

The best of the best

With another record number of entries,
Sophie Pender-Cudlip and **Amanda Constance** are proud
to present the best of the best prep schools of 2026



Our sincere thanks go to all the schools that participated in the best of the best prep schools 2026 – we know how much work goes into all your submissions. A special thanks to our judging panel and consultants, including Sophie Oakes of Oakes Education and Louise Hitchen of 134marketing for their contributions.

Cothill cricketers

Great city prep

Francis Holland Prep

Set in the historic Chelsea Library just off London's King's Road, Francis Holland Prep offers true city preparation. Weekly visits to the world-class Science Museum, the V&A and the Natural History Museum build pupils' cultural literacy and confidence in professional metropolitan spaces. Its central location also gives children an outstanding programme of visiting speakers and workshops, from finance and fashion professionals to drama specialists, partner charities and even sessions with the London Metropolitan Police. Beyond lessons, children can take part in more than 80 clubs, the Foresters outdoor learning programme and hands-on charitable initiatives. A recent highlight was Chelsea in Bloom when the whole school transformed recycled uniforms into an amazing RHS Gold Award-winning floral display.

francishollandprep.org.uk

Other contenders:

New College School, Oxford
Brighton College Prep, Kensington



Francis Holland Prep



Brighton College Prep School



Ardingly Prep



Francis Holland Prep

Great for early years

Brighton College Prep School

Learning is brought to life at this seaside prep school through a rich programme. Children benefit from specialist teaching in French, Mandarin, sport, art, drama, dance and music, with plenty of hands-on experiences. Nursery highlights include creating British bird artwork, meeting Henry the Hedgehog from the local animal rescue centre, making bird-food balls and calming mindfulness sessions with Coco the therapy dog. Reception children explore the prehistoric world through Jaws, Claws & Dinosaurs – featuring a visit from Jam the T-Rex – and Dinosaur Day dress-up. Beach School allows children to explore while also learning. Whether practising mini-Pilates or taking part in beach cleans, children learn self-care and environmental responsibility at a young age.

brightoncollege.org.uk/prep-school

Other contenders:

Bilton Grange Prep School
Notting Hill & Ealing High School, GDST

Great for innovation

Ardingly Prep

Ardingly Prep's goal is to equip children with skills to thrive at senior school and beyond. The annual Enterprise and Employability festival combines workshops, trips, external speakers and entrepreneurial skills workshops, to explain how successful businesses are built. Its Discovering My World programme develops life skills such as budgeting and financial management, alongside entrepreneurial capabilities that cannot be replaced by AI. From Year 3, children enter Dragon's Den, creating business plans and pitching to an external parent and alumni panel. In the £50 Business Challenge, Years 5 to 6 launch small ventures to grow seed capital. All year groups complete the award-winning Solar vehicle challenge, recently boosted by a solar-powered STEM double-decker bus.

ardingly.com/prep

Other contenders:

Belhaven Hill School
Dorset House Prep School

Best for pastoral care

Francis Holland Prep

This London girls' school prides itself on its warm, inclusive environment where children feel safe and valued, and happily run (or scoot!) into school each day. Outstanding pastoral care is delivered through high staff-to-pupil ratios, an integrated well-being programme and specialist-led personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Weekly PSHE lessons provide a trusted space for children to explore emotions, while the Friendology curriculum gives girls a shared language to navigate friendships with empathy and resilience. Dedicated pastoral staff, a professional counselling team and a therapy dog, Kanga, are based in a well-being room where children are listened to. Parent feedback is exceptional, with 99 per cent reporting their child feels happy at school, with friendship support exceeding national benchmarks.

francishollandprep.org.uk

Other contenders:

Norwich High School for Girls, GDST
Cumnor House Sussex