



**BEYOND ST PHILIP'S:  
THE SENIOR SCHOOL  
APPLICATION PROCESS**  
Updated: September 2023



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ST PHILIP'S SCHOOL

# A ST PHILIP'S EDUCATION

1. A small, nurturing Catholic school with high academic expectations of and for its pupils.
2. A 13+ school with a distinguished record of preparing pupils for transfer to senior schools at 13.

GREAT RESULTS

CLEAR VALUES

GOOD FUN



# WHERE TO START?

## BASIC OPTIONS

1. To day or not to day? Day / weekly boarding / full-boarding
2. Boys only / co-educational
3. Academically selective / open to a wide range of academic abilities
4. Catholic?

*NB Options expand greatly when boarding is considered.*



# SIX STEPS TO SELECTION: THREE PHASES

1. Registration by parents with senior school/s Y5/Y6 Sep
  2. Registration by parents on ISEB portal Y6 Sep
  3. iCAS/ISEB Common Transfer Form (HM's reference) Y6 Sep
  4. Pre-tests: electronic or written (KCS only) Y6 Nov
- 
5. Assessment days: additional tests, interviews, group activities Y6 Jan-Jun
- 
6. A) Conditional offer (must sit Common Entrance in Y8) Y6 Feb-Jun  
B) Common Entrance Y8 Jun  
OR  
A) Unconditional offer (must receive HM reference in Y8) Y6 Feb-Jun  
B) School reference Y8 Jun



## PHASE 1

- Registration by parents with schools *and* ISEB
- HM reference
- Pre-test @ *St Philip's*

Y 5 / 6

## PHASE 2

- Interviews
- Written papers @ *senior school*

Y 6 (& 7)

## PHASE 3

- Common Entrance – increasingly meaningless
- Final reference

Y 8

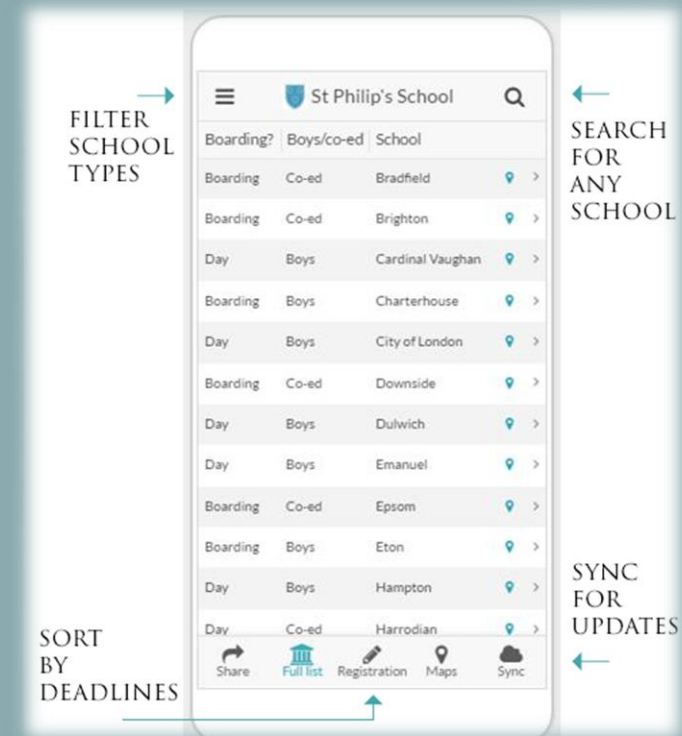


# REGISTRATION

Deadlines are vital

- See Parents' Area of the school website
  - Username: barn
  - Password: elms
- Use the St Philip's senior school app
- Double-check all dates with relevant school(s)
- Also must register on ISEB parents' portal

## The St Philip's senior school browser







# HM'S REFERENCE

The iCAS confidential reference is uniform and contains information on:

## Data

- Quantitative data (VR/NVR scores, SATs, CATs, reading age etc.)
- Predicted CE scores in maths, English, science
- Latest exam results & position in cohort

## Background

- Attitudes to learning
- Contribution to school life: sports, drama, music etc.
- Life outside school: personal attributes, talents, interests
- Special support: extra language, SEN
- Family background / medical / attendance / length of time at school
- Summary of potential



# PRE-TESTS: EITHER ISEB OR BESPOKE

## 1. ISEB Common Pre-Test (made by Century Ltd.)

*one-test-fits-all, taken at St Philip's in November of Form 6*

- Maths
- English
- VR
- NVR

*This is used by the vast majority of schools in Form 6, ahead of transfer at the end of Year 8*

## 2. Bespoke pre-tests

*taken at relevant schools in December of Form 6*

- Maths & NVR combined
- English & VR combined

*This is used by KCS Wimbledon and Dulwich in Form 6, ahead of transfer at the end of Year 8*



# ISEB PRE-TEST: WHAT IS IT?

- A test taken early in Form 6 - a standardised measure of ability and attainment
- Contains four c.30 min tests - maths, English, verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning
- May be taken more than once, but only once per year.
- Senior schools log-in to view results of all applicants registered with them

*According to the ISEB, “no special preparation is needed for the tests and no practice tests are available”.*



# ISEB PRE-TEST: WHAT IS ITS FORMAT?

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The pre-test is divided into four separate mini-tests:

1. English – 40 mins
2. Maths – 40mins
3. Verbal reasoning (VR) – 25 mins
4. Non-verbal reasoning (NVR) – 30 mins



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# ISEB PRE-TEST: WHEN IS IT?

