

By November of year before entry; £100 fee **ADMISSION** School's own exam and interview **ALUMNI** Sir Ernest Shackleton, PG Wodehouse, Chiwetel Ejiofor

**PREP:** HEAD Dr Toby Griffiths **PUPILS** 449 day boys **AGES** 6 months–11 **TERM FEES** £6,554

Dr Joseph Spence is a remarkable chap who runs a remarkable school. He's messianic about what he calls 'free education', meaning there's no divide between the curricular and the extra. Extended lunchtimes are stuffed with tempting clubs, from rocketry to magic, and weekends are a fiesta of sports, music, art, drama, more sports and innumerable other stimulations. No wonder Dulwich is frequently dubbed a 'day school run as a boarding school', though only 10 per cent of seniors actually board. Here, 'all-through' can start from the cradle (well, six months), with 11+ the most competitive entry point, where the intake is 50 per cent state – there are strong, longstanding links with the outstanding state schools in the area. Pupils at this imposing south-east London redbricker are confident and demonstrably articulate: Dulwich is the top-ranked debating school in the UK, and the CCF has the best RAF section in the country. At 63 per cent A\*–A at A-level, results are high, yet not ear-poppingly so, reflecting Dr Spence's firm belief in a preparation for life that extends beyond exam-passing. As everywhere these days, increasing numbers of pupils head off to unis abroad, but the Oxbridge percentage is still reassuringly good. PS: Dulwich pupils are known as 'Alleynians', because Dulwich shares a historic foundation with Alleyn's and JAGS. Confusing, yes?

## Emanuel School ●●

**BATTERSEA RISE, SW11 1HS**  
**WEBSITE** [emanuel.org.uk](http://emanuel.org.uk) **HEAD** Robert Milne, BA, from September; previously deputy head (pastoral) at King's College School **PUPILS** 890 day: 480 boys,



Francis Holland School,  
Regent's Park

410 girls **FAITH C** of **E AGES** 10–18 **TERM FEES** £5,999 **OXBRIDGE** 5% **REGISTRATION** Two years before entry; £145 fee **ADMISSION** Pre-test, school's own exam and interview **ALUMNI** Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Michael Roux Jr, Michael Aspel, film director Richard Marquand Mark Hanley-Browne is leaving Emanuel in fine fettle after a 13-year reign and is now the new CEO of the Alpha Plus Group (Wetherby, Pembroke Hall et al). Best of luck, MH-B. His successor is Rob Milne, previously deputy head of King's Wimbledon and a big fan of resilience (and playing squash). Emanuel's sports facilities are 'enviable', notes our mole, with a cracking 12 acres of playing fields onsite and a further 14 at Raynes Park, not forgetting a boathouse at Barnes Bridge. They scooped five medals at the National Schools' Regatta, including a gold in the girls' coxed fours. The admissions process has been tweaked, so from September 2018 there will be a pre-test at 11+ to whittle down the number of applicants (1,000 have registered for only 90 places). Plans are afoot for something similar for 10+ and 13+ entry.

Pupils come from some 200 schools across London; Emanuel offers more scholarships in co-curricular subjects than any of its competitors. The 30 drama scholars are the crème de la crème (some have agents) and one Year 9 appeared in Disney's new *Beauty and the Beast* film. Boys and girls are predominantly local, but Clapham Junction is a stone's throw away and is 'drawing in interest from along the railway line', says an insider. The new £10m arts and humanities building has opened its doors, and A-level results were a steady 68 per cent A\*–B last year. All is ticking along nicely in SW11.

## Francis Holland School, Regent's Park ●

**CLARENCE GATE, NW1 6XR**  
**WEBSITE** [fhs-nw1.org.uk](http://fhs-nw1.org.uk) **HEAD** Charles Fillingham, MA, since 2016; previously deputy head at City of London School for Boys **PUPILS** 495 day girls **FAITH C** of **E AGES** 11–18 **TERM FEES** £6,420 **OXBRIDGE** 10% **REGISTRATION** By November of year before entry; £100 fee

**ADMISSION** North London Girls' Schools' Consortium exam and interview **ALUMNAE** Jackie and Dame Joan Collins, Amanda Donohoe Charles Fillingham has inherited a thoroughly well-oiled machine as his first headship – lucky him. 'Academic and kind' is the motto at FHS NW1, and the promise of 'top academic results without unnecessary pressure' remains a massive draw – though rumour has it they're eager to nudge the A-level results up a notch (2016's were 89 per cent A\*–B). A record 582 girls applied last year; even with these numbers, they still interview each girl twice, once in a group of six and then individually. Mr Fillingham makes a point of shaking every prospective parent's hand: it helps him 'ascertain how keen you really are', warns a mother. The consensus is that this quiet linguist is finding his feet; he's sensibly used his first year to think and listen. Parents praise the newly streamlined school communication and the twice-termly pupil appraisals. An Entrepreneurship Fortnight was created in response to one parent's suggestion, and a major Spirit of





Emanuel School

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, Harrodian 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 Taverers 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