



BROMSGROVE SCHOOL

ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

For Entry in 2026

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for enquiring about a place at Bromsgrove School for your child. This booklet will help guide you through the admissions procedure and give you some useful background information about the School.

Pupils can gain admission to Bromsgrove School in any year group, but the main points of intake are:

Pre-Preparatory	Nursery and Reception
Preparatory	Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7
Senior	Year 9 and Sixth Form

The Admissions staff are always happy to talk to parents looking for a place outside of these main intake points. They can advise about the availability of places and give guidance about applying for a place. Please do contact them if you require any additional information either before registering for a place or during the application process.

Admissions Contact Details

Email:	admissions@bromsgrove-school.co.uk	
Telephone:	01527 579679	
Mrs Liberty Chance	Admissions Manager UK entrants, day and boarding, Prep international boarders	ext 347
Mrs Jo Courtney	International boarders - Senior School	ext 273
Mrs Tracey Collard	International boarders - Sixth Form	ext 318
Mrs Catherine Giles	International boarders ALP and Summer School	ext 214
Miss Hannah Steer	Visits Co-ordinator	ext 383

VISITS

We encourage prospective families to visit the School. Individual visits will normally include a meeting with the Headmaster (if available, otherwise a Senior Deputy Head), the Headmaster of Prep and Pre-Preparatory School (if appropriate) and other senior staff.

We hold regular open mornings for all sections of the School and are always delighted if families visit for an open morning and then follow that up with an individual visit.

We have a full range of videos, additional to those on our website, which give a taste of School life and which can be sent to you on request.

To organise your visit or to book a place at one of our open mornings, please contact our Visits Co-ordinator, Miss Hannah Steer, on ext 383 or by email at hsteer@bromsgrove-school.co.uk

GUIDELINES FOR ENTRY

All pupils wishing to gain entry to Bromsgrove School must sit our entrance examinations. A registration form must be completed prior to sitting the examination. Following registration, a confidential report from the current school will be requested. Offers of a place will be based on performance in the examination. Other relevant information, such as an educational psychologist's report, may also be taken into consideration.

Entrance examinations are completed online on a given date and time. Details of the entrance examination structure are available from the Admissions Office.

For pupils wishing to enter the Sixth Form from other British schools, admission is based on predicted GCSE results. Sixth Form candidates wishing to be considered for an Academic Scholarship should submit a scholarship application form at the time of registration.

All international pupils, including those for Sixth Form entry, sit our entrance tests in their own country by arrangement with one of our representatives. Alternatively, they may sit the examinations during a visit to Bromsgrove.

The policy for Nursery and Pre-Preparatory admissions can be obtained directly from Mrs Liberty Chance in the [Admissions office](#).

OPEN MORNING DATES

Pre-Preparatory School

Nursery to Year 2

Saturday 27th September 2025

Saturday 24th January 2026

Saturday 6th June 2026

Preparatory School

All Years

Saturday 20th September 2025

Saturday 9th May 2026

Senior School

13+ Entry

Saturday 11th October 2025

GCSE Subject Choices* (Year 8)

Saturday 7th March 2025

Sixth Form Entry

Sixth Form Choices*

Saturday 11th October 2025

Saturday 7th February 2026

*The Sixth Form and GCSE Choices Information Mornings are open to current Bromsgrove pupils and to prospective pupils. They offer an opportunity to meet the Heads of Departments for each faculty and to learn about the courses on offer for GCSE and in the Sixth Form.

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION DATES

13+ Entry and 11+ Entry

(Entry to Year 7 and 9) **

Friday 28th November 2025

Prep School Entry

(Entry to Years 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8)

Saturday 10th January 2026

***Alternative entrance examination dates may be offered at the discretion of the Assistant Head.*

11+ 13+ Scholarship Pathways

Information Morning

Saturday 8th November 2025

For more information about Scholarship Pathways please contact the Admissions office

SCHOLARSHIP PATHWAY PROGRAMME

We offer a **Scholarship Pathways Programme** for pupils in Year 6 and above in preparation for Scholarship awards in the Sixth Form. Pupils in any year group below the Sixth Form may participate. No fee remission is attached to a Scholarship as we believe its integrity lies in its honorary capacity. All scholarships can, however, be underpinned by means-tested bursary assistance.

