

## Beautiful schools

# The beauty parade

Architecture and setting may not be the most important things to look for in a school, but no one can deny the power of a beautiful working environment to inspire and cheer. Here, Geoff Heath-Taylor assembles 16 of the finest-looking schools to grace our land



### Milton Abbey School, Dorset

When it was built by William Chambers in the late 18th century for the 1st Earl of Dorchester, Milton Abbey was probably the grandest house in Dorset. With the ancient abbey as the school chapel and Capability Brown's parkland as the school's grounds, the site's beauty remains undiminished due to the small size of the school—with little more than 200 pupils and 50 staff, there has been no need to develop unsightly classrooms and accommodation blocks. Instead, it's got a farm and a nine-hole golf course and must be one of the loveliest places in England.

(01258 880484; [www.miltonabbey.co.uk](http://www.miltonabbey.co.uk)) >

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## ↑ Stowe School, Buckinghamshire

Although less than 100 years old, ravishingly beautiful Stowe has managed to secure its place as one of the great British public schools and this can be attributed in no small part to its extraordinary setting. Built as the family seat of the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, no other house and garden boasts such a pedigree of architects and landscape gardeners to have worked on it. Vanbrugh, Gibbs, Kent, Adam and Soane all left their mark and the pleasure grounds are perhaps Capability Brown's most admired work. The school leases the house and the grounds, which belong to the National Trust, are open to the public.

(01280 818000; [www.stowe.co.uk](http://www.stowe.co.uk))



## ↑ Stonyhurst College, Lancashire

Stonyhurst, which was founded in the Spanish Netherlands in 1593, before relocating to its current site in 1794, has a grandeur befitting its history as one of Europe's great Jesuit schools. Home to about 450 boys and girls, it was formerly the seat of the Shireburn family and incorporates Elizabethan, Jacobean and Baroque elements. The approach to the school is magnificent, down a long avenue flanked by two enormous, rectangular ponds. The school itself, nestled among trees but with far-reaching views across the Lancashire hills, looks like something from a fairy tale, with copper-domed cupolas, great mullioned windows and a buttressed chapel.

(01254 826345; [www.stonyhurst.ac.uk](http://www.stonyhurst.ac.uk))



## ↑ Eton College, Berkshire

Unlike many other schools, Eton was never a private home, yet it remains virtually unrivalled in its architectural grandeur, with buildings dating from almost every key architectural period over the past 600 years. Founded by Henry VI in 1440, the late-Gothic chapel was intended to be twice its current size, but construction halted when the King was deposed in 1471. Home to more than 1,300 boys, and the *alma mater* of 19 Prime Ministers, two Nobel Prize winners and countless statesman, military leaders, members of royalty and actors, the school's riverside facilities are scattered throughout the delightful town of Eton.

(01753 370100; [www.etoncollege.com](http://www.etoncollege.com))



## ↑ Glenalmond College, Perthshire

Glenalmond holds a commanding position on the banks above the River Almond, eight miles west of Perth. Established in 1847 by William Ewart Gladstone (*above*), four-time Liberal Prime Minister, the first warden was Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St Andrews and founder of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. With Gothic and Baronial influences, a vast Victorian chapel and a cloistered quadrangle, the school's magnificence and grandeur seem only fitting in the great open spaces of Perthshire. Now fully co-educational, Glenalmond is home to about 400 pupils.

(01738 842000; [www.glenalmondcollege.co.uk](http://www.glenalmondcollege.co.uk)) >

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