KEYSTONE TUTORS
TUTORING & EDUCATION ADVISORY



DOES ALMA STILL MATTER?

THE SCHOOLS EDUCATING THE NATION'S ELITE

An analysis of schools featured in Who's Who and Desert Island Discs

A report by Harriet Blomefield

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‘What is it that really puts the stamp of eminence on a modern British life? Two things count today: having an entry in Who’s Who and being asked to choose your eight favourite records on BBC’s Desert Island Discs.’

The Wall Street Journal

Foreword



Barnaby Lenon
Chair, Independent
Schools Council

It is no surprise that, in the past, state schools struggled to produce people who got into *Who's Who*. Before 1965, at least, schooling in the UK was organised on the basis of social class and even grammar schools had limited impact on social mobility. Today things are much improved: exam results and entry rates into top universities are far better in state schools, even if the pattern is not yet as even as it needs to be.

This booklet raises the question: is there something about independent schools that explains the large number of their pupils who have distinguished careers? It seems to me to be obvious that children from prosperous and successful families who can afford expensive boarding schools are quite likely to be ambitious and have access to networks of friends, family know-how and resources that help them on their way. Some of these schools have always been pretty academically selective and, if they were not in the past, they certainly are now. So their pupils are bright.

The other day I asked a very young Old Etonian MP whether he thought that his school played any part in his career choice. Yes, he said – the pupils were competitive and felt pressure to do well. Yes, while at the school he had had the opportunity to hear and speak to many politicians and this helped him develop an understanding of politics and a belief that he could become an MP.

So I certainly think that schools which provide their pupils with a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom are more likely to identify and nurture particular talents. Pupils who achieve international recognition in sport would be one obvious group, as would top military figures, musicians, writers and actors. Increasing numbers of independently-educated pupils are going into careers in charities and environmental protection, an interest which started at school.

Whatever school a former pupil was at, they can often point to just one teacher who made a profound impact on them. *Who's Who* reflects the state of society 30-40 years ago, but giving space in the timetable for a wide range of activities and recognising the impact of great teachers seem to me as important today as they have ever been.

Introduction

WHY DID WE WRITE THIS REPORT?



Will Orr-Ewing
Founder, Keystone Tutors

The recent furore around national examination results revealed the bind in which UK schools find themselves: they know that the education they provide is so much more than what can be reproduced in exam league tables but are somewhat at a loss as to how to prove it.

At Keystone Tutors, we face the same problem when advising parents on choosing schools. Contrary to popular myth, even families who aspire to the UK's most competitive schools are rarely guided by exam grades alone. In consultations they are more likely to emphasise hopes for their children's long-term happiness or the development of their character than they are their raw achievement in exams. Nonetheless, because it is always reassuring to justify decisions empirically, parents and their advisors find it hard to resist 'the tyranny of metrics'. They fall back on league tables despite their better instincts, and despite the fact that these are occasionally degraded by dodgy practice (e.g. schools or colleges not counting all their pupils' results) or the fact that some schools refuse to enter league tables at all. Which made us think – could there be other metrics that capture something of a school's impact on a pupil that would evade the reductive logic of the exam league table?

For that reason, we turned to *Who's Who* in the hope that this monumental (though under-explored) resource could present a new angle on schools in the UK. We liked the fact that it measures 'impact on public life' in a way that would see alumni recognised even if they would not have shined in an academic league table. We also hoped it would throw out the names of schools that were especially good at adding value: it is not unsurprising when a highly academically selective school comes top of an academic league table but it is more worthy of comment when a less academically selective school repeatedly produces high achieving alumni. Causation and correlation are so hard to tease apart in the question of schooling.

What did we discover? As Harriet dissects below, the analysis paints a fascinating portrait of the part UK schools play in producing the men and women who go on to make a national impact. The overrepresentation of boarding schools, and the staying power of some of these institutions, shows how skilful they are at renewing themselves in the face of perpetual change, and underlines why they remain the schools of choice for ambitious families from around the world.