Our scholars take great pride in their status. They are active members of School life, engaging with peers and teachers participating in teams and ensembles, and motivating those around them. They act as role models inspiring others with the love that they have already developed.

Over a number of years those on the Scholarship Pathways Programme will build up a portfolio of evidence to support their Scholarship application in the Sixth Form.

What we are looking for in the pupils on the Scholarship Pathway Programme is an interest, a talent and a love of learning in whatever discipline that they are excited by, whether that be music, art, drama, sport, design or a particular academic subject. We are not just looking for the brightest talents, but for those who have a spark and great curiosity.

For those accepted onto the Scholarship Pathways Programme we offer dedicated programmes of opportunity and support to help them make the most of their talents.

Academic Scholarship Pathway Programme

Under the guidance of our Master of Scholars and those in the scholarship team in each of our schools, we offer opportunities for pupils to be active participants in the intellectual life of the school. There will be a wide range of suggested competitions, iPQs, HPQs, LAMDA and MOOCS, speakers, reading suggestions, and academic challenges offered throughout the year allowing each Scholarship Pathway Student the opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual curiosity. There will be regular scholars' sessions in addition to Marmite and other extension activities already on offer.

Art and Design Scholarship Pathway Programme

The Art and Design scholarship pathway programme offers talented artists and designers an environment where they can create and exhibit their artistic skills. Pupils will be given opportunities to attend workshops and life drawing classes for Sixth Formers as well as visiting exhibitions and meeting talented artists and designers. Under the guidance of our Heads of Art and Design and Technology, those on the Art or Design Scholarship Pathway programme will be expected to play a full part in the Art and DT life of the School and to be able to articulate and demonstrate a passion for Art and Design.

Sports Scholarship Pathway Programme

Under the guidance of our Directors of Sport and Heads of Boys' and Girls' games in our schools, we offer pathways and links to surrounding county and academy programs. As one of the top performing Sports schools in the country – currently ranked at number 7 out of all UK schools over 26 sports – we offer a testing fixture list in all sports plus national and international tours. We have proven success and experience, regularly competing for National titles as well as producing professional sports people across multiple sports. To support those on the sports scholarship pathway programme we offer support through sports analysis, a physiotherapist, a Head of Athlete development, nutritional and lifestyle advice as well as specialist coaching from our Directors of Sport and external professional coaches. We take a holistic approach balancing both academic and sports needs of each child on the programme.

Places on the Sports Scholarship Pathway programme are awarded to those who demonstrate suitable athletic ability, potential, determination and enthusiasm. We expect those on the Pathway programme to commit to School sport during all three terms, to respond well to guidance, to lead by example as a sporting ambassador of the School and be a positive role model.

Drama Scholarship Pathway Programme

Under the guidance of our Director of Performing Arts, we offer opportunities to those talented in drama to play an active role in the performing arts life of the School, performing in School productions and events. We want pupils on the Scholars Pathway Programme to grow in confidence and develop their skills not only through additional acting and performance opportunities, outside of our main productions and House Drama, but also through taking key mentoring roles within the department, in addition to participating in debating and public speaking.

Music Scholarship Pathway Programme

Under the guidance of our Director of Music, we offer opportunities for those talented in music to play an active role in the musical life of the School, performing in School concerts, productions, recitals and other School events such as Open Mornings. We offer Scholarship Pathway places to those who are likely to become leading contributors to Bromsgrove music. Singers, organists and instrumentalists may apply. "Shortage" instruments may be favoured. Those who are accepted onto the Music Scholarship Pathway may be offered, at the discretion of the Director of Music in the Senior School and the Head of Prep School music, one music lesson a week by our music teachers in a specific instrument. We expect those accepted onto the Scholarship Pathways Programme to contribute fully to the musical life of the School, perform regularly as a soloist and act as an ambassador for the department. Many of our current Music Scholars go on to accept Scholarships at University, such as Oxbridge Choral and Organ awards, or at other prestigious Universities that offer Scholarships, irrespective of academic study subject.

REGISTER YOUR PLACE ON THE ASSESSMENT DAY – SATURDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2025

For children at schools outside the Bromsgrove family considering the Academic scholarship pathway programme, once they have taken their entrance examinations, and we have offered a place, we'll also offer places on the academic scholarship pathway programme for when they start at the School.

