



The Mall School



Future Schools – a Guide for Parents

The Mall School has an enviable track record of getting boys into a range of excellent day and boarding schools. Our website lists the schools Mall boys have successfully moved on to in the last five years with significant numbers of boys achieving scholarships.

All boys by the end of Year 8 have been offered places at an independent senior school.

At The Mall we aim to find the right school for your son. There is no such thing as a 'best school' just the best school for the boy. This guide aims to explain how this happens.

Choosing a senior school

Although your son will not go to his next school until he is 13, the process can begin as early as Year 5, not least because some schools have an early closing date for registrations.

In the Autumn Term parents of boys in Years 4 to 6 are invited to a Future Schools' Evening at The Mall where the Headmaster outlines the process for boys moving on to their senior schools. In Year 5 parents meet separately with the Headmaster to discuss senior school options.

During Years 4 and 5 parents should visit those schools they are interested in – many parents like to visit more than once. It is a good idea to take your son with you on the second occasion, but it is unwise to allow him to think that there is only one school that you are considering as his disappointment will be even greater than yours if this does not work out.

Do use Open Days to ask questions about the senior school. You will of course want to choose a school which caters for your son's

individual needs – socially and pastorally as well as academically. You will want to find a school where your son will be happy and thrive. You will also want to choose a school where he is likely to be offered a place.

By Year 6 at the latest you should have put your son's name down at two or three senior schools – it is very important to keep an eye out for their closing dates as schools are likely to be inflexible about late applications. School websites and prospectuses will give you the dates, which can differ widely from school to school.

No two senior schools are alike – either as institutions or in terms of their entry requirements. This is why the best way through the system is in discussion with the Headmaster or Assistant Head (Academic).

Parents will after all have different ambitions – some will want boarding schools, some will want schools that have amazing sports facilities, some will want a school with a reputation for caring for the individual, some will prize the academic over all other matters.

Pre-tests for senior schools

During Years 6, 7 and 8 some senior schools have a 'pre-test' – an entrance exam (typically in English, Maths and Reasoning) based on which they make offers – these are conditional on good performance at Common Entrance (more about this in the next section).

A pre-test is a competition against all the other candidates who apply. For example the pre-tests for KCS Wimbledon, Hampton and St George's are in January of Year 6, although some senior schools – including Hampton and St George's – offer a second opportunity to

sit their entrance exams in Year 7. We prepare boys for the reasoning tests, while their normal class work in English and Maths prepares them for those parts of the pre-test. Where available, we also use past papers for practice.

Boys who have an educational psychologist's assessment might be eligible for additional time in pre-tests and at Common Entrance. For more information about this please contact the School's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs Wright.

A few schools include an interview – if parents warn us of the date of an interview the Headmaster or senior member of staff will conduct a practice for the individual boy a few days before the real interview. The School is not always directly informed about such interviews, so we rely on parents to tell us about them.

All senior schools ask for a confidential reference about a boy from the Headmaster which will indicate if he believes the right choice of school has been made. This is particularly with regard to the level of pass required at Common Entrance and does underline the need for parents and the School to be realistic as well as hopeful about an individual boy's chances.

The reference also includes information about a boy's interests and achievements in other areas apart from the academic. At the end of each term form tutors send home a Record of Achievement form for parents and boys to complete which lists a boy's interests and achievements for the previous term. The Record of Achievement also includes details of parental involvement with the School. The Headmaster uses this information when completing the confidential references to senior schools.

Many London parents are putting their son's name down for several schools at once – which goes some way to explaining the competition for places. It is quite hard to opt for just one school in such a climate and many parents are prepared to pay several registration fees to create a 'safety net'. In practice, however, there comes a moment in Year 8 when the School has to declare which senior school is to mark the Common Entrance papers – they can only go to one school. Ideally we should be in complete agreement during the course of Year 7 at the latest and then there should be no surprises.

Common Entrance

As outlined in the previous section almost all schools have an initial pre-test selection process and then make a conditional offer of a place – they ask for a certain level of pass at Common Entrance (e.g. 65% as marked by the senior school) and some schools have higher entrance requirements than others. Obviously parents and Headmaster need to agree that a boy is capable of the level of 'pass' required. The Assistant Head (Academic) is also available to advise on a boy's chances and progress.

Common Entrance is sat in the June of Year 8 – the exam comprises papers in English, Maths, Science, French, History, Geography, Religious Studies and Latin (the latter occasionally optional). Papers are set by the Independent Schools Examination Board and are essentially the same for each senior school although there are tiered papers in some subjects to cater for boys of differing ability. If the correct choice of senior school has been made then a boy simply needs to work well to ensure he is successful – senior schools do not normally wish to ruin children's lives by refusing to take them unless there is serious, inexplicable underachievement.

Boys sit the Common Entrance exam at The Mall and then the senior school marks the paper. Senior schools will award grades at Common Entrance for each subject and many use this information for setting when the boys join the senior schools in Year 9. A number of senior schools also award book prizes to individual boys for outstanding performance in the exams.

Common Entrance is not supposed to be a competitive exam and a boy who is made an offer will simply need to work well enough at The Mall to pass at the level required (assuming we agree that the right choice has been made).

Scholarships

In the Spring Term of Year 7 the Assistant Head (Academic), in discussion with teachers, identifies those boys he believes would benefit from the experience of being in the Scholarship set. Those eventually invited to join the Scholarship set do so in early May of Year 7. Parents do need to accept that scholarship exams for senior schools are highly competitive and not every boy can win an award. The scholarship requirements for each senior school are very different and some syllabuses are incredibly demanding – though it is close to reassuring to know that 30% can be a top mark in the exam. The financial reward can be quite small nowadays but the academic pressures on scholarship boys are considerable.

Please note that music, art, sports and all-rounder scholarships do not involve an exam as such (rather an audition/trial/portfolio of art work/and interview) and boys trying for these do not need to be in the Scholarship set but take Common Entrance in the usual way (unless they are additionally taking the Academic Scholarship exam). The Head of Department for the relevant subject will be able to

advise you as to whether your son is a potential scholarship candidate.

Should you have any further question about non-academic scholarships please speak to Mrs Scott, Assistant Head (Pastoral), or Mr Miller, Assistant Head (Academic), for questions related to the academic scholarship programme.

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