We hope this short report offers a fun and thought-provoking new perspective on UK schooling, and look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Background

What is *Who's Who?*

Who's Who is a leading source of up-to-date information about over 35,000 influential people from all walks of life, worldwide. Containing autobiographical listings of people from around the globe who have an impact on British life, it is seen as one of the world's most recognised and respected works of reference. *Who's Who* has been published since 1849 and, as of 2020, is in its 172nd edition.

What is *Who Was Who?*

When the subject of a *Who's Who* entry dies, the biography is transferred to the next volume of *Who Was Who*, where it is usually printed as it appeared in its latest *Who's Who* form, with the date of death added.

The first volume of *Who Was Who* covered deaths between 1897 and 1915. Volumes were then published at ten-year intervals; since 1990 they have been published at five-year intervals.

Who makes it into *Who's Who?*

The majority of those men and women whose biographies appear in *Who's Who* are included in recognition of the distinction they have attained in their professional lives and the influence they exert on British society; they range from politicians and academics to musicians and film directors. Whilst many entrants are British, notable individuals from across the world are included owing to their importance in British and international life.

The holders of some posts, such as MPs, senior judges, and high-ranking civil servants, are included as a matter of course, because the appointment itself is of general public interest. For those who do not fit into these categories, a Selection Board meets regularly during the preparation of each edition of *Who's Who* to discuss potential entrants. The Selection Board reviews those people whose professions are less rigidly structured, such as artists, actors, and sports people, as well as professors, scientists and business people. Prominent figures in numerous fields are considered by the Board on the basis of their continuing achievements, and ultimately selected owing to their pre-eminence. Where necessary, the Selection Board consults those with specialist knowledge.

Who's Who also automatically includes a comprehensive listing of the holders of UK hereditary titles, from Duke to Baronet. These entries make up approximately 10% of the total listings.

Our Methodology

Some notes about our methodology

1 Keystone analysed school mentions based on 66,000 data points within entries in *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who*. We assessed this data, gathering mentions of schools to create a league table counting the number of mentions in both *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who*. This forms the basis of our comparisons between the historic and current data. We read the data in a fair and transparent way but must note that the inconsistency of the wording of entries in *Who Was Who* does mean that we cannot guarantee the complete accuracy of the data. We are, nonetheless, confident that the core findings have been considered and assessed in a consistent and fair manner.

2 The statistics are based on entries where a UK school could be identified within the 'Education' section of the entry.

3 For the data relating to Desert Island Discs we have analysed the data for 3,230 episodes listed on Wikipedia from 1942 to the present day[1]. We looked at the Wikipedia entries of the guests and our results are based on those entries that mention which school or schools the guest attended.

4 No adjustment has been made to take into account the size of the school. For instance, Eton has twice the number of pupils as Ampleforth.

5 Where available we have used the top three names at time of writing on Ranker.com for notable former pupils.

1) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Desert_Island_Discs_episodes

The General Picture

HEADLINE FIGURES AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **All-boys schools dominate:** 6 of the top 10 independent schools by *Who's Who* entry are either all-boys or only admit girls at 16.
2. **Boarding schools are still leading the way:** there is remarkable consistency across top independent boarding schools from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who*.
3. **Eton is an outlier even amongst all-boys boarding schools:** the school has maintained its position at Number 1 and has educated 10% of entries where a UK school was identifiable in *Who Was Who* and 5% of *Who's Who*. In *Who's Who* it has educated the same number of people as the top 36 state schools put together and more than the next highest ranking four independent schools combined.
4. **Female numbers are increasing:** there is a clear increase in female entries from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who* as would be expected. No all-girls schools feature in the Top 10 independent schools, however.
5. **Geography matters:** Whilst the top 10 state schools are spread across the UK, the top 10 independent schools are predominantly clustered around London and the South West.
6. **State school numbers overall are increasing:** The state school share of entries increased by 18% from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who*.



