



Internationalism programme is the first step in Fillingham's vision to make this a more outward-looking school. Sportswise, it's never been madly competitive, though the snazzy swimming-pool refurb has made a splash; there are 90 thriving clubs, from chess to cheerleading, to choose from. A very happy, nurturing day school with, as one pupil enthusiastically attests, an impressively extensive salad bar.

Francis Holland School, Sloane Square ●

39 GRAHAM TERRACE, SW1W 8JF

WEBSITE fhs-sw1.org.uk **HEAD** Lucy Elphinstone, MA, since 2012; previously senior leader and head of sixth form at Downe House **PUPILS** 356 day girls **FAITH** C of E **AGES** 11–18 **TERM FEES** £6,695 **OXBRIDGE** 10% **REGISTRATION** By November of year before entry; £100 fee **ADMISSION** North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam and interview **ALUMNI** Jemima Khan, Vanessa-Mae, Sienna Miller **PREP:** **HEAD** Caroline Spencer **PUPILS** 164 day girls **AGES** 4–11 **TERM FEES** £5,930 Creativity is the buzzword of the year at Francis Holland SW1, from the 'horti-couture'

fashion show, inspired by the Chelsea Flower Show, to the Roaring Twenties sleepover, which sounds a riot: Charleston lessons, mocktails and a gangster assault course. Plans are under way for new centres for creative learning and creative enterprise (the former will have a roof garden 'for quiet contemplation' – can we have a key?). Wellbeing is high on the agenda – they're working with mental health charity Place2Be to improve girls' confidence and resilience. It's all part of head Lucy Elphinstone's 'grit and grades' vision for the school, which is paying dividends. Last year's GCSE results were the best ever, and the school hopped 19 places up the league tables. Families are 'local' in the west London sense – some from Chelsea and lots from Fulham and Chiswick – with a high proportion of Euros. Girls pitch up in reception and stay for A-levels, bypassing the horrors of the 11+. A handful of girls leave for boarding school at 13+, but the snazzy new sixth-form centre should encourage them to stick around. We've never thought of FHS girls as terribly sporty, but they report, with some satisfaction, 'wins against Godolphin, Putney, Wimbledon, City of London, Emanuel, Harroddian and FHS Regent's Park across three sports and all age groups'. So that's told us.

The Godolphin & Latymer School ●

IFFLEY ROAD, W6 0PG

WEBSITE godolphinandlatymer.com **HEAD** Dr Frances Ramsey, DPhil, from September; previously head of Queen's College **PUPILS** 809 day girls **FAITH** Non-denom **AGES** 11–18 **TERM FEES** £6,978 **OXBRIDGE** 20% **REGISTRATION** By November of year before entry; £125 fee **ADMISSION** North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam and interview **ALUMNI** Davina McCall, Baroness Coussins, Kate Beckinsale We've always liked Godolphin's outgoing head Ruth Mercer – 'She impressed us from day one,' says a parent – and we're equally smitten with her successor, Frances Ramsey, who arrives from Queen's College. 'People keep telling me how lucky we are to have her,' gushes a mother with forgivable smugness. This is a grounded, compassionate, happy school (less London than others in the Hammersmith hub), with a tremendous reputation for producing self-motivated, high-achieving girls who are also exceptionally nice (a vastly underrated quality, we think). Academically, they're in the top drawer: 77 per cent A*–A grades at A-level last year, and an IB average of 40 points. Needless to say, it's perennially popular, with around 800 applications every year for 115 places. They interview everyone who applies to make sure they get girls who will

flourish, not just those with the biggest brains. Facilities are fantabulous given the urban location, and the new sports hall, complete with climbing wall, is unspeakably splendid. We asked Mrs Mercer to tell us the highlights of the past year: 'Too many to mention – every day brings something new,' came the reply. To give you a flavour: double-gold rowing medals at the National Schools Regatta, against 'ruthless' competition; silver at the Lady Taverners cricket finals; and bronze at the Independent Schools' Netball Cup. The only quibble? 'Too much homework,' whispers one mum – but she adds that her daughter is 'exceptionally happy', so it can't be all that bad.

Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School ●

BUTTERFLY LANE, ELSTREE, HERTFORDSHIRE WD6 3AF

WEBSITE habsboys.org.uk **HEAD** Peter Hamilton, MA, since 2002; previously head of King Edward VI School, Southampton **PUPILS** 1,142 day boys **FAITH** Inter-denom **AGES** 11–18 **TERM FEES** £6,490 **OXBRIDGE** 23% **REGISTRATION** By November of year before entry; £100 fee **ADMISSION** School's own exam and interview **ALUMNI** Sacha Baron Cohen, Matt Lucas, Simon Schama **PREP:** **HEAD** Matthew Judd **PUPILS** 291 day boys **AGES** 5–11 **TERM FEES** £6,490 Habs Boys was the *Sunday Times's* Independent School of the Year



The Godolphin & Latymer School