

3 Boarding schools



Source: Adobe Stock/smartin69

3 a Speaking **Ten words to go on**
 Eton, Harrow, Westminster – boarding schools have a long-standing tradition in the British school system. Look at the ten words below and with a partner talk about what they mean when it comes to boarding schools. Go into some detail. Talk not only about the literal meaning, but also about the personal associations that come to your mind.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| application process | halls / spaces |
| fees / scholarships | dormitory |
| houses | boards vs. day |
| code of conduct | assembly |
| academic achievements | selective |

3 b Speaking **Would you?**
 What is your gut feeling – would you choose to go to a boarding school? Use the phrases from the VocabBooster to explain

- » what you think you would enjoy about it,
- » what you might hate about it,
- » what you'd be worried about,
- » what you'd miss.



Source: Adobe Stock/Macrovector

VocabBooster

| | |
|---|---|
| If I went to a boarding school ... I wonder whether I would ... I feel like ... I'm (not) convinced that ... Personally, I believe that ... In terms of feeling home sick ... I reckon ... While it might be ... | Another point is that ... One of the worst things for me would be ... I picture adjusting (to ...) would be ... I suppose I'd struggle with ... What I would find extremely difficult is ... I wonder if ... When it comes to achievements ... Perhaps I would ... |
|---|---|

Snap Shot

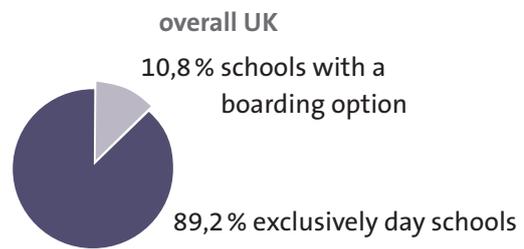
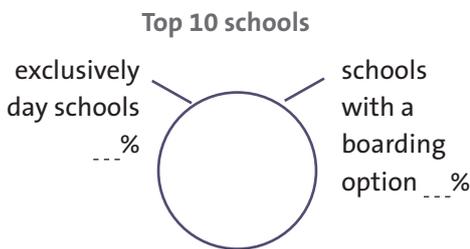
3 c Boarding school or not? – part I

Speaking

The question whether a school is a good school or not, is of course a difficult one to answer and often very subjective. Below you find the top ten secondary schools (11- to 18-year-olds) of 2025 according to *The Times*. Read through the ranking criteria and try to make sense of it as a class. If there is anything you don't know / are unsure about, ask a classmate; only use your teacher as a last resort.

| boarding option | school |
|-----------------|--|
| | 1. St Paul's Girls' School |
| | 2. St Paul's School |
| | 3. = 4. Brighton College |
| | 4. = 3. King's College School, Wimbledon |
| | 5. Westminster School |
| | 6. Godolphin and Latymer |
| | 7. North London Collegiate School |
| | 8. Guildford High School |
| | 9. City of London School for Girls |
| | 10. The Henrietta Barnet School |

Parent Power table ranks schools on their average performance using A-level, GCSE and IB outcomes from summer 2024 and Advance Higher, Higher, National and KS2 outcomes from 2023. If a school does not appear in the league table, it is most likely because it did not respond to our requests for its results, or the results could not be found in the public domain.



3 d Boarding school or not? – part II

Follow-up



Take out your mobile phone, tablet or laptop. How quickly can you find out which of these offer a boarding option? Tick all that offer a boarding option. Then do the math and complete the pie chart in 3 c.

3 e Why?

Speaking

Compare the two pie charts. What is obviously weird? Talk about why so many boarding schools made it into the top 10 schools. Consider two main aspects:

- » What does a school need in order to do well in a ranking like that?
- » What makes a school a good one for you personally?

3 f How would you rank schools?

Follow-up

Get into groups of four and come up with a method that you would use to rank schools in Austria. Remember to cover these points:

- » what aspects you would consider in your ranking
- » which aspects would matter more / less
- » how you would get your data



Source: www.thetimes.com/best-schools-league-table/secondary/article/top-secondary-schools-revealed-6wgfnpnwk

Source: Adobe Stock/Vectorslab

3 g

Language in use

What are the benefits of attending boarding school?

Read the text about the positive effect boarding has according to Sidcot School. Some words are missing. Use the words in brackets to form the missing word for each gap (1–14). Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Six advantages of boarding schools

BE Boarding school life is (0) ___ (**reward**), challenging and sets children up for a bright future. Some of the many advantages of boarding schools include:

1. Intellectual growth

Conversations about learning can continue long after lessons have finished thanks to extra time on campus. Children are able to discuss what they have learnt and new ideas they have had. Children develop a love of learning and are able to explore their (1) ___ (**passionate**) freely.