Photo by Blueskynet on Shutterstock

Top 10 Independent Schools

	School	*Who Was Who* Entries (rank)	*Who's Who* Entries (rank)	Change in rank	Notable Former Pupils
1	Eton College	5,238 (1)	1,102 (1)	0	Boris Johnson Prince William, Duke of Cambridge Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex
2	Winchester College	1,509 (4)	316 (2)	↑ 2	Lord Alfred Douglas Rishi Sunak Ian Gow
3	Harrow School	1,941 (2)	269 (3)	↓ 1	Winston Churchill Benedict Cumberbatch Jawaharlal Nehru
4	Westminster School	673 (12)	234 (4)	↑ 8	Gavin Rossdale Sir Nick Clegg John Gielgud
5	Marlborough College	1,347 (5)	230 (5)	0	Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge Bruce Chatwin Siegfried Sassoon
6	Rugby School	1,549 (3)	214 (6)	↓ 3	Rupert Brooke Reid Railton Sir Salman Rushdie
7	Charterhouse School	1,031 (8)	199 (7)	↑ 1	James Clark William Haines Peter Yates
8	St Paul's Boys' School	694 (11)	184 (8)	↑ 3	Samuel Pepys Dan Snow Ed Vaizey
9	Ampleforth College	139 (57)	178 (9)	↑ 48	Rupert Everett Antony Gormley Hugh Millais
10	Wellington College	1,120 (6)	173 (10)	↓ 4	Will Young Harold Nicolson Christopher Lee

COMMENTARY

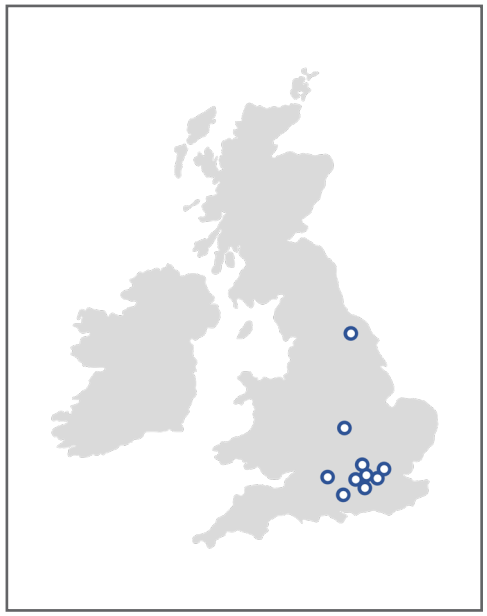
Whilst the top end of the Top 10 independent schools delivers few surprises, the table merits further comment.

The top three schools are amongst the best-known academic institutions in the world, in part because their alumni are so famous. Eton has educated Princes William and Harry, not to mention twenty Prime Ministers (nine of whom moved from Eton to Christ Church, Oxford). Harrow is a little way behind Eton when it comes to producing future Prime Ministers — a mere seven — but this number does include Winston Churchill. Of course, you can't judge a school's impact wholly from the number of PMs it has educated, but there must be something in the sense of confidence a school can give an individual if it is helping to steer him or her towards the top job in the country.

What is particularly striking about this Top 10 is the number of schools on the list that are fully boarding, the top three being in a small minority of schools where one hundred per cent of the pupils board. What is it about boarding schools that gives their former pupils such a good preparation for life beyond school that they are then pushed to the top in so many fields? One consideration must surely be the 'network' born of being bound together

so tightly in such formative years, and the access such schools tend to offer their pupils to both a strong and supportive alumni network and active parent body. This can lead to early opportunities in gaining careers advice and access to work experience, or even job offers, further down the line. This, alongside the independence gained from being away from the family home, might well be the perfect recipe for future success.

Another key conversation-starter brought to light by this Top 10 is the number of schools it includes which do not classify themselves as particularly academically selective at admission. Does the appearance of schools which are not renowned for academic selectivity but still rank highly in *Who's Who* (particularly notable is the inclusion of Ampleforth in the Top 10 as well as others just outside the Top 10) indicate that academic excellence is not the primary driver in achieving great things beyond school and university? Does it instead imply that a holistic, all-round education and childhood is just as important in enabling future success?



Lastly, it is worth noting the geography of these schools. We hear a great deal about the North/South divide in the UK; whilst this Top 10 is in no way indicative of the full picture, it does seem to confirm a general national indictment that the most successful alumni (in relation to *Who's Who*) happen to have attended schools almost entirely clustered around London.