For external candidates entering the Sixth Form on either admissions examinations or through GCSE results, they will not have the Scholarship Pathway Programme Portfolio, but can present any achievements they might have achieved outside of School.

For children at schools outside the Bromsgrove family considering the Art, Design, Drama, Music, or Sport scholarship pathway programme they are invited to a Scholarship Pathways Programme Event on the morning of Saturday 8th November. Musicians should bring instruments, Sportsmen/women should be in kit. Everyone else, just bring themselves.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Bromsgrove maintains a number of places for Foundation Scholars at 13+. These awards only operate in respect of day places for those entering the Senior School and preference is given to candidates from Bromsgrove town and the surrounding area. Foundation Scholarships are awarded to very able pupils in need of financial assistance. The maximum award is 50% of the day fee (means-tested), which may be augmented by a further means-tested bursary. Candidates wishing to be considered for a Foundation Scholarship should apply in writing to Miss Rachel Scannell, Assistant Head, at the Senior School. We award one or two Foundation Scholarships a year.

OLD BROMSGROVIAN AWARD

An **Old Bromsgrovian means-tested bursary** is on offer to children or grandchildren of an Old Bromsgrovian. Candidates wishing to be considered for an Old Bromsgrovian Bursary should apply in writing to Miss Rachel Scannell, Assistant Head, at the Senior School.

SIXTH FORM SCHOLARSHIPS 2026

The interviews, examinations, try outs and auditions will take place in the first couple of weeks of the Michaelmas term for students in Year 12.

16+ Academic Scholarship Examination and Interviews Saturday 6th September 2025

Subject Paper (2 hours 15mins) answering on three subjects from the list below; complete a Skills Assessment; interviews with the Master of Scholars and the Headmaster.

Biology	Design and Technology	German	Physics
Business Studies	Economics	History	RE
Chemistry	English	Latin	Spanish
Classical Civilisation	French	Mathematics	
Computer Science	Geography	PE	

If GCSEs have been taken then please bring a copy of your results with you. All candidates should report to Senior School Hospitality Suite at 8.30am. Collection 17.00pm (lunch will be provided):

All the following Assessments take place in the week commencing 1st September:

16+ Music Scholarships and Interviews

In the Sixth Form a minimum of Associated Board Grade 7 in a principal instrument is expected and at least Grade 5 in a second instrument or voice

Auditions

The Music Department will contact applicants concerning the timing of the examination approximately one week in advance. An accompanist will be provided; candidates must send their piano accompaniments to the Music School Administrator before the audition day. At audition, candidates will be expected to:

- Perform two contrasting pieces on their main instrument or voice
- Perform one piece on any additional instruments, or voice
- Take an aural test; sight reading and scales relating to the candidate's most recent grade may be asked for
- Demonstrate their musical aspirations and experiences in a discussion which will include general musical knowledge, music theory and the candidate's interests

16+ Art and Textiles Scholarships and Interviews

The scholarship examination takes the form of a practical test, a piece of written and an interview with the Head of Art. Candidates are required to bring a maximum of two pieces of art and/or textiles work with them to the examination. Pupils are expected to demonstrate a high level of competence in art and design, as well as the ability to articulate their thoughts on both their own work and that of practising artists. Evidence of independently initiated projects, as well as teacher directed work is also highly desirable.

16+ Drama Scholarships and Interviews

At audition, candidates will be expected to:

- Perform a pre-prepared 2 minute piece
- Perform a brief unseen passage
- Undertake a panel interview with the Director of Performing Arts and the Head of Drama to include the presentation of the scholarship pathway portfolio, if an internal candidate.

16+ Sport scholarships and interviews

Candidates are expected to demonstrate a very high-level performance in at least one sport, preferably to regional level. Students will be expected to demonstrate a range of skills and abilities through a number of general tests, as well as having to show their strengths in particular sports. There will be a panel interview with the Directors of Sport and the Heads of Boys' and Girls' games where internal candidates should bring their sports scholarship pathway portfolio with them.

BOARDING and DAY

DAY HOUSES

Senior School

Every Pupil in Bromsgrove Senior School belongs to a House – either day or boarding. Loyalties to the House are strong and there is huge competition between the Houses.

We have three girls' day houses and three boys' day houses, all with approximately 80 pupils, each is run by a Houseparent and their team of tutors. The Houses offer pastoral and academic support and are always the first point of contact for parents with any concerns.

