



**NAOMI BARTHOLOMEW**  
Headmistress,  
St Catherine's School,  
Bramley, Surrey

**AGE:**  
4-7 years  
**FEES\* (PER TERM):**  
FROM £1,895  
-£7,300



PRE-PREP

# STEP UP TO PRE-PREP



*A good Pre-Prep education can be a great foundation for the rest of your child's school career, says Naomi Bartholomew*

Choosing a Pre-Prep can feel like a daunting prospect, particularly if you're doing it for the first time. As is often said, this is a "head and heart decision", a little bit like buying a

Above, St Catherine's School, Bramley

house. Distance will probably be the first thing you consider, followed by the calibre of the teaching staff, facilities, and class sizes. Some of the groundwork can be done before you even visit the school, just by searching online and through prospectuses, so create a simple checklist to establish what you're looking for.

What follows is the more delicate matter of whether it feels like the right place for your child. Does the school offer an education that's aligned to your own values, and the aspirations you have for your child? How is the school described by other parents? And more importantly, what is the atmosphere like when you ▶

\*AVERAGE FIGURES FOR SCHOOL FEES FROM ACROSS THE SECTOR. FROM THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL, ISC.CO.UK



visit the school? Is the Headteacher someone who you trust to oversee your child's education, and someone you feel you can engage with?

### A hub of inspiration

Here at St Catherine's, we are very fortunate to have inspirational teachers and superb facilities – in fact, we're often told that we are like "a village within a village". Located in the leafy village of Bramley, just three miles from Guildford, our girls have the opportunity to play freely in the surrounding outdoor spaces.

Class sizes are small – 16 children in Reception, and 18 in Years One and Two – and with our highly-qualified teachers, every child receives the support they need. We also employ specialist teachers in ICT, dance, PE and music, who add huge value to the pupils' learning.

We base our education on strong Christian values, and the chapel is at the heart of the school. Everyone strives to be the best they can be, and the girls celebrate each other's successes, recognising their own strengths and achievements.

### Going above and beyond

We also ensure that the girls are looking beyond St Catherine's, and are proud to work alongside our neighbouring schools, including Bramley Infant School and Gosden House. Pupils come together to socialise at our annual Bramley Arts Day, and we take the girls out for local trips, visiting theatre companies, authors, illustrators and speakers. In our recent "emergency services day", the girls also enjoyed looking inside an ambulance, fire engine and meeting doctors, nurses,

Clockwise from left, ballet lessons at St Catherine's, pupils partake in Chinese Day, the exterior of St Catherine's School, Bramley



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paramedics and fire crew. Our programme is very fulsome, and it is these enrichment activities that make the girls' learning experiences so broad and exciting.

### Starting right

One of our recent initiatives is the Baby Cats series, which invites toddlers and their parents to attend classical concerts and creative sessions, including art, music and movement-based activities. This is an excellent opportunity for parents and children to experience what's on offer before they join the school.

Often when I meet with prospective parents, they are weighing up whether to invest in independent education when their child is only four years old. But I feel

passionately that strong foundations can make all the difference to young learners, as well as to future educational success.

The Independent Schools Council's 2017 census revealed that 14 years in independent education is the equivalent to an additional two years of schooling. And this manifests itself in confidence, resilience and ambition.

Girls leave here ready to go out and make a difference in the world. And this comes as a result of a very clear set of values that are taught, and which we all live by within the school community. It is this above all other things that distinguishes one school from another, and this is why we believe every girl here will benefit from our thriving Pre-Prep. 