Photo by Bell Photography 423 on Shutterstock

Case Study

WINSTON CHURCHILL



Winston Churchill may well be one of Harrow's most notable alumni, but you do not need to look far beneath the surface to learn that the young Churchill's academic career was not particularly impressive. Churchill began boarding at St George's School, Ascot, at the age of seven but was moved to Brunswick School in Hove after a couple of years owing to poor behaviour. It has been reported that he only narrowly passed the entrance exam for Harrow.

At Harrow, Churchill was not particularly happy and did not excel. However, his ability to memorise lines, which he used to great effect when he first made public speeches, was already apparent. Whilst at Harrow, he entered a competition and won a school prize for reciting from memory 1,200 lines from Macaulay's long poem *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

Churchill's lifelong interest in soldiering was already evident at school. He joined the Harrow Rifle Corps within weeks of entering the school and, following encouragement from his father, was enrolled in the academic programme to prepare students for Sandhurst (the Royal Military College, now called the Royal Military Academy). In a letter from 1889 Churchill writes to 'Mamma', telling her that he has joined the 'Army class' and that he is learning French and geometrical drawing and studying for the Shakespeare prize.

'In all the twelve years I was at school no one ever succeeded in making me write a Latin verse or learn any Greek except the alphabet.'

Churchill, *My Early Life*

But his mother was very disappointed in her son, feeling he could achieve much more. In 1890, she wrote: 'I had built up such hopes about you & felt so proud of you – & now all is gone … your work is an insult to your intelligence. If you would only trace out a plan of action for yourself & carry it out & be determined to do so – I am sure you could accomplish anything you wished.'

In all, hardly the sort of school experience that would have predicted his success both in arts (as the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature) and the affairs of men.

https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/child/harrow/
Photo by Kristina G. on Unsplash

Case Study

AMPLEFORTH COLLEGE



Ampleforth is a noticeable inclusion in the list of Top 10 schools, reflecting its dramatic rise from 57th position in *Who Was Who* to 9th in *Who's Who*. In recent years Ampleforth has had numerous mentions in the press, but often not for the right reasons. The rise in the number of entries from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who* therefore presents an even more significant achievement.

Ampleforth has long been popular with the Roman Catholic aristocracy and has been nicknamed "The Catholic Eton". It is not known for being academically selective at admission and rarely features highly on academic league tables. Yet alumni from Ampleforth have been successful in a wide-range of industries, and many of those working in the arts — Sir Antony Gormley, Julian Fellowes, Rupert Everett and James Norton — are household names. Does this reflect the fact that the impact of a school is not necessarily solely correlated to the academic pressure it imposes or subsequent academic success?

One of Ampleforth's most eminent old-boys, Rupert Everett, found fame in his performance in *Another Country*. This film explores the hypocrisy and snobbery of the English public school system, with the school setting said to be modelled upon Eton and Winchester. It looks at how the bigotry of public school life in the 1930s turns the lead character, Guy Bennett, eastwards to communist Russia.

'Guy Bennett: God, if our parents only knew what actually went on here.
Judd: They do know. Fathers anyway.'

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Top 10 State Schools

	School	*Who Was Who* Entries (rank)	*Who's Who* Entries (rank)	Change in rank	Notable Former Pupils
1	Reading School	66 (108)	46 (76)	↑ 32	Damien Green Sir Thomas White Henry Addington
2=	King Edward VII School Sheffield	98 (79)	43 (82)	↓ 3	Emily Maitlis Harry Epworth Allen Matthew Bannister
2=	Cardiff High School	74 (99)	43 (82)	↑ 17	John Humphrys Sir Leszec Borysiewicz Jon Ronson
4	Aberdeen Grammar School	159 (50)	41 (87)	↓ 37	Lord Byron George Chrystal Robin Cook
5	Royal Grammar School High Wycombe	22 (278)	40 (91)	↑ 187	Chris Grayling Jimmy Carr Matt Dawson
6	Royal High School Edinburgh	171 (48)	36 (97)	↓ 49	Thomas Coutts Alexander Graham Bell Robert Adam
7	Harrow High School	35 (190)	35 (102)	↑ 88	Michael Portillo Clive Anderson Roger Glover
8=	Wimbledon College	52 (137)	34 (107)	↑ 30	Tom Holland Paul Merton Patrick Roberts
8=	William Ellis School	28 (230)	34 (107)	↑ 123	Andrew Sachs Toby Young Tim Guest
8=	Lancaster Royal Grammar School	22 (278)	34 (107)	↑ 171	Jon Richardson Karl Oyston Magnus Lund
8=	Westcliff High School for Boys	20 (310)	34 (107)	↑ 203	Neil Harman Gary Brooker Sir Alan Cook