Senior School Day Houses

Girls	Boys
Hazeldene	Lupton
Ottillie Hild	Lyttelton
Thomas Cookes	School House
	Walters

Preparatory School

At Preparatory School pupils belong to a tutor group. In Years 3 and 4 the tutor will also be the class teacher. In the older year groups pupils have a Form tutor. The Class or Form tutor is a parent's first point of contact for any concerns, the Heads of Year and the Deputy Heads are also always available for both pupils and parents, should the need arise.

All pupils in the Preparatory School are in one of six Houses. House competitions run throughout the year, culminating in an end of year winning House. Events include, but are not limited to, major sports, music, drama and academic achievement. The Preparatory School House system is competition based but acts as a precursor to the traditional House system of the Senior School.

BOARDING HOUSES

Pupils board full time, with a limited number of spaces for weekly boarders. The weekly boarding fee includes transport on Monday morning and Friday afternoon. We do not operate exeat weekends, so full time boarders are not required to leave the School at any time during term time, other than for School holidays. This means that there is always a large number of boarders on site and that an exciting activity programme is available to them.

We operate a 'Guardian Angels' holiday scheme every holiday and half term (not including the Christmas holidays or the long summer holidays) which offers boarding pupils the chance to remain at School in a relaxed and friendly environment. The scheme offer a chance for pupils to rest and relax as they would at home.

Bromsgrove School continuously makes investments and improvements into its boarding accommodation and is proud to offer facilities of the very highest standard. A rolling refurbishment programme means that all the boarding accommodation is updated and decorated regularly.

Senior School Boarding Houses:

Oakley	Girls
Mary Windsor	Girls
Elmshurst	Boys
Wendron-Gordon	Boys
Housman Hall	Boys and Girls, Sixth Form only

Preparatory School

Page House and Page Conway Road House cater for around 100 boys and girls aged from seven to thirteen who are cared for by resident Houseparents, supported by a team of tutors and resident staff.

If you are considering a Prep boarding place we can offer taster boarding sessions, subject to spaces being available.

ENTRY PROCEDURE

WHAT	WHEN	INFORMATION
Enquiry	Any time of the year	Please contact Admissions by telephone 01527 579679 or email admissions@bromsgrove-school.co.uk .
Individual Visit	At any time during term time	Please contact Miss Hannah Steer by email at hsteer@bromsgrove-school.co.uk or by phone on ext 383.
Registration	After your visit	Complete online Registration Form and make online payment of the Registration Fee (£120 day place/£240 boarding place); these are needed before we can proceed to request confidential school reports from current schools.
Entrance Examinations	November for 11+ & 13+ candidates, Lent Term for all other candidates	Alternative entrance examination dates may be offered at the discretion of the Assistant Head. All examinations are held at Bromsgrove School. For Sixth Form candidates, entry is dependent on achieving specific GCSE grades.
Taster Days and Nights	Prep boarding candidates may have a taster session (space allowing) after registration and before accepting a place. Taster days are available for Pre-Preparatory applicants	The Admissions office will advise on the availability of dates for boarder taster sessions.
Places Offered and Accepted	Lent Term for all points of entry	Acceptance of a place is required within twenty-one days of the offer being made.

DATA PROTECTION

The admissions forms which you complete give us lots of personal information about you and your child. Your child's former school also gives us information about your child. Like other organisations, we need to keep this information safe, up to date, only is for what we said we would, destroy it when we no longer need it and most importantly, treat the information we get fairly. For more information about how the School will use your information, and your child's information, please see our Pupil Privacy Notice and our Parent Privacy Notice. Both of these documents are published on the School website www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk. If your child is aged 12 years or over he/she has the maturity to exercise his/her own data protection rights, please discuss the Pupil Privacy Notice with him/her. If you have any questions about our Privacy Notices, please contact the School's Bursar.

FEES as of September 2025

DEPOSITS

Registration Fee

Day Place	£120
Boarding Place	£240

Acceptance Deposit

Day Place / Forces Boarder	£500*
Boarding Place	£3,000*
(parents resident in, and fees paid from, Europe)	

Additional Deposit

Non-European Boarder	£12,095*
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*this amount is refunded once the final term's fees and extras have been settled.

