



**ROSE HILL SCHOOL**  
ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

## **Future Schools: A Guide for Parents**

Rose Hill School has an enviable track record of getting pupils into a range of excellent independent schools. Our website lists the schools Rose Hill pupils have successfully moved on to in the last few years with significant numbers of pupils achieving scholarships.

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

At Rose Hill we aim to find the right school for your child. There is no such thing as a 'best school' just the best school for the pupil. This guide aims to explain how this happens.

### **A. Independent Senior Schools**

Some independent senior schools use the Common Entrance examinations for assessing pupils who transfer at the age of 13+ and at Rose Hill all pupils follow this course.

The 13+ examination is taken in Year 8 during the week after the summer school half term.

The syllabuses are devised by the Independent Schools Examinations Board (ISEB). These are broadly in line with National Curriculum requirements, but at an above average level in most subjects with the need for more in-depth answers and greater independent learning.

The exams are set by ISEB. See [www.iseb.co.uk](http://www.iseb.co.uk) – there is also a parents' information section on this website.

Papers are set by appointed examiners and answers are marked by the Senior School for which a candidate is entered.

Other independent schools prefer to set their own assessments which usually involve English, Maths, a standardised reasoning test and a pupil interview. Please refer to the separate list for individual school details, many of which require a pre-test to establish whether a candidate's academic level is appropriate.

There is an entry fee for the Common Entrance examination of approximately £100.00 and all Year 8 pupils sit this. Subjects examined at 13: English, Maths, Science, French, Geography, History, RS and Latin.

Some parents see Common Entrance as daunting. It should be noted that English, Maths, French, Science and Latin offer different levels in order to ensure that all candidates are able to achieve in these subjects. The experience of studying an assessed range of subjects at this stage is also excellent preparation for 16+ examinations.

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



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In the Spring Term parents of pupils in Years 3 to 8 are invited to a Future Schools' Evening where the Head outlines the process for pupils moving on to their senior schools. In Year 5 parents are invited to meet separately with the Head to discuss senior school options.

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

The Newsletter will publish senior school Open Days throughout the year. Do use Open Days to ask questions about the senior school. You will of course want to choose a school which caters for your child's individual needs – socially and pastorally as well as academically. While Open Days may provide a useful general introduction to the school, a personal visit enables you to see the school on a normal working day, meet key personnel and see the pupils at work and play.

You will want to find a school where your child will be happy and thrive. You will also want to choose a school where they are likely to be offered a place.

NB:

\* League tables may be interesting, but they do not necessarily provide an accurate guide to a school's performance. It is vital to see how a school's GCSE and A Level/IB results relate to the standard demanded at entry to the school. This is the real indicator of how pupils' performance has been enhanced.

\* Always look at a school's achievements outside the academic ones. Most independent schools offer a broad balance and exciting opportunities in the creative arts and sport. Some are well-known for particular areas of strength, perhaps drama or hockey.

\* Find out about GCSE options and whether the school offers A levels or International Baccalaureate.

The Independent Schools Council Information Service can be useful for reference – visit <https://www.isc.co.uk/schools/>

### **Registering at a School**

For three independent schools in our area, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Brighton College, it is essential to register your child at least 3 years before age of entry. Other schools will accept registration later, but early registration is clearly advisable. Registration costs vary from school to school.

By Year 6 at the latest you should have put your child'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.



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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 Head or Director of Studies.

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**

Pre-tests are used by an increasing number of independent senior schools, usually in Year 6 but can be done in Year 7. They give parents an early indication of whether the school is right for the child. Some senior schools will confirm a place based on the pre-test, some still require success 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 Tonbridge and Brighton happen from November - January of Year 6, although some senior schools offer a second opportunity to sit their entrance exams in Year 7. We prepare pupils for this, for example, their normal class work in English and Maths prepares them for those parts of the pre-test. Where available, we also use similar questions for practice. These tests are set by ISEB and parents need to apply for this and let us know so that we can administer them.

Pupils 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 Morgan (Head of Learning Support).

A few schools include an interview – if parents warn us of the date of an interview the Head or senior member of staff will conduct a practice for the individual pupil 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.