COMMENTARY

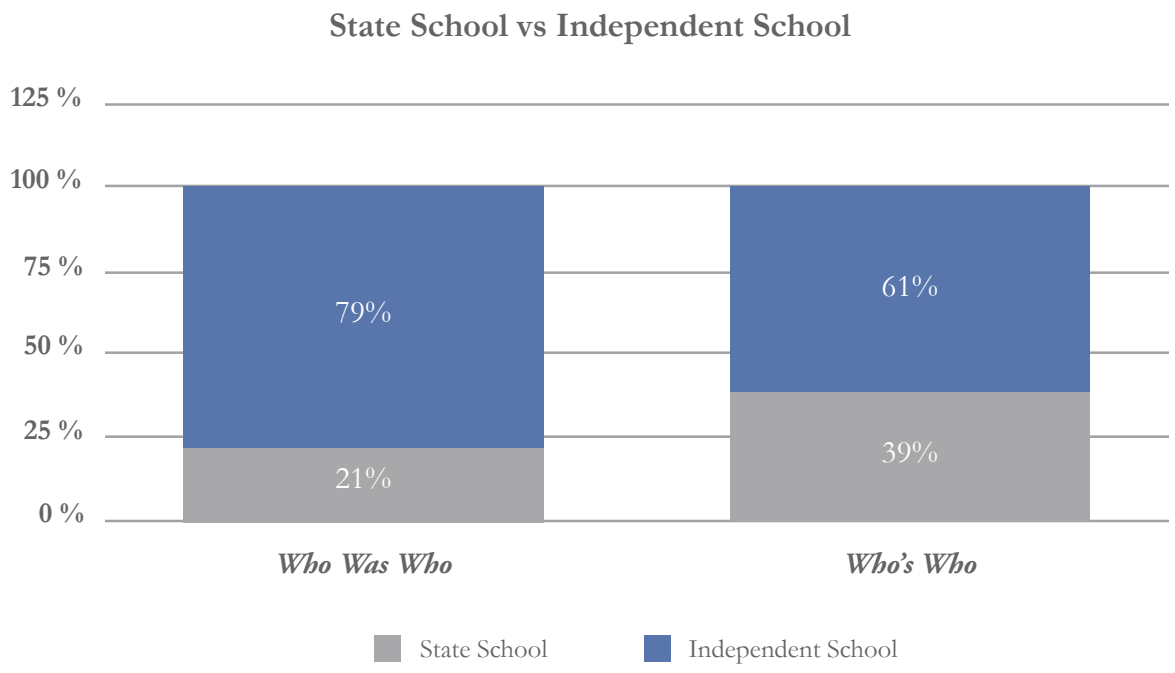
It is unsurprising that state schools have seen considerable growth up the rankings, as 'class' becomes less of a driver in the work environment and businesses seek to use more meritocratic means of recruitment. Only three of the Top 10 state schools have seen a fall in ranking from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who*; whilst four have seen an increase of over one hundred places.

One perceptible difference between the Top 10 state and Top 10 independent schools in the UK is their geography. Whilst almost all the independent entries were based in or around London, two of the Top 10 state schools were situated in Scotland. It is impossible to quantify exactly what this means, but there is a positive message to be taken from the fact that the state school alumni who achieve success beyond their education and are listed in *Who's Who* come from a broad geographical range.

Given that private school students make up 7% of pupils (up to 17% at sixth form), there is still considerable room to improve further.