FEES

SENIOR SCHOOL

Fees per term inc. VAT

All Years	Day	£8,100 (including lunches)
	Weekly Boarder	£12,006
	Boarder	£18,114

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Years 3 – 6	Day	£5,646 (including lunches)
	Weekly Boarder	£8,586
	Boarder	£11,772

Years 7 & 8	Day	£7,320 (including lunches)
	Weekly Boarder	£10,398
	Boarder	£14,520

PRE-PREP

Reception	£3,918
Years 1 & 2	£4,320

Aftercare is available from 3.15pm to 6.00pm at £9.00 per hour.

Nursery Fees and Government funding information is available from the Admissions Manager on request

ADDITIONAL CHARGES

Music Charges

Per 40 or 30 minute lesson (inclusive of VAT)	£41.00/£30.75
Hire of Instrument per term	£38.50

Five 'teaching weeks' notice is required for cessation of music lessons and such notice must be given to the Director of Music.

BURSARY INFORMATION

For decades Bromsgrove has been committed to helping those pupils who would benefit from a Bromsgrove education but whose parents or guardians cannot afford full fees. These annual awards are means-tested and reviewed on an annual basis.

This academic year we are going to prioritise the bursary funds to those families already at the School who face financial pressures and/or hardship due to the impact of VAT being added to School fees.

TRANSPORT

As well as our own fleet of minibuses we contract with companies such as BNC Taxis and Aston Coaches to provide a daily service to and from School. The daily routes are organised to accommodate the geographical spread of pupils and can vary from term to term, depending on the location and numbers of pupils requiring transport and the length of the journey involved. All drivers and contract company staff hold an enhanced DBS Disclosure. School drivers are assessed by the LEA for driving competence and their health is checked on an annual basis.

The School transport service currently covers the following areas:

Halesowen/Edgbaston
Hall Green/Cotteridge/Northfield
Solihull/Knowle
Worcester/Droitwich/Hanbury
Earlswood/Dickens Heath/Wythall/Rowney Green/Alvechurch
Henley in Arden/Danzey Green/Tanworth in Arden/Beoley/Tardebigge
Ardens Grafton/Inkberrow/Redditch
Stourbridge
Hartlebury/Kidderminster/Chaddesley Corbett
Rubery/Barnt Green/Blackwell
Stratford/Wilmcote/Redditch
Hagley/Blakedown/Belbroughton

To secure a place on our daily bussing, a minimum of five journeys per week need to be booked.

The Transport Manager, Mrs Rachel O'Neill, is happy to talk to parents requiring more information. Mrs O'Neill can be contacted by email on roneill@bromsgrove-school.co.uk or by phone on ext 256.

Bromsgrove was inspected by the Good Schools Guide in June 2023, their full report is below:

Headmaster

Since 2022, Michael Punt MSc PGCE, previously head of Chigwell School and before that, academic deputy at The Perse. An Essex boy, he was educated at Brentwood School, did his physics degree at Oxford and a master's in semiconductor science from Imperial, which led to an initial career in the electronics materials industry. Finally gave into his 'calling' in 1993 at St Dunstan's in London, which he combined with an on-the-job PGCE. He is an ISI inspector and vice-chair of the HMC Pastoral Committee.

As we sit and chat on the Chesterfields in his large, immaculate office, he radiates Labrador-like enthusiasm about the school: 'It's just such an exciting place!' There's a kindness, soft edge and sociability that pupils feel has lightened the mood. They particularly appreciate that he and his family (wife, Gill, and their two sons; the other one is at uni) eat with the boarders at least four times a week, and that he 'often does the rounds of lunch tables too.' 'A real people person,' agree parents. No walkover, though, with parents telling us he has 'flexed his muscles around a few discipline issues – within a few weeks, he got rid of several people, which was absolutely needed.' Doesn't currently teach, 'but I'm not ruling it out.'

No sweeping changes on the cards but keen to make 'pastoral care even better and the academics even more solid.' Staff can be sure to be kept on their toes. Loves the great outdoors, especially walking and cycling.

Entrance

At 13+, CAT 4 tests and an essay. Three-quarters come from the school's two preps – no automatic entry, but parents say they're given ample warning and advice if a child is unlikely to be accepted. The remaining quarter – around 50 students – come mostly from middle schools in the state sector, others from local preps. Around two applicants per place. Small intake of 25 students into year 10, and around 30 international students join at year 11 for the Accelerated Learning Programme – a one-year course preparing students for an English education in the IB or A levels; two-thirds of these students transfer into sixth form (more stay than intend to).

