. The boys who studied The Tempest and T.S. Eliot’s poetry with Michael Nevin for public exams went into the exam room in a state of deep preparedness.

The modesty and kindness of the man are what people remember. When he set a Saturday evening Div essay, he would often do the essay himself on a Saturday evening so he would know exactly what the boys had been through. He marked the essays without fail in his classroom straight after Chapel on Sunday mornings. He was famous for his marking system: 40 out of 40 was good, but 43 out of 40 was very good, and he once awarded 60
When I rang him at his cottage by Coniston Water where he now lives with his wife Lindsay (and goes to local classes on Wordsworth), I saw what people meant about this modesty. On going to Winchester as a boy: 'I actually failed the entrance exam the first time round. I got in through nepotism, as my maternal grandfather had been headmaster of the school from 1936 to 1945. It really picked me up by the boot-straps, academically.' On reading aloud to his class: 'Well, I’m afraid I did do quite a lot of reading aloud. And we had a few silent reading lessons, too. I used every possible means to get them along, to get them swept up in the story.' And on his handing out of copious notes on every single character in *The Tempest*: ‘Well, I did spend a lot of time in the holidays rather slavishly mugging up. I would find out what the best critical works were, and study them carefully, and then distill it all into notes for the boys. I think I probably overdid that — but I wanted to give them what I’d had.’

As schools become less romantic in the age of league tables, Nevin treasured the eccentric traditions of Winchester. As well as Div (‘which is at the absolute centre of what the school does; it values learning for its own sake, and the great thing is, the don is learning at the same time’), Nevin was devoted to Winchester Football, or ‘Winkies’. He was famed as one of the great referees of this game which can never be played against other schools because only one school plays it. ‘I rather hated Winkies when I was at the school,’ he said. ‘It was pretty painful and muddy, and the rules were incomprehensible. When I became a teacher I started refereeing the game, and grew to love it. The great thing was, the rules could be changed — and not by the dons, but by the boys. The game has become much less painful over the years. There used to be ‘hotting’ [that’s the word for the scrum] all the time. Now there’s less of that, and the game is much more widely enjoyed. I think it’s better than the [Eton] Field Game. That’s a dribbling game, so more skill is needed. In Winkies you just kick and follow as hard as you can.’

Hearing that comparison, many might prefer the sound of the more elevated skills of the Field Game. But inclusiveness was at the heart of Michael Nevin’s philosophy. He liked a game that anyone could play. And he liked the ordinary, unglamorous inter-house league, playing itself through on rainy weekday afternoons on faraway Palmer Field. He also coached cricket (he played cricket for Cambridge, where he read English at Emmanuel in the 1960s); and he chose to be the coach for the Colts rather than for a more senior team. He loved the timeless quality of a cricket match. He had a melancholy side, which occasionally veered towards depression, and his extremely regular and diligent habits were in part a way of fighting off the demons. And he really hated computers. ‘What are those blessed things they muck about with?’ his friend and fellow-don Peter Cramer remembers him saying at a house meeting. (He was referring to the computer mouse.) ‘The whole damn lot ought to be thrown into the Solent.’

‘He would bob his leg up and down with excitement if we were talking about Dickens’
# A guide to Easter revision colleges