WHO'S WHO AND *WHO WAS WHO* STATE vs INDEPENDENT



Winners and Losers

RISING STARS: Top 10 schools in *Who's Who* that were outside the top 100 in *Who Was Who*

	School	Status	*Who Was Who* Entries (rank)	*Who's Who* Entries (rank)	Change in rank	Notable Former Pupils
1	The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School	Independent School	65 (111)	126 (16)	↑ 95	Sacha Baron Cohen Richard Wright Matt Lucas
2	Bryanston School	Independent School	56 (125)	78 (35)	↑ 90	Jasper Conran Kwame Anthony Appiah Emilia Fox
3	St Paul's Girls' School	Independent School	52 (137)	73 (39)	↑ 98	Rachel Weisz Natasha Richardson Rosalind Franklin
4	Millfield School	Independent School	9 (553)	66 (46)	↑ 507	Alex Pettyfer Nicollette Sheridan John Dunn
5	Brentwood School	Independent School	45 (155)	65 (48)	↑ 107	Douglas Adams Frank Lampard Jack Straw
6	Sevenoaks School	Independent School	16 (372)	61 (53)	↑ 319	Daniel Day-Lewis Emma Hope Elleston Trevor
7	Gordonstoun	Independent School	27 (235)	57 (56)	↑ 179	Charles, Prince of Wales Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh Prince Andrew, Duke of York
8	Bolton School	Independent School	35 (190)	56 (58)	↑ 132	Ralf Little Sir Ian McKellen Monica Ali
9	Cheltenham Ladies' College	Independent School	59 (118)	53 (63)	↑ 55	Tamara Beckwith Kristin Scott Thomas Bridget Riley
10	Royal Ballet School	Independent School	8 (616)	52 (64)	↑ 552	Debbie McGee Lesley Collier Dame Darcey Bussell

COMMENTARY

Our analysis of the 'rising stars' looked at the Top 10 schools in *Who's Who* that were outside the Top 100 in *Who Was Who*. Some of the numbers in this chart indicate the meteoric rise of various schools, with institutions such as Millfield (+507 places), Sevenoaks (+319 places) and the Royal Ballet School (+552 places) showing a considerable increase.

There are schools within this list which might be seen as surprising entries owing to them not being particularly academically selective. Schools that would fall into this category would be Bryanston, Millfield and Gordonstoun. So, why do they feature? Are we once again seeing that escaping the 'hot house' can prepare children just as well for the realities of their futures as being under academic pressure? Does it imply that children don't have to navigate the juggernaut of test preparation, rote learning, and results expectations in order to succeed in the world?

That being said, there are schools on this list which are well known for their results – including the likes of St Paul's Girls' School, which saw 99% of girls achieving A*/A at GCSE and 85% A*/A at A level in 2019. Its inclusion in this list, along with Cheltenham Ladies' College, also reflects the rise in female entries in *Who's Who*.

Whilst the majority of the biggest fallers are independent schools, there is no escaping the fact that all ten of the biggest risers are also independent.

WANING STARS: Biggest fallers from those who were in the Top 50 in *Who Was Who*

	School	Status	*Who Was Who* Entries (rank)	*Who's Who* Entries (rank)	Change in rank	Notable Former Pupils
1	Rossall School	Independent School	298 (29)	30 (122)	↓ 93	Little Boots Thomas Beecham Frederick Lugard
2	Liverpool College	Independent School (until 2013)	189 (44)	34 (107)	↓ 63	Brian Epstein Sir Ken Robinson William Charles Cuff
3	Royal High School Edinburgh	State School	171 (48)	36 (97)	↓ 49	Thomas Coutts Alexander Graham Bell Robert Adam
4	Cheltenham College	Independent School	1070 (7)	62 (51)	↓ 44	Lindsay Anderson Rageh Omaar Patrick White
5	Blundell's School	Independent School	205 (41)	44 (80)	↓ 39	Claire Marshall Richard Cosway Arthur Stark
6	Aberdeen Grammar School	State School	159 (50)	41 (87)	↓ 37	Lord Byron George Chrystal Robin Cook
7=	Stonyhurst College	Independent School	237 (38)	51 (68)	↓ 30	Charles Laughton Arthur Conan Doyle Tim Hetherington
7=	Repton School	Independent School	450 (18)	65 (48)	↓ 30	Jeremy Clarkson Basil Rathbone Roald Dahl
9=	Brighton College	Independent School	196 (42)	52 (64)	↓ 22	George Sanders Graham Kerr Tamzin Merchant
9=	Mill Hill School	Independent School	170 (49)	49 (71)	↓ 22	Francis Crick Denis Thatcher Ernest Satow

