

Alumni Sir Ernest Shackleton, PG Wodehouse, Chiwetel Ejiofor
Prep: Head Dr Toby Griffiths
Pupils 459 day boys **Ages** 6 months–11
Term fees £6,305

At our *Tatler Schools Live!* event last year, Dulwich head Joe Spence extolled the virtues of an all-through school, which takes a child seamlessly from nursery to A-levels. Most of the audience was ready to sign up for Dulwich on the spot. 'Dr Spence is an inspired leader,' says one mother. The most recent Spence innovation is the Dulwich Olympiad, held at the school's offshoot in Beijing, which last year brought together 400 Dulwich students from around the world for music performances and sporting competitions. Then there's the Dulwich Symposium, an annual, off-timetable day of discussion and debate (last year, a Year 12 pupil captained Team England at the World Debating Championships) and Dulwich Inventive, a week of off-the-wall thinking. It all comes under the heading of 'free learning', but somehow they still find time for conventional learning too – 63 per cent A*–A grades last year. Dulwich is predominantly a day school, but it has a boarding-school ethos, with a packed extracurricular timetable. There's a great range of sports on offer, so all boys are able to be part of a team and compete regularly. There's no pre-test; they're looking for 'scholarly potential and curiosity about the world', and receive roughly six applicants for every Year 7 place. 'Our son is flourishing in ways we could never have imagined,' says a mother.

EMANUEL SCHOOL ●●

BATTERSEA RISE, SW11 1HS
Website emanuel.org.uk **Head** Mark Hanley-Browne, MA, since 2004; previously deputy head of pastoral at Highgate School **Pupils** 832 day: 454 boys, 378 girls **Faith** C of E **Ages** 10–18 **Term fees** £5,857 **Oxbridge** 6% **Registration** At least 18 months before entry; £145 fee **Admission** School's own exam and interview **Alumni** Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Michael Roux Jr, Michael Aspel Emanuel is 'a fabulous all-rounder that has come of age', decrees our mole. Welcome to 12 lush green

acres, excellent facilities, inspiring teachers and smiling children. The registration list is closed when it hits 600 – it's filling up earlier each year, so get your skates on if you want a piece of this Wandsworth beauty. One way in is opting for Year 6 entry, when there are a mere four applicants per place, bypassing the 11+, when there are eight. Head Mark Hanley-Browne is a scientist who combines old-school charm with innovative educational ideas. He believes 'happiness makes you successful', (we like that) and is keen to entice 'can-do, interested and interesting' students to join his flock. Results were a sturdy 70 per cent A*–B at A-level last year and, as well as bursaries, there are bountiful amounts of scholarships (186), which offer 10 to 25 per cent off fees. Thanks to Clapham Junction being nearby, pupils come from further and further afield, although the majority still live within three miles of the school. Drama is taken particularly seriously, with annual trips to the Edinburgh Fringe – and many children have agents. It's one of the few day schools to offer Eton Fives (the U13 were national champs last year) and first-rate on-site facilities include two rugby pitches, a swimming pool and a sports hall. A new arts and humanities centre opens in summer 2017, and pupils tell us the beautiful, airy library is a homework haven and favourite lunchtime spot.

FRANCIS HOLLAND SCHOOL, REGENT'S PARK ●

CLARENCE GATE, NW1 6XR
Website fhs-nw1.org.uk **Head** Charles Fillingham, MA, since January; previously deputy head of City of London School **Pupils** 495 day girls **Faith** C of E **Ages** 11–18 **Term fees** £6,130 **Oxbridge** 10% **Registration** By November of year before entry; £100 fee **Admission** North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam



Dulwich College



The Harroldian

and interview **Alumnae** Dame Joan and Jackie Collins, Amanda Donohoe, Emilia Fox Francis Holland has a new head – a man! It can't have been easy for Charles Fillingham to fill the (fabulous) shoes of his phenomenal predecessor Vivienne Durham in January, but the first male head ever in Francis Holland's history is shaping up well. He's 'honest, approachable and determined to lead the school to even greater heights', according to one mother. And he inherits a school in peak condition, hiking up the league tables with its best-ever A-level results last year (90 per cent A*–B). Totally oversubscribed, obviously, FH describes itself as both 'academic and kind', and a satisfied parent of three girls agrees, saying that it's 'a happy, nurturing place to learn'. The school is notable for interviewing all candidates twice – both in a group setting and one-to-one. The ethos here is 'boarding without the beds', and they pull an astonishing amount

of extracurriculars from these seemingly pocket-sized premises, from cheerleading and coding (now on the curriculum too) to Mythical Monsters club. The basement pool has had a refurb and girls skip over to Regent's Park for other sports. So far, as well as launching his new Women of Influence lecture series, Mr Fillingham has proved himself a fiend for digital communication – he's given the website an overhaul and you can expect a lot more Twitter action from @FHSRegentsPark this year.