The Council for Independent Education’s list for last-minute cramming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Av. class size</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashbourne College</td>
<td>All main subjects offered at all levels. Specific individual unit revision courses offered in mathematics; otherwise AS or A2 for specific sessions restricted to Ashbourne’s exam boards. Useful course pack provided and end-of-course report.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td>£400 per course (15 hours’ tuition)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashbournecollege.co.uk">www.ashbournecollege.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td>Small group fee is £620 per course (20 hours); one-to-one tuition is £46 per hour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 15 April to Friday 19 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Academy</td>
<td>All major A-level and GCSE subjects offered. Bespoke one-to-one tuition or small group ‘topic-specific’ courses, Monday to Friday half-days. Daily supervised exam practice and written feedback. End-of-course report.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Monday 25 March to Friday 29 March</td>
<td>£400 per course (15 hours’ tuition)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bathacademy.co.uk">www.bathacademy.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td>Small group fee is £620 per course (20 hours); one-to-one tuition is £46 per hour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Tutors College</td>
<td>AS and A2 economics, French language, mathematics. Also: AS and A2 history (half-day topics £80) and AS and A2 Exam Preparation Workshop (half-day course £80).</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td>£400 per course (15 hours’ tuition)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ctc.ac.uk">www.ctc.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carfax Tutorial Establishment</td>
<td>All subjects offered at A-level and GCSE. Individual tuition with group sessions on study skills and exam technique. Regular exam practice. Morning and/or afternoon sessions. One subject – 20 hours total per week. One subject intensive – 30 hours total. Two subjects – 36 hours total.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td>One subject £450 per week, intensive £625 per week. Two subjects £690 per week.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.carfax-oxford.com">www.carfax-oxford.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingham College</td>
<td>All main subjects at A-level (A2 &amp; AS) and GCSE offered. Homework is set throughout and reports are sent at the end of the course. GCSE Combined Science (28 hours’ tuition) £697.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday 25 to Friday 29 March (GCSE: Monday 25 March to Thursday 28 March)</td>
<td>A-level (17.5 hours’ tuition): one subject £465, Two subjects £885. GCSE (14 hours’ tuition): one subject £366, Two subjects £696. Three subjects £1,026</td>
<td><a href="http://www.collingham.co.uk">www.collingham.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 1 to Friday 5 April (GCSE: Tuesday 2 April to Friday 5 April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 to Friday 12 April (GCSE: Monday 8 April to Thursday 11 April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>Av. class size</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duff Miller College</strong></td>
<td>All main subjects offered at all levels. Combined Science counts as two GCSE subjects.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td>Full A-level £875 (37.5 hours). A-level (A2 or AS) £515 (20 hours’ tuition). GCSE £415 (20 hours’ tuition).</td>
<td><a href="http://www.duffmiller.com">www.duffmiller.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 Queen’s Gate, London SW7 5JP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020 7225 0577, <a href="mailto:enqs@duffmiller.com">enqs@duffmiller.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 15 April to Friday 19 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lansdowne College</strong></td>
<td>All main subjects at A-level (A2 and AS) and GCSE are offered. Combined Science counts as two GCSE subjects. Individual tuition available on request. All exam boards offered.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td>Full A-level £880 (35 hours). A2 or A2 £555 (17.5 hours’ tuition). GCSE £460 (17.5 hours). Three or more GCSEs charged at £355 per subject.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lansdownecollege.com">www.lansdownecollege.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44 Bark Place, London W2 4AT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020 7616 4400, <a href="mailto:education@lansdownecollege.com">education@lansdownecollege.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 15 April to Friday 19 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MPW (Birmingham)</strong></td>
<td>All major A-level and GCSE subjects offered. Half-day specialist modules (e.g. in history &amp; English literature) available for £126 per session.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday 25 March to Friday 29 March</td>
<td>£462 per course (17.5 hours’ tuition)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mpw.co.uk/bham">www.mpw.co.uk/bham</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18 Greenfield Crescent, Birmingham B15 3AU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0121 454 9637, <a href="mailto:enq@birmingham.mpw.co.uk">enq@birmingham.mpw.co.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MPW (London)</strong></td>
<td>All major A-level (A2 &amp; AS) and GCSE offered. Forty-hour A-level mathematics course available for £984. Eight-hour seminar courses in history, English literature and religious studies for £281. Thirty-hour Combined Science GCSE course £847.</td>
<td>7 (max 9)</td>
<td>Monday 25 March to Friday 29 March</td>
<td>Per course (20 hours’ tuition): one subject £636. Two subjects £1,272. Three subjects £1,733. Four subjects £2,183. Accommodation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mpw.co.uk">www.mpw.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90/92 Queen’s Gate, London SW7 5AB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020 7835 1355, <a href="mailto:london@mpw.co.uk">london@mpw.co.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxford International College</strong></td>
<td>All main subjects at A-level, GCSE, IGCSE and IB. Week-long residential or non-residential courses. Study skills included. End-of-course reports provided.</td>
<td>3 (max 6)</td>
<td>Monday 25 March to Friday 29 March</td>
<td>£695 for five-day course (30 hours of timetabled study). Additional £250 for full-board accommodation.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oxcoll.com">www.oxcoll.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Centre for Innovation, New Road, Oxford OX1 1BY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 1 April to Friday 5 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01865 240637, <a href="mailto:info@oxss.co.uk">info@oxss.co.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxford Tutorial College</strong></td>
<td>All main A-level and Pre-U subjects offered. GCSE mathematics, English and science offered on half-day and full-day basis. Fully residential A-level and Pre-U courses available for £960.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tuesday 2 April to Saturday 6 April (GCSE: 2 April to 5 April)</td>
<td>A-level £660 (24 hours’ tuition). GCSE £275 (12 hours’ tuition) or £500 (24 hours’ tuition).</td>
<td><a href="http://www.otc.ac.uk">www.otc.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 King Edward Street, Oxford OX1 4HT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 8 April to Friday 12 April (GCSE: 9 April to 12 April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01865 793333, <a href="mailto:info@otc.ac.uk">info@otc.ac.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the above colleges are members of the Council for Independent Education (www.cife.org.uk), a national organisation of independent colleges which specialises in preparing students for university entrance.
SPECTATOR CLUB

Subscribe to The Spectator – you get more than a magazine

• Each week’s issue delivered to your door
• Free and instant access to the 5-star Spectator app on your iPad and iPhone (Android soon!)
• Free web access to the magazine website and all online content
• Exclusive discounts on wine, travel and theatre
• Our quarterly luxury magazine Spectator Life
• Special subscriber discounts to all our debates and special events
• Invitations to subscriber-only events such as The Spectator Tea Party held at our garden overlooking St James’s Park

Subscribe with the latest offers at www.spectator.co.uk/SAD13B or call us on 01795 592886 and quote SAD13B
Easter Revision
2-12 April 2013

A-Level & Pre-U courses
- Small classes
- Examination oriented
- Expert tutors
- Mock examinations
- Residential or non-residential at Brasenose College, Oxford

01865 793333
info@otc.ac.uk | www.otc.ac.uk
12 King Edward Street, Oxford OX1 4HT

A personalized education for your child
A level & sixth form in Oxford

“You have motivated my son & unleashed his intellect where others have failed.” – Greene’s parent

45 years of individual learning
www.greenes.org.uk
01865 248308

Easter revision courses.
GCSE and A level courses of flexible duration and intensity, first time or re-takes.

01865 200 676
www.carfax-oxford.com
We're delighted to return to the Chelsea Flower Show for the fourth consecutive year, with a show garden designed by the award-winning Robert Myers. Find out more at brewin.co.uk/chelsea