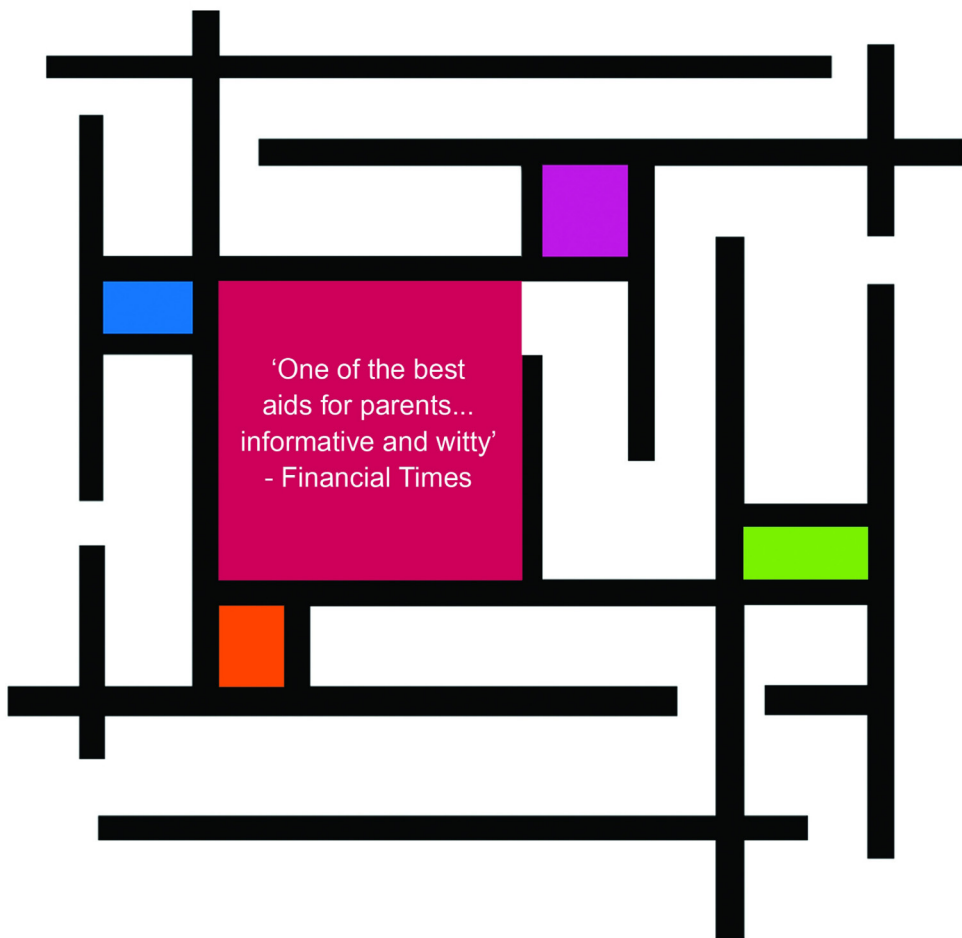


THE  
**Good Schools Guide**

Unique, straight talking, indispensable

2009 | 14th edition



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# GODSTOWE PREP SCHOOL

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E-mail: [headmaster@godstowe.org.uk](mailto:headmaster@godstowe.org.uk)

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Pupils: 85 boarders, 285 day girls. Also pre-prep/nursery 100 boys and girls, all day • Ages: 7-13, pre-prep 3-7 • Religion: C of E  
• Fees: £2,450 - £4,245; boarding £6,235.

Open days: Termly on Saturdays, check website for dates.