2. Resources and facilities

High-quality resources and facilities are one of the well-known advantages of boarding schools. It is a perfect environment for children with a thirst for learning but also for those who want to try other hobbies. At Sidcot, students live close to our libraries and sports centre and have lots of open green spaces for activities that (2) ___ (**rich**) their lives.

3. Personal growth

Having many opportunities available to them allows children to explore their (3) ___ (**curious**) and perhaps even surprise themselves. Sidcot School offers students the chance to try everything from art and drama to sports and (4) ___ (**intellect**) interests. Students can (5) ___ (**active**) invest time in interests they're most passionate about.

4. Relationships

Friendships grow at boarding school. Children support and (6) ___ (**courage**) each other, make lifelong friendships and share a wonderful experience. The teacher and student relationship is also a (7) ___ (**support**) one, focusing on mentorship and (8) ___ (**guide**). These relationships create a (9) ___ (**feel**) of belonging and improve student well-being.

5. Independence

Students quickly get used to being away from home, looking after themselves, and managing (10) ___ (**responsible**). Children learn to make their own decisions, solve challenges, and manage their time. This helps them grow personally and become more (11) ___ (**depend**). As a result, students develop a strong sense of (12) ___ (**identify**).

6. Cultural diversity

Living with peers from diverse backgrounds exposes students to new cultures and ideas. At Sidcot School, we welcome students with over 30 different (13) ___ (**nation**). We focus on (14) ___ (**equal**) and community, and an environment where everyone is valued as someone who contributes to the school and the world.

Source: www.sidcot.org.uk/sidcot-blog/7-advantages-boarding-schools

Test format
Banked gap-fill

Write your answers here:

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---|----|
| 0 | rewarding | 5 | 10 |
| 1 | | 6 | 11 |
| 2 | | 7 | 12 |
| 3 | | 8 | 13 |
| 4 | | 9 | 14 |

3 h The effects of boarding schools

Speaking

Get into groups of three and re-read the text in 3 g to fully understand the points made by Sidcot School. Go through the arguments and repeat what the text says using phrases from the VocabBooster. For each point, add whether you believe this is true or not and give a reason why you think so.

VocabBooster

| | |
|--|--|
| The text says / states that ... | I can imagine that works well, since ... |
| According to the text ... | I believe that is true ... |
| Sidcot School claims that ... | I have to admit that I don't see how ... |
| Boarding is said to ... | But what I think they overlook is ... |
| I do think they have a point because ... | However, they appear to forget that ... |

3 i Who goes there?

Speaking

Form groups of three with different classmates than for task 3 h and talk about how you picture the pupils who attend boarding school and their parents. Consider the questions below and take notes.

- » What are the stereotypes that come to your minds? Do you think they are justified?
- » Why might children want to go to boarding school?
- » For which children is boarding school a good / bad idea?
- » What factors might make parents want their children to go to a boarding school? What do their parents (not) want for them?
- » Which jobs do parents who send their children to boarding school have?
- » How do you feel about parents who send their children to boarding school?

Then exchange your thoughts with another group. How similar were their ideas to yours, and what was different?

3 j Evidence

Follow-up



On a platform like YouTube find a video about why parents send their children to boarding school and on why students decide to attend boarding school. Watch the video, take notes and then share in class what you heard. How does it reflect the conversations you had during task 3 i?

Pay attention to the source that posted the video!

3 k Life without adults

Lead-in

Boarding schools may offer much, but what they certainly all have in common is the lack of parents. While this is usually hard for children in real life, it's the ideal setting for many children's and young adult books: no parents to get in the way of adventure. If you had a full week to spend without your parents,

- » how would you spend it,
- » what would go well,
- » what would you miss?

Find a partner and talk about this imaginary week without parents.

3 | Reading

Parents in CYAL (Children’s and Young Adult Literature)

Read this book extract that shows the ideas presented in *Family in Children’s and Young Adult Literature*. Some parts are missing. Choose the correct part (A–L) for each gap (1–9). There are two extra parts that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.



Source: Adobe Stock/Darria

Australian English

Why children’s stories are full of orphans, evil stepmothers and boarding schools

For most of the history of western children’s literature, only a narrow range of families was ‘reflected’ in children’s literature.

Readers became familiar with both the ‘ideal’ of the white, heteronormative nuclear family and, conversely, (0) ___.

The brave orphan protagonist has been a stock character in children’s literature for centuries. Many of the ‘classic’ children’s stories focus on the trials and eventual triumphs of an orphaned (or at least bereaved) child, and the element remains a popular one for contemporary authors, too.

