




2025 AWARDS



An array of impressive schools have taken the laurels this year, says *Victoria Lambert*. So many brilliant entries, so many deserving school communities – but as ever, only one can triumph in each category. And so here are this year's School House Awards winners...

THE JUDGING PANEL



VICTORIA LAMBERT
Editor,
School House

Victoria Lambert is School House's editor. She is firmly in favour of a rounded education that brings out the best in every child.



DR EMEKA OKOROCHA
School House doctor
and author

Dr Emeka is an NHS doctor and private GP working in London and Kent, and is also a media personality.



ANNABEL HESELTINE
Writer, broadcaster
and podcaster

Environmentalist Annabel Heseltine writes on conservation for The Telegraph, The Ecologist and Resurgence.



LUCY CLELAND
Editorial director,
Country & Town House

Lucy Cleland has worked in the magazine industry for over 20 years and is driving Country & Town House's sustainability agenda.

THE WINNERS

With so many stellar entries, choosing the winner in each category was difficult, time-consuming and caused much debate. So how did the judges reach their decisions?



Social Mobility Champion
(Sponsored and judged by Christ's Hospital School)
WINNER: DULWICH COLLEGE, London

One of the most vital functions of modern independent schools is how well they improve the life chances of their least privileged students, something Christ's Hospital is widely admired for. The shortlist for this award consisted of Dulwich College, Sedbergh School and Wellington College. Our winner demonstrates significant commitment to social mobility, says Christ's Hospital's director of development, Hugo Middlemas, both in the scale of its bursary provision and breadth of educational partnerships. 'What is encouraging is that Dulwich College is growing the number of its bursary recipients at a time when many schools are cutting their support for disadvantaged pupils,' says Middlemas. 'Its story is one of truly serving the community of London, deeply engaging with schools across the city to identify young people who could benefit from a transformative Dulwich education, as well as representing the rich diversity of the London population.'



Animal Support Champion
(Sponsored and judged by Farms for City Children)
WINNER: THE DOWN'S MALVERN, Herefordshire

There's plenty of animal magic at each of our top three schools – Sedbergh, St Ronan's and The Down's Malvern – so the judges had their work cut out for them. But in the end, Susannah Mair, corporate fundraising manager at Farms for City Children, explains why The Down's Malvern won. 'The school's animals are a catalyst for transformation. They spark curiosity, help anxious or quiet children find their voice and connect the school community in moments of wonder,' Mair says. 'Children learn the realities of food provenance, sustainability and the field-to-fork journey. From comparing heritage breeds with commercial livestock to pressing apples in the orchard and feeding the pulp to the pigs, every interaction deepens their understanding of responsible consumption. Children are not just visitors – they are farmers, carers and advocates for the natural world.'

PHOTOS: ELYSE MARKS



Local Partnership & Community Champion
WINNER: DULWICH COLLEGE, London

This award celebrates the way schools interact and integrate with the world around them. Important work is being carried out countrywide but three schools stood out: Eton College, Wellington College and Dulwich College, with the latter taking the honours. As Lucy Cleland explains, the school impresses in how it 'mobilises its entire community in a coordinated act of service that delivers measurable benefit to local schools and charities'. For example, the 2025 annual Dulwich Service Day saw over 850 senior school pupils and more than 150 staff volunteer with 53 community initiatives, including food banks, environmental projects, care homes, youth clubs and state primary and special schools.



Pastoral Care Champion
WINNER: BANCROFT'S SCHOOL, London

The three finalists in this category – Bancroft's School, Lancing College and Cheam School – were outstanding. But Bancroft's was a clear winner for the way it responded when affected by tragedy. Within the last two years, the school community has endured the devastating, high-profile deaths of two alumni and one pupil, with the latter being only 14. In response, all staff received trauma training, and one-to-one care was provided where needed. The school's open-door ethos was crucial in helping pupils process grief, while rituals such as the creation of a memorial garden offered solace and strength. Dr Emeka Okorochoa, the judge of this category, says: 'With great challenges bring great opportunities to demonstrate your abilities to adapt and overcome hardship, and I believe that's exactly what this school has done.'



Alumni Relationships Champion
WINNER: NOTTING HILL AND EALING HIGH SCHOOL, London

Notting Hill and Ealing High School, Sherborne School and Bryanston School all show how lifelong relationships can be forged between pupils and their schools. The winner – Notting Hill and Ealing High School – impressed Lucy Cleland as having the largest Girls Day School Trust (GDST) alumni network; 61 alumni visited the school last year as speakers, industry experts or judges, 'with involvement across STEM, aviation, entrepreneurship, literature, journalism, law and more.' She adds: 'This demonstrates a culture where past pupils see themselves as integral to the school's future.'



Charity Champion
WINNER: REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, Surrey

The shortlist for this category consisted of Wycombe Abbey, Reigate Grammar School and Solihull School, with Reigate winning for the sheer scale of its charity involvement. Dr Emeka says: 'I believe having 100 percent of the school's students involved in charitable work and a number of different opportunities is incredible. Having students supported by a culture that values the service and impact of charitable work is vital for not only the immediate community, but the wider outreach.' Lucy Cleland also wanted to recognise runner-up Solihull School for its 'measurable, life-changing outcomes: cataract surgeries, clean water, new hospital units, prosthetic funds, and more. Long-term, transformational impact with exceptional sums raised.'



Mind & Mental Health Champion
WINNER: FRANCIS HOLLAND, SLOANE SQUARE, London

Berkhamsted School, Reigate Grammar School and Francis Holland, Sloane Square were our three finalists in this category. While all impressed the judges, Dr Emeka pronounced himself 'thoroughly impressed' with the support systems available for Francis Holland, Sloane Square students, such as its drop-in service, mindful journalling club and its therapy dog, Kanga (pictured). 'For me, what also stood out was the connection between the students and the kind of society that the school promotes,' he explains. 'Recently, a 16-year-old student delivered life-saving first aid to a man who collapsed at Sloane Square tube station. This shows not only a good health knowledge base by the school's students, but also compassion and the awareness to deliver aid to somebody in need. The student went on to win the school's Chaplain's Award for Compassion, for which she was nominated by fellow students for showing remarkable kindness.'



Sustainability Champion
WINNER: HABERDASHERS' MONMOUTH SCHOOL, Gwent

On the shortlist were Haberdashers' Monmouth School, Cranleigh School and Berkhamsted School – all superb examples of what happens when you put sustainability at the heart of school philosophy. But Haberdashers' Monmouth emerged winner overall for its whole-school, student-led and outward-facing approach. Here, environmental responsibility is driven by students, often in partnership with local schools, charities and farmers. Projects are designed to have impact beyond school grounds, from mammal tracking across Monmouthshire to sixth formers delivering climate science workshops across the local community. Students are even working with chefs and suppliers to remove deforestation-linked ingredients such as palm oil from school menus. Lucy Cleland says she found Haberdashers' Monmouth's approach 'impressive for going far beyond the school gates, with community and supply-chain impact'.



With thanks to Farms for City Children for help with judging the Animal Support Champion award, and to Christ's Hospital School for its sponsorship of the Social Mobility Champion award

WHAT NEXT?

The prize winners will be receiving commemorative plaques. And for those who just missed out, it's time to start planning next year's entry – details in our Spring/Summer 2026 issue.