FRANCIS HOLLAND SCHOOL, SLOANE SQUARE ●

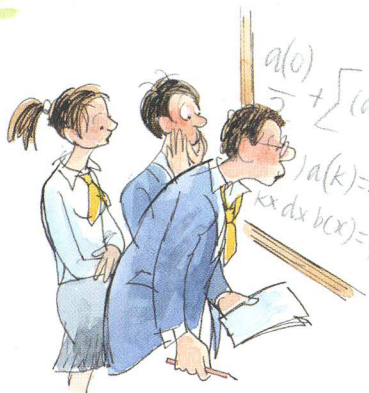
39 GRAHAM TERRACE, SW1W 8JF
Website fhs-sw1.org.uk **Head** Lucy Elphinstone, MA, since 2012; previously senior leader and head of sixth form at Downe House **Pupils** 355 day girls **Faith** C of E **Ages** 11–18 **Term fees** £6,390 **Oxbridge** 5% **Registration** By November of year before entry; £100 fee **Admission** North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam and interview **Alumnae** Jemima Khan, Vanessa Mae **Prep:** Head Caroline Spencer-Kruger **Pupils** 165 day girls **Ages** 4–11 **Term fees** £5,650

Charismatic head Lucy Elphinstone is a mother and entrepreneur who knows exactly what makes her girls tick: 'I treat them like my own children,' she says. Under her, this boutique-sized Sloane Square school is shrugging off its reputation as the back-up option for rich girls and NW1's jet-set sister. We love the 'grit and grades' approach, where girls are taught to be adaptable and to see failure in a positive light. Ms Elphinstone is messianic about the digital age, so computing is now offered at GCSE, coding is taught from Year 1 and web-design club has been added. A-level results are rising nicely, with 76 per cent A*-B last year, and there's a counsellor from children's wellbeing charity Place2Be at school three days a week to help relieve stress and soothe any niggles. Sport is jogging along nicely: the netball tour to Barbados was a blast and the U13 cricket team finished a respectable third at the Westminster Championships at Lord's. An influx of young Oxbridge-educated staff went all out to organise a Harry Potter sleepover last winter – there were real owls and a costume parade, followed by a night in the main hall. Ms Elphinstone sees the school's petite size as a bonus. 'We're like a terrier,' she says. 'We can sense change in the wind and alter our direction accordingly.' A very well-behaved terrier, that is.

THE GODOLPHIN & LATYMER SCHOOL ●

IFFLEY ROAD, W6 0PG

Website godolphinandlatymer.com
 Head Ruth Mercer, BA, since 2009; previously head of Northwood College
 Pupils 809 day girls Faith Non-denom Ages 11–18 Term fees £6,716 Oxbridge 15% Registration By November of year before entry; £125 fee Admission North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam and interview Alumnae Davina McCall, Baroness Coussins, Kate Beckinsale 'A Dolphin is comfortable in her own skin and not afraid to accept challenges, take risks and develop into the person she wants to be,' says outgoing head Ruth Mercer, who is off to walk her own talk next summer, by leaving to take the 'gap year' she never had. We eagerly await



succession news... While highly academic, Godolphin enjoys its 'less pressured than St Paul's' rep. Every applicant is interviewed (around 800 for 120 places) and the school avoids 'top-slicing', choosing instead the girls it feels will thrive. The results are testament to that: 40 points average at IB, and 91 per cent A*-B at A-level last year. Pastoral care is described by one top prep-school head as 'very human and bespoke', with peer mentoring recently introduced at a student's suggestion. There's a notable international flavour, but also a strong sense of community – most girls live within three miles (they've upped the bursary threshold to £120,000 in recognition of the 'squeezed middle') and families come out in force for matches. A new sports hall (half-funded by parents) crowns some fantabulous inner-London facilities: hockey Astro, netball courts, dance studio, climbing wall... and the girls certainly use them. Dolphins were fifth in the independent schools sports listings last year, but we love the fact that they're not afraid to fall on their behinds, as proved by their penchant for a recent backwards bicycling challenge. *Junior MasterChef* is a current craze (Nigella's an OD) and girls inform us that the competitive cake sales 'can get quite violent'.

HAMPTON SCHOOL ●

HANWORTH ROAD, HAMPTON, TW12 3HD

Website hamptonschool.org.uk Head Kevin Knibbs, MA, since 2013; previously deputy head Pupils 1,260 day boys Faith Non-denom Ages 11–18 Term fees £6,125 Oxbridge 15% Registration By November of year before entry; £100 fee Admission School's own exam, interview and previous school's report

Alumni Brian May, golfer Paul Casey, Olympians Greg & Jonny Searle
 Prep: Head Tim Smith Pupils 224 day: 212 boys, 12 girls Ages 3–11 Term fees £4,200 Hampton's prep has moved into a swanky new building and changed its name (it was Denmead, it's now, er, Hampton Prep) to reflect its links with the senior school. There's no automatic right of transfer from one to the other, but boys in Years 2 to 5 of the prep can apply for assured places at the senior school – a neat way to avoid the 11+ crush, when there are five applicants for every place. 'Boys need to be academically minded and hard-working,' says the school, 'but we are also looking for talented all-rounders, including the quirky and creative.' These fellows have got the academic stuff nailed: 75 per cent A*-A at A-level last year; the highest mark in the country for history Pre-U; four gold certificates in the UK Chemistry Olympiad; and two Arkwright scholarships. Maths is strong; they won the Hans Woyda team competition for 2015–2016,

and Hampton's mathematicians have received offers from Trinity College, Cambridge for the past three years. There's plenty of room for sport on the 27-acre site – 17 different sports, in fact, with competitive fixtures for all abilities. Football gets top billing – the U15s won the ISFA Cup – but the rugby boys and rowers are serious contenders too. Music is tip-top, and the annual production with the girls from Lady Eleanor Holles is the highlight of the dramatic year. 'At Hampton, boys are allowed to be boys,' says a mother. Another plus: 'it's not full of ultra-Surrey parents.'

THE HARRODIAN ●●

LONSDALE ROAD, SW13 9QN

Website harrodian.com Head James Hooke, BSc, since 1999; previously a teacher at St John's School, Buenos Aires Pupils 440 day: 231 boys, 209 girls Faith Non-denom Ages 13–18 Term fees £7,035 Oxbridge Occasional Registration By October of year before entry; £150 fee Admission CE or school's own

Francis Holland School, Sloane Square