### **Head's Report**

All senior schools ask for a confidential reference about the pupil from the Head which will indicate if she 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 pupil's chances.

The reference also includes information about a pupil's interests and achievements in other areas apart from the academic. In all school reports we record pupils' interests and achievements for the previous term. This also includes details of co-curriculum involvement with the School, sporting achievements, character, and contribution to school life. The Head uses this information when completing the confidential references to senior schools.



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## **Scholarships**

Many parents are putting their child'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.

Most schools offer awards for excellence in one or more of the following areas: Academic, Sporting, Art and Design, Drama and Music. Standards required for scholarships relate directly to a school's admissions criteria and its place in the market. As a rule, a more academic entry requirement will mean similarly higher expectation in non-academic areas.

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) The scholarship requirements for each senior school are very different and some syllabuses are incredibly demanding The timing of senior school scholarships varies but most occur in the Spring term. The financial reward can be quite small nowadays but the academic pressures on scholarship pupils are considerable. Although awards can in amount to 25% of fees, this is becoming less common.

Parents do need to accept that scholarship exams for senior schools are highly competitive and not every pupil can win an award. The Head of Department for the relevant subject will be able to advise you as to whether your child is a potential scholarship candidate.

## **Bursaries**

Schools are increasingly looking to offer financial support to parents who are genuinely in need. This is done by using a means test and is called a Bursary Award.

## **Common Entrance**

Pupils sit the Common Entrance exam at Rose Hill 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 pupils join the senior schools in Year 9. A number of senior schools also award book prizes to individual pupils for outstanding performance in the exams.

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 the Head need to agree that a pupil is capable of the level of 'pass' required. The Director of Studies is also available to advise on a pupil's chances and progress.



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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 (ISEB) and are essentially the same for each senior school although there are tiered papers in some subjects to cater for pupils of differing ability. Common Entrance is not supposed to be a competitive exam and a pupil who is made an offer will simply need to work well enough at Rose Hill to pass at the level required (assuming we agree that the right choice has been made). If the correct choice of senior school has been made then a pupil simply needs to work well to ensure they are successful – senior schools do not normally wish to ruin children's lives by refusing to take them unless there is serious, inexplicable underachievement.

Results come directly from the senior school to parents the following week. Rose Hill are not in a position to share results before the school that is making the offer.

### **Grammar & Maintained Schools at 13+**

There is no official entry to Grammar Schools at 13+. However, places do come up from time to time. Individual schools may invite pupils who apply for internal assessments at any time of the year.

Non-selective schools such as Bennett Memorial, St Gregory's and the Skinners Kent Academy may also have places at 13+, but again, all will depend on whether there is space.

Direct contact to the school in question should be made.

### **Grammar School at 11+**

The most current information can be found: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-places/kent-test#>

If you want to apply for a year 7 place at a Kent grammar school, you have to register your child for the Kent Test. The test assesses whether grammar school is a suitable option for your child. We will advise you before registration.

**Many children will find the test difficult.** Grammar schools in Kent provide for children in about the top 25% of the ability range. In addition, some of Kent's grammar schools - particularly those which are most likely to offer places to children from outside Kent - give priority to those with the highest scores. You may want to discuss your child's academic achievement with us before you decide whether to register them for the Kent Test.

**Passing the Kent Test does not guarantee your child a place in a Kent grammar school.** Make sure you know where the Kent grammar schools are, and what the admissions criteria are for the school(s) you are interested in. Consider how likely your child is to be offered a place there, and how they would get to that school if a place was offered.



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**School admissions are co-ordinated between local authorities.** Even if your child qualifies for admission to a grammar school in more than one area, all your preferred schools must be listed on your home local authority's application form, and you will not be offered more than one school place.

#### **H. Any Questions?**

Should you have any further question about non-academic scholarships please speak to Mrs Scarbrough, Head of Upper School (Pastoral), or Ms Lang-Daly, Director of Studies, for questions related to the academic scholarship programme.

Please do not hesitate to make an appointment to see me if you would like to discuss any aspect of future schooling for your child.