COMMENTARY

We looked at the schools who were the biggest fallers from the list of those which had previously been in the Top 50 of *Who Was Who*. Some of the most notable fallers were schools who have, in the past, sought to educate boys (and sometimes girls) from military and religious backgrounds. These falls are likely to be a consequence of the reduction in numbers of military families based overseas which are sending their children back to board in the UK and the fact that the military and the clergy no longer have access to the reduced fees they enjoyed in the past.

This is particularly clear in the case of Number 1 of the fallers, Rossall School, which was established for sons of clergymen and was also the first school in the UK to have a Combined Cadet Force. It was considered to be one of the top thirty public schools in Queen Victoria's reign, yet is now ranked 344th by Times Parent Power. The third entry on the list, the Royal High School, Edinburgh, is thought to have been founded in 1128, making it one of the oldest schools in the world.

A LEVEL RESULTS VS RANKING

A Level Rank	School	Status	*Who Was Who* Entries (rank)	*Who's Who* Entries (rank)	Change in rank
1	King's College London Maths School	State School	-	-	-
2	Magdalen College School	Independent School	97 (82)	56 (58)	↑ 27
3	Brighton College	Independent School	196 (42)	52 (64)	↓ 22
4	St Paul's Girls' School	Independent School	52 (137)	73 (39)	↑ 98
5	St Paul's Boys' School	Independent School	694 (11)	184 (8)	↑ 3
6	King's College School	Independent School	290 (32)	81 (34)	↓ 2
7	Queen Ethelburga's College	Independent School	-	-	-
8	Concord College	Independent School	-	1 (1,716)	↑NA
9	The Godolphin and Latymer School	Independent School	24 (260)	24 (169)	↑ 91
10	St Mary's School Ascot	Independent School	2 (1276)	13 (329)	↑ 947

COMMENTARY

We decided to investigate the Top 10 achievers in terms of A level results versus their *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who* rankings.

Schools leading the way in their A level results do not, as we have already established, necessarily educate lots of people who subsequently achieve entry to *Who's Who*. Indeed only one of the top 10 schools in *Who's Who* (St Paul's Boys' School) appears on this list.

Of the Top 10 scoring schools, six have seen an increase in their ranking from *Who Was Who* to *Who's Who*.

Data: : https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?step=default&table=schools&region=all-england&for=16to18&orderby=ks5.0.TALLPPE_ALEV_1618&orderdir=asc

Desert Island Discs

The Wall Street Journal once asserted, 'What is it that really puts the stamp of eminence on a modern British life? Two things count today: having an entry in *Who's Who* and being asked to choose your eight favourite records on BBC's Desert Island Discs.' This quotation, positioned boldly at the start of this report, led us to be extremely curious about whether there is any correlation between *Who's Who* data and the alma mater of Desert Island Discs interviewees.

The format of Desert Island Discs, for anyone who hasn't yet explored the enormous back catalogue, is that guests are invited to imagine which eight recordings they would choose to take with them as company in the scenario that they're stranded solo on a desert island. They then choose a book and a luxury item, which joins them on the island with the discs and the Bible or another appropriate religious text. To clarify how one gets a slot on Desert Island Discs, the BBC website states: "Castaways are people who've played a significant role in their field or in society and who have a story they're happy to share, and who we feel will appeal to the Radio 4 audience."

We reviewed the schools attended by Desert Island Discs interviewees since the programme began and the top 10 schools attended were remarkably in-line with the *Who's Who* data explored through this report.