Around 80 join the sixth form, where A level/BTEC candidates need an average of grade 6 across their GCSEs (7s in any A levels to be studied), while for IB students it should be nearer grade 7.5/8 or equivalent. Not set in stone, though – 'there's flexibility,' says head.

Exit

A mere two per cent, if that, leave after GCSEs – that's far better retention than most local independents and when you see the sixth form offering, it's easy to see why. Over 95 per cent to university, the rest into employment, an apprenticeship degree (most recently, Jaguar Land Rover) or a gap year. The London universities, notably UCL and King's College London, are popular, as are Cardiff, Reading, Bath and Bristol. Five medics in 2022, and one off to Oxford. Significant numbers overseas: mostly to the US (some big names such as Columbia and Vassar), a couple to Toronto and Hong Kong, yet another handful to European destinations eg IE Madrid. Courses are as diverse as the student body, with economics, engineering, business, psychology and law all popular. Top-drawer careers advice, say students – well-staffed, including visiting speakers, good links with alumni and plenty of one-to-ones and interview practice.

Teaching and learning

Breadth, flexibility and support are the stars of the show. Impressively, A level, IB and BTEC all on offer in sixth form, and students rave about how they can choose any combination of subjects, swap subjects as late as the end of lower sixth or trade in an A level for a BTEC (they run them in sport and business). A levels get the biggest take-up, and students like that you get two teachers per subject ('gives a broader perspective'). They start with four subjects, usually swapping one for an EPQ just before Christmas (or why not try the school's new cyber security alternative?). School happy to run A levels for just one or two students, currently the case with German and classics. Maths, economics and business flourish. Science is big and getting bigger. Computer science introduced at years 9 and 11 and starting to feed through into subject choices. The IB group of around 130

students (across the two years) are closeknit and say the teaching is 'amazing.' Virtually all those that take BTEC get double distinctions.

Students hit the ground running with the GCSE syllabus, stretching the curriculum over three, not two, years. Means 'you get to ditch the subjects you don't like' and 'you really get to know the content inside out,' say students. Still, 13+ is young to specialise, so what if you regret your choices? 'You just change them,' shrugged one. Everyone has to take a language (out of French, German or Spanish – and you can also do beginners' courses), and two-thirds take triple science. Business, PE and geography all popular. Maths results dazzle. School has just brought in the HPQ. Loose setting in English, maths and science.

While not an academic powerhouse, every department provides stretch. In biology, we spotted noticeboards promoting Olympiad preparation, support surgeries, beekeeping activities and biology all-stars, plus all the latest journals on display. Latest thought-provoking content is laminated and displayed, alongside reminders of curriculum content. Saturday morning academic catchups run across all subjects all year round – particularly popular in the leadup to exams. Oxbridge preparation also available, along with other academic interest groups.

Every student brings a device, but not to the detriment of good old pen and paper. 'Where devices have really transformed things,' says school, 'is in how students store information and reflect on it.' Regular 'teacher meets' mean teachers do a 'lot of thinking about how we teach.' Lots of homework and testing, say students, and tons of feedback – 'really specific and constructive.' Everyone is under the microscope here.

It was exam season when we visited, so it was either heads down, immersed in test papers, or revision sessions where we noted collaborative, stress-free and tailored teaching – and above all, real focus. Except in one classroom, where younger ones were energetically competing in a digital maths quiz – 'They've just finished their exam!' explained the teacher over the noise.

Learning support and SEN

Vast majority of the 100 or so on the SEN register are at the milder end and supported in the classroom 'with extra help around the edges,' which can include one-to-ones (included in fees). A handful drop a GCSE to do extra learning support. The learning resources centre, split over three levels, stays open until 9pm and at weekends. 'They come up with a really specific plan called a provision map,' said one parent, who added that, 'If my son has any issues, the SENCo really bats for him – for example, if a teacher expects him to copy off the board, she's there dealing with it straightaway.' Between 350-400 students have EAL, just under half of whom receive support – value added for this group is outstanding.

