

## Competition for places at top private schools reaches 'boiling point' with children sitting as many as seven entrance exams in desperate attempts to make the grade

- Competition for places at top private schools has reached 'boiling point'
- Children are taking as many as seven entrance exams at different schools
- Number of children taking tests at schools has doubled in recent years
- Thousands of 10 and 11-year-olds will sit examinations this month

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Competition for places at private schools has reached 'boiling point' and is heaping stress upon parents and children (file pictured)

Competition for places at Britain's top private schools has reached 'boiling point' as children take several entrance exams in attempts to make the cut.

The number of prep schools has increased in recent years but few private schools have opened, meaning children have had to sit numerous exams at different institutions.

Thousands of 10 and 11-year-olds will sit English, maths and basic IQ tests this month to see if they make the grade.

Prudence Lynch, headmistress of Kensington Prep, a girls' school in west London, told [The Times](#) that parents 'almost explode' from stress as children sit up to seven exams, some nearly a day long.

She said: 'The pressure is beyond boiling point. There aren't enough places.'

'The number sitting entrance exams for most of the senior schools has doubled - those that used to have 300 sitting the exam now have 600 or 700.'

'We're having to try to prepare 10-year-olds to have sophisticated exam technique as well as knowing how to answer the questions, such as writing legibly, looking at the clock and dividing up the questions, not spending too long on a question that is worth only one mark, allowing time to review what you've done.'

'It's not just about aptitude, it's about those tricks to go with the aptitude.'

This week more than 1,000 children sat 11+ exams at Upper Latymer School, in Hammersmith, almost double the number ten years ago.

The independent school in west London was attended by the likes of Hugh Grant, Heston Blumenthal and MP Keith Vaz.

Meanwhile Magdalen College School in Oxford saw a 40 per cent rise in applications for entrance examinations.



**Lucy Elphinstone, headmistress at Francis Holland School (pictured), in Chelsea, west London, said they interview each child as well as holding entrance exams**

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At Francis Holland School, in Chelsea, registrations for their tests have skyrocketed from 230 in 2009 to 730 this year.

Lucy Elphinstone, the school's headmistress, said: 'We interview every candidate to try to get past the prepared, formulaic interview from children who have been rehearsed by parents or tutors.

'We try to do something surprising that will get past the prepped interview, but these are ten-year-old children and we want to make them feel comfortable, rather than do an Oxbridge-style interview that scares the daylights out of them. You often see a wonderful spark when they talk to you that you wouldn't get just from an exam paper.

At a conference in London, she added: 'There is very little innocence and freedom left for children ... pressure on places is becoming such that parents are beside themselves with anxiety to get their children into schools.'