Desert Island Discs Rank	School	Status	*Who Was Who* Rank	*Who's Who* Rank
1	Eton College	Independent	1	1
2	Westminster School	Independent	12	4
3	Harrow School	Independent	2	3
4	Charterhouse School	Independent	8	7
5	St Paul's Boys' School	Independent	11	8
6	Dragon School	Independent	915	NA
7	Rugby School	Independent	3	6
8	Marlborough College	Independent	5	5
9	Sherborne Boys' School	Independent	25	13
10	Stowe School	Independent	35	14

Perhaps predictably, given the fact that Desert Island Discs was first broadcast in 1942 when class and gender were bigger obstacles in gaining access to various careers, the Top 10 schools attended by the 3,000+ guests are almost all independent all-boys schools. Eton once again tops the list; with Westminster, Harrow, St Paul's Boys' School, Charterhouse, Rugby and Marlborough all making an appearance on both the Top 10 Independent Schools listed in Who's Who and the Top 10 schools attended by Desert Island Discs interviewees.

It is once again worth noting that whilst many of the schools in the Top 10 are notoriously academically competitive at point of entry, there are schools within the Top 10 who carry a significantly less-demanding entry process. The schools that particularly stand out on this basis are Sherborne and Stowe, both less academic but very much focused

on the all-round, holistic, boarding school education that the UK's independent schools are renowned for. Whilst these schools still provide a high level of academic education, they also look after those who are not so academically inclined, and do not tend to have such high numbers moving on to Oxbridge and equivalent universities.

Dragon School, a Prep School in North Oxford, manages to sneak in as a bit of an anomaly on the list. This is likely down to a few factors, firstly, at 800+ students it is large for a Prep School. It is also a feeder school to top Independent Schools, with a significant proportion of its former pupils going on to a high quality of secondary level education. Regardless of these factors, there is no denying the fact that The Dragon produces a great number of high profile successful alumni in a wide range of fields, from writers (including Sir John Betjeman and Alain de Botton), to politicians (Rory Stewart and Baroness Young), to a remarkable number of well-known actors (Emma Watson, Tom Hiddleston, Max Irons… the list goes on). This is just touching the surface; a review of Notable Old Dragons reflects the variety of fields old boys and girls succeed in. It is worth asking what the school provides that drives this success – is it confidence, early independence through boarding, quality teaching, or access to a wide-range of extra-curricular activities – or a combination!

Conclusion

We hope that the portrait above offers some new insights into the role UK schools play in contributing to the life of the nation. Any conclusions drawn need to be placed firmly in historical and social context.

First, we do not sit in judgement on what counts as 'impact', nor do we necessarily urge families or schools to use it as the barometer by which they make their evaluations of individual schools. The fact that the earlier data is replete with clergymen and army officers reflects society's changing norms and says little about the worth of the individual life then lived. As is detailed above, *Who's Who* also has somewhat idiosyncratic criteria for choosing who merits inclusion. The 'impact' of many businesspeople, sportspeople and celebrities rarely warrants inclusion, whereas that of anyone born with a title automatically, and mysteriously, does. Many might conclude that they would favour a school that produces alumni who keep well out of the *Who's Who* limelight!

Second, this report deliberately does not wade into thorny debates about class and gender in modern Britain. While the top-line figures suggest that many high achievers in modern life can trace the origins of their success back to the playing fields of Eton, there are positive trendlines to observe in the share of state school alumni in *Who's Who* today and the increasing impact on society made by women.

Third, there is a necessary time lag in the data, as many of those who have recently left school will not 'make their mark' for decades to come. In the distant but also fairly recent past, those with 'top' university degrees were often drawn to 'the professions' (finance, law, accountancy, architecture, medicine or engineering). Looking ahead it seems clear that the future of careers in the UK is going to see significant change, with school-age children at top schools expressing a desire to work in STEM or to set up their own companies. But will these go on to have the impact on public life that many of their forebears achieved through more traditional routes? Who will it be who fills the *Who's Who* pages when we come to repeat the research decades hence?

With all that said, the report makes a strong case for the enduring value of an education that is as broad as it is rigorous.

ABOUT KEYSTONE

Founded in 2007, Keystone is one of the UK's leading providers of private tutoring and educational consultancy for families around the world. It is headquartered in London, with subsidiary offices in Hong Kong and Singapore. Its reputation is based off its track record of helping children win places at the most competitive UK schools and universities, or success in top UK exams such as 11+, IGCSE, IB and A Levels.

Read more about Keystone on its website or in its recent Good Schools Guide review.

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Harriet is now using her years of experience to head up Keystone's Consultancy department.

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