The arts and extracurricular

Expect long days. 'My child is worn out by Sunday,' said one more than one parent (a good or bad thing, depending on your outlook). From 4-5.15pm daily, there timetabled activities. For year 9s, these could be anything from writing CVs to Bromsgrove Badge (feeds into CCF, which is compulsory from year 10), music, sport and drama. Or why not choose from one of the 350+ clubs, which also run before school and at lunchtimes? You could build and race an electric car, do beekeeping, gardening, debating, play golf, go horse riding or join (or set up) an academic society, to name a few. There are always various service projects on the go, plus Young Enterprise, DofE and Model United Nations. However hidden your talents, this school will find them.

High standards in drama (department is located in the prep and shared with them), with an annual senior school production and others for years 9 and 10 and again for sixth form. House drama, plus opportunities to learn about eg lights and sound. Music on an upwards trajectory. The department (located in senior school and shared with prep), welcomed us with spine-tingling sounds of accomplished singing. There are girls' and boys' separate choirs, chamber choir, an orchestra and 30 ensembles and bands, including pop and jazz – the latter driven by the pupils and often celebrating different cultures. Around a third learn an instrument, with at least one piano per boarding house. One student was excited that smaller lunchtime concerts are making a return.

Spectacular art and DT building, with modern warehouse vibe – 'the reason I chose the school,' said one of our guides. Stunning product design displays of roller skates, lamps, furniture etc downstairs, while upstairs textiles, photography and art, craft and design are offered as separate specialisms. Sixth form get their own gallery and workspace where 'we go to them to teach, not the other way round – like a foundation course,' says school. Good

to see collaboration between the two departments (eg an art project involving laser cutting) but we'd like to have seen more art around the school – 'We're on it,' said head of art, who agreed.

All the usual sports and cultural tours, plus curriculum-based and teambuilding. Coming up next: South Africa for rugby, Costa Rica for World Challenge (runs every two years), Malaysia and Singapore for netball. All of year 9s camp in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.

Sport

Huge, but not the be-all-and-end-all. 'Sport is really not our son's thing but there's so much else going on for him that it hasn't mattered at all,' said a parent. Historically, a rugby school, with an elite rugby pathway that alone attracts some parents. But Bromsgrove brings home the silverware in other sports too - hockey and cricket (boys) and hockey, netball and athletics (girls). Cross-country, football, tennis, squash, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, fencing, basketball and swimming all feature too. A-D teams fielded every Saturday – typically 35 teams playing at any one time, against the likes of Oundle and Oakham. Say goodbye to your Saturdays, say students – 'We travel far.' Too far, groaned some, 'but it's worth it,' they quickly added on reflection. Praise for the coaching ('My daughter had never played volleyball and now she's on the school team') and a shout out for the physio ('I injured my knee and they gave me a whole stretching routine'). But comms around matches – and who is playing – could be less last minute, feel some.

Fabulous sports facilities, as you'd expect – includes an indoor arena with pull-out seating for 400 where the national indoor hockey finals take place. The pool and gym are open at weekends for boarders, and the Rylands Centre with - a 400m running track – has been acquired by the school, 'so athletics is done properly now.'

Boarders

Thirteen day and boarding houses are a mix of new and old, each with its own identity and reputation as the sporty one, arty etc one (although this changes each year). So even if you don't board (just over half don't), your house is where you start your day for 'roll call' and where you can spend breaktimes and 'frees.' School picks your house for you (bearing in mind family links) and house loyalty is instilled through events such as drama, singing, sports, ball etc. Sixth formers get their own co-ed house (rest are single sex) just over the road, although some decide not to leave their first boarding house, home from home, by that stage. Around two-thirds of boarders are international – a quarter Chinese, a fifth European and the rest a mix of over 55 nationalities.

All houses boast plush common rooms with comfy seating, snooker tables etc. All have kitchens, though boarders eat in the main dining room (most rate the breakfasts and lunches, but not the dinners – 'the menu is so repetitive'). The older you are, the more likely you are to get a single room, otherwise it's first dibs on the doubles. Biggest dorms are four-bed. All are ensuite. 'Are you fussy about tidiness?' we asked a houseparent. 'Oh yes!' she said, and you can tell. After activities, it's free time until dinner at 6pm, then silent prep from 7-9pm. From year 11, you get to keep your phone overnight. On Sundays, it's brunch followed by activities such as bowling, cinema, day out in Birmingham etc. Some feel there could be more downtime.