- Mid-November of Form 6.
- On a Tuesday and a Wednesday morning not too early, not too late in the morning.
- Taken on a computer at St Philip's.



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# ISEB PRE-TEST: WHO USES IT?

WHICH SCHOOLS USE THE ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST?

Just about all of them!

PERHAPS OF MOST INTEREST TO ST PHILIP'S ARE:

Day

City of London

St Paul's

Westminster

Wetherby Senior

Boarding

Eton

Harrow

Radley

Tonbridge

Winchester

Worth



# ISEB PRE-TEST: CONTENT

## English

- Boys are tested with multiple-choice and single-answer questions based on inference comprehension, literal comprehension, word and phrase meaning and grammar

## Maths

- Boys are tested on their ability to work with whole number operations, algebra, decimals, factors and multiples, fractions, word problems and terms, percentage, ratios, data handling, distance-speed-time, length-mass-perimeter-area-volume, lines-angles-shapes, money and time. Questions are both multiple choice and single-answer.



# ISEB PRE-TEST: CONTENT

## VR

- Verbal reasoning is a form of problem-solving based around words and language
- Boys perform best in verbal reasoning tests if they're widely read and have an extensive vocabulary

## NVR

- Non-verbal reasoning is a form of problem-solving based around images, diagrams, shapes and patterns
- Questions require a boy to break a code within the question using only the pictures and are a test of one's powers of deduction





# THE PRE-TEST: ENGLISH SAMPLE



< ENGLISH



## PRACTICE

Which punctuation mark is missing from the sentence below?

"Where have you been? asked the teacher.

"

!

?

:

Next

# THE PRE-TEST: ENGLISH SAMPLE



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< ENGLISH



## PRACTICE

Rearrange the words below to make a meaningful sentence.

One word will not fit in the sentence.

Choose the word that does **not** fit.

drive poor it makes to window visibility difficult

difficult

poor

visibility

window

drive

Next



# THE PRE-TEST: MATHS SAMPLE



## PRACTICE

Which of the fractions below is greater than  $\frac{1}{5}$  but less than  $\frac{1}{3}$ ?

$\frac{1}{4}$

$\frac{1}{10}$

$\frac{1}{25}$

$\frac{1}{2}$

$\frac{1}{8}$

Next



# THE PRE-TEST: MATHS SAMPLE



MATHEMATICS



## PRACTICE

$$12,345 + 87,655 =$$

10,000

100,010

100,000

10,100

100,001

Next



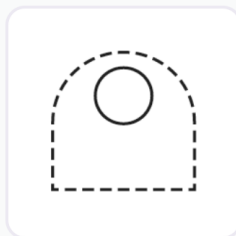
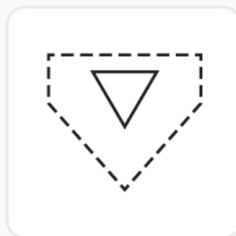
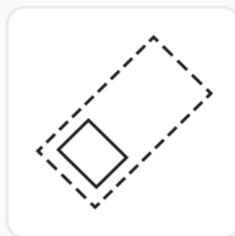
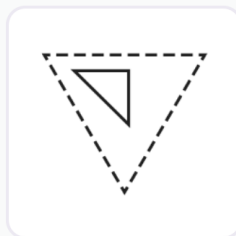
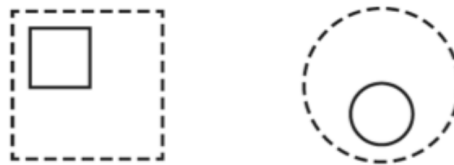
# THE PRE-TEST: NVR SAMPLE



## PRACTICE

Below are two figures.

Decide which of the five answer options is most like these two figures.



# THE PRE-TEST: NVR SAMPLE



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VERBAL REASONING



## PRACTICE

One letter will complete the word in front of the brackets and begin the word after the brackets.

Choose the correct letter from the choices below.