Features:

- Has SEN unit or class [info]

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**Head:** Since 2006, Mr David Gainer BEd (forties). Educated at Claires Court, Maidenhead, and Belmont Abbey in Herefordshire followed by St Mary's, Strawberry Hill, London, where he studied mathematics and drama. Began career at Llanarth Court Prep School in South Wales, then housemaster of junior house at his old school Belmont Abbey, followed by 3 years at Forest Grange Prep in Horsham where he was deputy head, before becoming young head of Belmont Prep near Dorking in 1991. Friendly, jovial, approachable and vastly experienced. Ideas bubble, and he is determined to raise the profile of boarding. Has introduced 'Boarding Passes' enabling girls to have up to four free nights a term. On arrival announced he did not want to live in traditional head's house, preferring to be 'in the thick of the action'. That's where he is now. Married to Cathy who teaches PHSE and works hard as registrar. They are a wonderful double act and their influence is apparent both in terms of rising numbers and the overall happiness of pupils and staff. 'We take happiness seriously,' says the headmaster. 'I want the girls to jump out of the car because they want to be here.' Visits pre-prep pupils regularly. Has two children, one of whom is currently in place as a deputy housemistress, presumably keeping an eye on her ebullient father. Just what this school needed after a rocky patch.

**Entrance:** Not a selective school Entry at 7 for the main school. Academic scholarships at 8+ and 11+. Sibling discounts as well as reduced fees for clergy and parents in the Forces. Girls can have a guest day (and night) in the school. The way things are going it's advisable to apply early.

**Exit:** Pre-prep boys usually go to traditional boys' boarding at seven. Caldicott, Papplewick and Summer Fields particularly popular. Girls to major senior schools, including Wycombe Abbey, Cheltenham Ladies' College, Downe House,

Haileybury, Rugby, Badminton, Benenden, Wellington, Oundle etc. Most take CE at 13, with scholarships and exhibitions on all fronts. In 2007 31 girls departed with 22 scholarships. Small trickle to state sector at 11 – getting smaller and smaller. Girls enjoy an excellent reputation at their senior schools. 'They are happy, well adjusted and hard working without being cloned,' said one experienced registrar.

**Remarks:** The first girls' boarding prep in the country, purpose-built in 1900. Delightful, wisteria-clad buildings (with later extensions). Recently built music school with inspiring head of department, serious re-vamp of the dining room (food 'terrific') and other buildings, particularly the boarding accommodation. Here the head has changed the old system: there is now a junior house and two senior houses. Bedrooms are bright in pinks and blues, chosen and painted by the girls with space for treasured possessions. A popular innovation is that instead of wake up calls or strident bells, boarders may choose the music by which they like to be woken (heavy rock was not selected). Brilliant use of v hilly ground on outskirts of High Wycombe: assault course and outdoor activity areas. Amazing new food technology kitchen just opened by Raymond Blanc. Masses of activities at weekends (rarely fewer than 50 girls in) plus free clubs and options – 2 hours per day from 4.30pm. Early drop-off plus breakfast (7.30am) and late pick-up plus supper (6.30pm) for 'a few pounds'. Excellent PSHE in place and girls get lifestyle course after CE which includes lectures from representatives of The Body Shop.

Pre-prep has expanded hugely and is now housed in separate buildings deliciously close to the all weather playground. French from age four; Latin or Spanish at ten. Classes in prep school 'subtly' streamed. maximum class size 18. IT, art, marvellous textiles and ceramics; fantastic music. Over 130 soloists on a variety of instruments with masses of girl-inspired concerts. Dyslexia help on hand, with one-to-one sessions where necessary; regular spelling and reading help available. EFL also available, though only about 5 per cent overseas (not counting exp-pats). Some MoD parents.

A parent said to us, 'The atmosphere is so much more positive now. The teachers' morale has shot up and the atmosphere is full of buzzing happiness. This is a first class nurturing environment owing much to the husband and wife team – brilliant. My daughter can't wait to board'

So Godstowe is once again treading the sunny uplands of girls' education. Well worth a visit – and not just for the teddy bear that every prospective pupil is given!

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*Read the school's outstanding ISI Inspection Report on the Godstowe website at [www.godstowe.org](http://www.godstowe.org)*