

A–Z of UK boarding

A glossary of some of the terms used in this Guide:

Boarding house A building where pupils live and, in some cases, eat. A typical boarding school will have many different boarding houses.

Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) The BSA promotes boarding in the UK and aims to develop good-quality boarding through high standards of pastoral care and boarding facilities.

The British Council A UK organisation with offices in 110 countries. The British Council provides information about UK education and advice about studying in the UK.

Bursar A member of staff whose responsibilities usually include management of a school's income and expenditure, and dealing with school fees.

Bursary Bursaries enable pupils to attend boarding schools who otherwise would not be able to afford the fees. They are sometimes allocated to pupils from specific families (for example, missionaries) or from particular places.

Combined Cadet Force (CCF) The CCF offers boys and girls the chance to experience some elements of Service life.

Common Entrance An exam taken in the final term at preparatory schools to select pupils for entry to many independent senior schools.

Dormitory The room in a boarding house where a number of boarders sleep (often called a 'dorm'). The number of beds varies within and between boarding schools, but is rarely more than three or four.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme A well-established scheme for students to acquire skills and gain new experiences through various challenges – for example, outward bound expeditions or community service.

Exeat Weekends, sometimes including Friday or Monday, when boarders are able to go home during term time.

Extracurricular activities Activities taking place outside the formal curriculum, which are designed to encourage non-academic skills and experiences.

Flexi-boarding The newest form of boarding where pupils and their families opt for boarding as and when they need it.

Full boarding This is where pupils live at school for most of the term, including weekends. There are usually specific exeats (leave weekends), when full boarders go home or to their guardians in the UK.

Governors People responsible for a school's success as a business and ensuring there is enough money to run the school.

Guardian An individual who acts on behalf of a pupil's parents and takes care of the pupil during term time and holidays. Students whose parents live abroad always require a UK-based guardian.

Guardianship organisation An organisation that helps to arrange UK guardians for students from overseas who are planning to attend a UK boarding school.

Headmaster/mistress The person in overall charge of the school, often referred to as the 'Head'. Headteachers usually have many years of teaching experience and other members of staff report to them.

Houseparent (also known as housemaster/mistress) A staff member responsible for the supervision and care of boarders in a boarding house. He or she is usually assisted by a member of staff with specific duties, such as a tutor or a matron.

Independent boarding schools Institutions that are run independently rather than by the state (the UK Government) to provide a general education and accommodation for young people between the ages of 7 and 18. Some schools have pre-preparatory departments, which take non-boarding pupils from the age of five or even younger in some cases. The majority of boarding schools in the UK are non-profit-making foundations.

Independent colleges (tutorial and sixth-form colleges) Independently run institutions that provide educational opportunities and, in some cases, accommodation, mainly (though not exclusively) for students aged between 16 and 18.

Independent Schools Council (ISC) The ISC is an umbrella organisation made up of eight independent schools associations. It promotes the common interests of its member schools in the political arena and has overall responsibility for the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) ISI is the agency responsible for the inspection of schools in membership of the associations of the ISC.

Matron The matron looks after the health and hygiene of boarding pupils and may manage the other staff in the boarding house. Each boarding house usually has a matron.

National Curriculum This applies to all children under 16 in maintained schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and is geared towards gaining particular skills by certain Key Stages (at age 7, 11, 14 and 16). Scotland's curriculum is slightly different to that used in the rest of the UK. The National Curriculum is used as an important guide by independent schools.

National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools The agreed minimum standards for good practice in UK boarding schools, covering the full range of welfare, health and policy issues at schools.

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) The Government department responsible for the inspection of state schools and independent schools in England not in membership of the ISC. Ofsted also regulates and inspects the boarding provision at all schools, judging the schools against the National Minimum Standards.

Prep The term commonly used to mean homework. (Also used as an abbreviation of 'preparatory'.)

Preparatory school Pupils aged between 7 and 13 attend preparatory (prep) school. Some schools also have pre-preparatory departments that take (usually non-boarding) pupils from the age of five or even younger.

Scholarship A financial award to a student who shows talent or ability in a particular subject or area.

Senior school Pupils aged between 11 and 18 can attend a senior school. Many senior schools have junior departments for children aged 7+ or younger.

Single-sex school Single-sex schools cater exclusively for boys or girls. Most schools in the UK are co-educational and accept both boys and girls.

Sixth form The final two years at school in which pupils aged 16–18 study for AS- and A-levels or equivalent qualifications.

Tutor Each pupil has an individual tutor who takes an active interest in all aspects of their progress. Tutors are on hand to talk through and help to solve any problems pupils may have.

Weekly boarding This is full boarding during the week, with pupils going home at the weekend.