LITERA (?) AID

L

N

R

S

Y

Next



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# THE PRE-TEST: DEMO



[ACCESS PRE-TEST DEMO HERE](#)



# THE PRE-TEST: PREPARATION

## HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR THE PRE-TESTS?

### English

- 8 periods of timetabled English
- Focused work in lessons on comprehension technique and composition, with weekly composition prep
- Focused work in lessons on punctuation, spelling & grammar with weekly spelling prep
- Past-papers: timed, multiple-choice questions based on comprehension texts in timed exam conditions
- Weekly English clinic

### Maths

- 7 periods of timetabled maths
- Review in lessons of key topics such as algebra, averages, ratios, decimals, shapes, angles
- Use of computerised tests to practice and breed familiarity – BOFA and Atom Learning
- Weekly maths clinics

### VR/NVR

- Timetabled VR/NVR from Form 3
- VR/NVR skills addressed in after-school clinics
- Familiarity via Atom Learning and BOFA





# THE PRE-TEST: PREPARATION

## Form 5 curricular preparation

- Sensible curriculum that is broad but focused on English and Maths

## Form 5/6 summer break

- Pre-test packs
- Work set remotely, weekly

## Form 6 curricular preparation

- Sensible curriculum that is broad but focused on English and Maths

## Form 6 final preparation

- Pre-test mock examinations
- English and Maths homework twice per week for consolidation of week's work

## Interview

- Interview preparation one-on-one with external coach (thrice)
- Interview preparation one-on-one with HM



# KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED

- Half-termly effort grades
- Core subject one-on-one meeting in mid-point of Michaelmas and Lent Terms
- Sensibly timed parents evening in Form 6 - first half of term
- Half-term specialised mini report for Form 6 boys in English and Maths, highlighting three key areas for focus four weeks before the pre-tests
- HM appointments meetings open to all

# THE INTERVIEW/ FURTHER ASSESSMENTS



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- Interviews vary in time from 15-30 minutes
- There are wide-ranging styles. Some focus on English or maths (KCS, St Paul's, Westminster) and others are more open-ended (Eton, Radley)
- Similar to maths, points are given for the thought process and not just the 'right answer'
- Boys need to talk enthusiastically about themselves: academics and current affairs are important, but so are interests in model aeroplanes, sports, obscure breeds of dogs, film-making or beetle collections. "Just a chat" says a former Eton registrar "that allows us to get to know the boys."
- Conversation relies on extensive and comfortable control of vocabulary, so plenty of good books should be read.

# THE INTERVIEW/ FURTHER ASSESSMENTS



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## **ADDITIONAL TESTS**

- Often run on the same day as interviews
- Usually contain papers in English and maths
- Often also have a reasoning element

## **HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR ADDITIONAL TESTS?**

- In similar fashion to pre-test preparation for Form 6
- Extra, school-focused work for Form 7
- Specific clinics for Form 8



# OFFERS

- Offers are made for the majority in Form 6 and are conditional upon satisfactory performance at Common Entrance in Form 8
- *Westminster, St Paul's, Dulwich and Tonbridge make unconditional offers. A boy's place is reliant only upon a good report from HM and continued good progress*
- It is extremely rare for a boy to be rejected with a conditional offer, but it *is* a technical possibility
- Satisfactory performance is not a universal measurement – each school has its own concept of satisfactory
- One school's 70% might be another school's 50%



# MY SON IS A LATE DEVELOPER!

## SCHOOLS THAT SELECT IN FORM 7 and 8

- Ampleforth
- Canford
- Dulwich (in addition to Form 6)
- Hampton (in addition to Form 6)
- Harrow (although process starts with pre-test in Form 6)
- King's Canterbury
- London Oratory
- Marlborough (in addition to Form 6)
- Merchant Taylors
- Oratory at Woodcote
- St Edward's Oxford
- Whitgift
- Worth



# CAT TESTS & THEIR IMPORTANCE

- Run twice yearly – in September and March
- Understood easily by senior schools
- Help assess ability/potential as opposed to what has been learned
- Just one facet in a complex personal decision



# CAT TESTS & THEIR IMPORTANCE

- Divided into verbal, quantitative, non-verbal and spatial
- Maximum score is 141 in each section
- National average is 100/independent schools c.110/Central London c.120?

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Standard</b>
Westminster	130+	Eton	125+
St Paul's	130+	Tonbridge	125+
KCS Wimbledon	130+	Winchester	125+
City of London	125-130	Harrow	120+
Dulwich	125	Radley	120



# GETTING STARTED



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## SUGGESTIONS

- Make informed decisions
- Be open-minded - go and see schools, even if it means ruling them out
- Give yourself choice, but avoid overwhelming your son

# FIRST STEPS – ASSESSING OPTIONS



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- Use CAT scores to guide you in relation to the type of school best suited to your son
- Meet Head Master in Michaelmas/Lent term to establish sensible targets
- Visit a selection of schools – private visits or open days are both useful
- Assist son in filling out personal questionnaire to assist in the HM's reference
- For those looking at schools that select later than Form 6, please keep HM informed