Each house has its own internal family structure, with older students looking out for younger ones. House parents well thought of - one student said her whole house cried when theirs recently left. House tutor groups, mostly around 11, have an hour session timetabled a week, plus Wednesdays before school. 'Means they know them well,' said a parent.

Ethos and heritage

Gratefully accept one of their glossy, branded maps if you're offered one – we couldn't even locate our car when it was time to leave. Not that the expansive, 100-acre campus is a bad place to get lost, with the variously aged buildings and manicured gardens looking magnificent on the summer's day we visited (although a few students grumble that 'you can't walk on the grass unless you're a monitor or staff' and 'there's no free play or recreational sports allowed at breaktimes'). Inside is equally well-maintained, with large, well-ordered classrooms and wide corridors. When we fell upon an untypically tired looking IT suite, a teacher promptly pointed out that it was due for an imminent refurb – perhaps she spotted our surprise. Students have three assemblies a week, one in the chapel, and there's a popular café, open all day, for older pupils. The large, well-stocked multi-storey library deserves a mention, as does the modern, uni-style lecture theatre and lovely little school museum. The local community uses the sports and performing arts facilities.

The mood is energetic, hardworking and busy, with students walking briskly and purposefully to lessons (and even more so to lunch) and packing a lot in their days. Those we dined with were done and dusted within 10 minutes, despite large plates of food. But who can blame them for wolfing down the 'proper' fish and chip shop fodder, with beautifully presented salads and puds?

Pastoral care, inclusivity and discipline

The medical centre – complete with wellbeing nurse, residential nurse and visiting counsellors - is a key touchpoint for students in need of support. Tutors are 'very supportive,' they also told us. Students say staff 'really listen' and there's a programme of talks, including from visiting speakers, and no-holds-barred approach to tackling teenage issues.

Self-discipline and organisational skills are essential attributes at Bromsgrove, report parents, 'which can be a struggle for some' (although students say the school helps via eg roll calls, helpful reminders and visual timetables). Towing the line is also a prerequisite: 'They like things done the right way, including uniform and hair looking tidy and polite, well-mannered people,' said a parent. Some students feel a few of the rules could be adapted for modern times, especially around haircuts ('Let's hope that hair grows back behind your ears for commemoration, young man,' we heard a staff member saying) and skirt lengths ('Strictly below the knee, we are told, but there's not much give in them so that makes it difficult to walk in them!'). There is the usual tiered detention system, and up to 10 students are suspended or excluded a year. Very little debate around drugs or sex – you are out. 'Occasionally things could have been handled better,' felt one parent, 'but even then, the school will listen and say, "Fair enough, we'll do better next time."'

There's an LGBTQ+ group and students feel it's a comfortable place to be gay, trans etc. 'But I think it could be more comfortable,' says head, who has supported a pupil-led launch of a 'Bring your whole self to Bromsgrove' initiative to further improve inclusivity in what is a relatively traditional environment. He has also introduced 'coffee chats' where students invited to challenge the school with questions like 'Why isn't being gay covered in PSHE?' and 'Why can't I play basketball if I'm a girl?' There's a multi-faith prayer room, and students feel different ethnicities, cultures and religions mix well.

Pupils and parents

Pleasingly, there's no Bromsgrove type, although all the students we met were articulate and courteous - a real asset to the school. Hats off to the student who made a point of coming to say hello when he recognised us in a restaurant the following day. Parents are, as one put it, 'a real eclectic mix of working-class Brummies to well-to-do Cotswoldians.' Perhaps not as much old money as you might expect, with quite a few Forces families and many making big sacrifices. As one such parent told us, 'There are people driving cars worth more than my house, but the vast majority live in the real world and most of the rich ones don't throw it in your face.' The diversity and global outlook that the international boarding community brings is a pull for local families. Plenty of boarders from closer to home too - the location, in a medium-sized town in central England, is ideal for all four

The last word

If you want to spend your weekends and evenings on a couch, the Bromsgrove experience would be wasted on you. This is a 'full on' school best suited to naturally busy people, whose glittering prize is a vast and inspired array of extracurricular and an imaginative approach to academic stretch. No wonder students head, full throttle, to reach their potential and beyond. A work hard, play hard environment with all the bells and whistles –and all in a glorious setting.