

# LIVING NORTH

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## Take On Board

To board or not to board, that is the question...



Ayscough School

When it comes to choosing which school your children attend, many factors come into consideration: academic performance, community outreach initiatives, extracurricular activities. But, increasingly, the independence a child will learn alongside their studies is also a point of deliberation for prospective parents. In a world where rapidly-developing technologies are transforming the job market, and where no form of employment ever feels fully secure, it's now more important than ever that our children are learning the life skills – as well as achieving the academic qualifications – that will give them the resilience to go on to be successful in their chosen field. But does a child's freedom only result from them flying the nest?

Well, if you're a boarding school – and many of the leading independent schools in the country are – then the answer is yes. Boarding students at any age are required to take responsibility for their actions and choices and, because parents aren't there to shield them from natural causes and effects, will experience both success and failure in a controlled environment. Boarders are therefore given the opportunity to manage their own lives and, from that constant decision-making, become strong individuals, capable of leadership and initiative. They learn how to live with other students from different backgrounds for extended periods of time, which challenges them to develop their interpersonal skills; day pupils, it could be argued, are simply not challenged in the same way.



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But boarding schools do not only offer benefits to a child's soft skill development; the academic advantages of living on the site of their educational institution can also be significant. The teachers at boarding schools work with their students both in and out of the classroom, sharing meals and participating in extracurricular activities, and often living, as the children do, onsite. They see students in every aspect of school life and can therefore celebrate their strengths and successes with more knowledge of each child. There is much truth in the old adage that 'one wins the battle outside of the classroom', and

being able to congratulate a student on their sporting performance on a Saturday, for example, not only helps to develop their self-confidence, but also ensures that they are more focused in your lesson on the following Monday. What's more, the time that children in day schools spend commuting will already be put to use in the classroom at a boarding school, or through the activities programme. These longer days afford the opportunity to extend academic lessons, to play sports more regularly and to extend the extracurricular provision of a school. In short, it offers children the opportunity to make enhanced progress while having fun.

That's not to say that boarding schools are necessarily always the right choice. There are many things to consider, and the environment which works best for the holistic development of one child may be entirely different to the one which works best for the next. Sometimes it can be difficult for students to adjust to life in boarding schools, away from their loved ones, and this impacts their enthusiasm for learning and participating in activities. But it can't be denied that boarding schools remain an educational option for our children, well worth thinking about.

Particularly when considering their life after school, and how they can best prepare for what true independence will feel like. Research has shown that the move for boarding school students from secondary school to university is often made easier, for example, as they have already established the independence of living away from their families. Their time spent living with others will also have helped to develop their interpersonal skills, and they will have benefited from additional academic and extracurricular opportunities, meaning they have an improved understanding of a work/life balance.

Whichever side of the fence we may fall, what we can agree on is that the world which our children will inherit will be markedly different from that in which we now live, and independence, creativity and adaptability will be even more important. For some students, boarding schools may offer an opportunity to develop these skills while having fun – meaning they will be more capable of steering a successful course through the many challenges that life in this new world will throw at them. It's definitely something to consider.