FORM 4	FORM 5	FORM 6
Listen to Mrs Sullivan	Consider priorities See selection of schools	Early Mich: Last registrations Register ISEB portal
	Late Mich/Lent: meet HM See selection of schools	Mich: Pre-test mocks
	Summer: watch deadlines See selection of schools	Mid Mich: HM's reference
		Late Mich: Pre-test
		Early Lent-Summer: interviews/assessments
		Early Lent-Summer: offers

# SO, WHICH SCHOOL IS FOR YOUR SON? AND YOU...AND YOUR FAMILY...



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## **FACTORS**

- General type of school:
  - obviously boarding/co-ed
  - academic and competitive or academic and broad
  - atmosphere – big, small, sporty, bookish, artistic
- Practicalities: geography, siblings
- Your son: balancing ambition and welfare



# WHAT DOES ST PHILIP'S DO?

- Foster and maintain good working relationships with senior schools – keeping the good name of St Philip's healthy  
*“I like St Philip's parents because they are quite low-key and polite”*
- Monitor carefully any changes in admissions
- Prepare boys as thoroughly as reasonably possible so that they are in a position to make the most of their opportunities
- Review, question and appraise our own methods and evolve where we feel necessary
- Guide parents in weighing schools up against one another and guide parents towards the right school for their son
- Support boys who develop later and strongly



# WHAT DOES ST PHILIP'S DO?

Works hard every day to ensure your son is

- Safe and feeling secure
- Happy and busy
- Taught well and challenged as appropriate

} confident  
} motivated  
} prepared





# WHAT DOES ST PHILIP'S DO?

## Personal visits to a variety of schools:

- Ampleforth Catholic boarding (co-ed)
- Alleyn's Day (co-ed)
- Bradfield Boarding (co-ed)
- Brighton Boarding (co-ed)
- Canford Boarding (co-ed)
- City of London Day (boys)
- Dulwich Day (boys)
- Eton Boarding (boys)
- Harrow Boarding (boys)
- KCS Wimbledon Day (boys)
- Kensington Park Day (co-ed)
- Oratory at Woodcote Catholic boarding (co-ed)
- Oundle Boarding (co-ed)
- Radley Boarding (boys)
- Sevenoaks Boarding (co-ed)
- Sherborne Boarding (boys)
- Shiplake Boarding (co-ed)
- Stonyhurst Catholic boarding (co-ed)
- St Edward's Oxford Boarding (co-ed)
- St Paul's Day (boys)
- Thames Christian Day (co-ed)
- Tonbridge Boarding (boys)
- Wellington Boarding (co-ed)
- Westminster Day (boys)
- Wetherby Senior Day (boys)
- Winchester Boarding (boys)
- Worth Catholic boarding (co-ed)



# ALL IN ONE PLACE (MOSTLY)

The St Philip's [senior school browser](#)

School	Register by		Pre-test type	Pre-test date	Interview date	Detail: assessment process
Boys						
● <b>ETON</b>	Form 5 Jun, 30th	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6, Mar, Apr, Jun	For 2020 entry onwards Pre-test:
● <b>HARROW</b>	Form 5 Jun	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 7, Sep-Oct	Pre-test: ISEB Common Pre-test a
● <b>RADLEY</b>	Form 6 Oct	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Apr-May Form 6	Pre-test: ISEB Common Pre-test t
● <b>SHERBORNE</b>	Form 6 Jun	📍	🔗 ISEB Pre Test and own exam	Form 7, Jan OR ...	Form 7, Jan	Pre-test: None Assessment day: J
● <b>TONBRIDGE</b>	Form 5 Jun	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6, Sep-Dec, c...	Pre-test: ISEB Common Pre-test t
● <b>WINCHESTER</b>	Form 5 Jun	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6, Lent	Unusually traditional methods still
Co-ed						
● <b>AMPLEFORTH</b>	Form 8 Nov	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre Test	Form 6 Nov OR ...	Form 8	The assessments for 2023 entry w
● <b>BEDALES</b>	Form 7 Oct	📍	🔗 Own test - November	Form 7, Jan	Form 7, Jan	Taster days are held from Form 4 a
● <b>BRADFIELD</b>	Form 6, Jan	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 7, Nov - Dec	Form 7, Oct	Admissions Interview: In Form 6 (L
● <b>BRIGHTON</b>	Form 6 November	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6, Jan - Mar	Pre-test: ISEB Common Pre-test t
● <b>CANFORD</b>	Form 7, Apr	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6 Lent - Sum...	There are now four pre-test windc
● <b>CHARTERHOUSE</b>	Form 6 / Septemb...	📍	🔗 ISEB Common Pre-Test	Form 6, Nov	Form 6, Apr-Jun	Pre-test: ISEB Common Pre-test t