Why is the only good parent a dead parent?

Even in fantasy literature, it would stretch a reader’s credulity too far to expect them to believe that a parent would allow their child to play with wolves and bears in the jungle, work as a teenage spy for MI5, rob priceless artworks from the great museums of Europe or fight the most powerful dark wizard of the age.

Instead, parents must necessarily be either not physically present or, at the very least, emotionally distant. Often this is achieved even before the story begins or (1) ___.

There exists, then, a very practical understanding between authors and readers; parents must be gotten rid of, ideally fast and with no questions asked.

In a 2010 article in *Publishers Weekly*, children’s book editor Leila Sales reported: “Dead parents are so much a part of middle-grade and teen fiction at this point, it’s not even the ‘in’ thing. It’s just an accepted fact: (2) ___.”

She criticises the way this is done as what she calls “The Ol’ Dead Dad Syndrome” as “lazy writing” and encourages authors to explore (3) ___:

“Set the book at boarding school, summer camp, or another parent-free zone. Create parents who are clueless or uninvolved, à la *Harriet the Spy*. Fade their role into the background.”

Escape to boarding school

From the school stories of Angela Brazil (1906–1946); Enid Blyton’s *Malory Towers* (1946–1951) and *St. Clare’s* (1941–1945) series and, of course, the more recent success of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), the boarding school narrative has long enjoyed popularity with young readers.

The boarding school appears to function as a wish fulfilment for many children, allowing them to imagine being temporarily free from their parents (4) ___.

Mothers are sacrosanct, but stepmothers – obviously they’re evil

While all readers, children and adults alike, are familiar with the stock character of the wicked stepmother from fairy tales like *Snow White*, *Rapunzel* and *Cinderella*, there are few genuinely cruel biological mothers in children’s literature.

In our book, Claudia Schwabe explains in her essay *Where Are They Now? Manifestations of (Monstrous) Mothers in Fairy Tales*, when Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm set about collecting their German fairy tales in the early nineteenth century, they silently erased any ‘bad’ mothers, (5) ___ to protect what she calls the “sanctity of motherhood”.

While mothers may be inadequate, unable, or extremely distracted, a truly wicked biological mother is, it seems, (6) ___ (even Mrs Wormwood in Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* is stupid, selfish and uncaring rather than actively malevolent and

nuclear family: parents and their children as a family unit

bereaved: having lost a family member / friend recently

credulity: wish to believe something

MI5: the UK’s intelligence service

malevolent: showing a desire to harm sb

Source: Eleanor Spencer-Regan, Jade Dillon Craig – pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/why-children-stories-are-full-of-orphans-evil-stepmothers-and-boarding-schools

seminal: very important

80 Mary's cruel mother in Jacqueline Wilson's *The Diamond Girls* is revealed to be suffering from an undiagnosed mental illness).

The expanding notion of family, reflected back on us

85 In her seminal 1990 article *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors*, Rudine Sims Bishop suggested that children's books may function either as 'mirrors', allowing readers to see their own lives reflected, or 'windows', (7) ___.

For many decades, only a narrow range of types of families was 'reflected' in children's literature, thus many children were not able to experience (8) ___.

90 The romanticised and socially produced 'ideal' of the heteronormative nuclear family certainly still persists, as suggested by (9) ___.

95 But, as the academics and practitioners who contributed to our book make clear, modern authors and readers alike are more open to different ideas of what makes a family.

- A without having to confront that most frightening of prospects – parental death and orphanhood
- B the plight of the orphaned child
- C grief work to have been completed such as in *James and the Giant Peach*
- D affording them a view of a reality different from their own
- E kids in books are parentless
- F seeing families just like theirs
- G the hope of reunion with their parents driving the plot
- H in its very first pages
- I a taboo too far
- J the 'happily ever after' of the *Twilight* novels and the epilogue of the *Harry Potter* series
- K alternative ways of liberating child protagonists from parental supervision
- L replacing them with cruel, scheming and even murderous stepmothers

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| B | | | | | | | | | |

Test format
Multiple matching

3 m

Follow-up

Ask some questions

After getting the missing parts into the text in 3 I, read the whole text again. To ensure you understand what it claims, come up with five questions that anyone who has read the text should be able to answer. Together, the questions should give a good overview of the content. When you're done, find a partner and answer each other's questions.

3 n

Speaking

Where were the parents in your books?

Take a minute to recall the books you've read over the past four or five years. Where were the parents in those books? Collect the titles on the board and discuss how "absent" the parents were.



Source: Adobe Stock/Dusan