



'The UK Boarding Schools Specialist'

Breaking Down Boarding School Fees

When it comes to British Boarding School fees, many parents view them with two primary questions in mind. What is the quality and value of boarding school education that I'll be receiving (in exchange for the fees I'm paying) and how high is the potential gain likely to be on this long-term investment? While the answer to the second question contains too many variables to weigh up here, we can gain a clearer idea from the first question by breaking down a school's fees structure and better understanding what your paid tuition fees typically go towards.

Let's start with staff salaries because this is what roughly 70% of a school's budget is invested in. A reputable boarding school producing strong all-round results (both inside and outside of the classroom) and an impressive list of school leaver destinations year in year out, will have invested upwards of two thirds of their operating budget in teaching staff and related insurance and pension schemes. A full-time roster that contains graduates from Oxbridge and Russell Group level universities who are experienced, dynamic, motivated and highly qualified. From a parent's perspective, they'll be wanting to know if the pupil-teacher ratio is around the average 8:1 mark (or even lower) and whether their child's teachers will be easily accessible. If it's a firm 'yes' to both, then this automatically has a favourable impact on the quality and value for money question posed earlier.

Next up, **12%-15% of fees will go towards the upkeep of a school's buildings and facilities.** By their very nature, a boarding school will have a lot of buildings needing ongoing maintenance. At the same time, it's becoming more and more of a balancing act as schools try to retain their external character and 'Hogwarts' appearance while also providing facilities and opportunities that reflect today's rapidly changing world. Recreational facilities, clean and modern boarding houses, sixth-form centres, fully equipped IT Hubs and Art & Design and Design Technology Rooms to name just a few. In turn, administrative systems need to be technologically up to date and teaching staff will require IT, updated laboratories, resource centres and equipment and materials to stay ahead in their disciplines. The easiest way to estimate how much value for money a parent is receiving, based on how a school presents itself and the range of opportunities on offer to pupils, is to simply arrange a school visit so you can see for yourself. Should further convincing be needed, an appointment with the school's bursar should be made along with a request to see the latest set of accounts.

5% is allocated each to teaching resources, food and utilities though as schools start to realise just how much importance is placed on the weekly menu by overseas (and prospective) students, this figure is likely to rise. After adding the various other cost categories such as IT, laundry, medical services, professional charges and miscellaneous expenses, together with the cost of scholarships and bursaries, there isn't much left for further development (which is normally left to fundraising efforts).

Schools with income from other means or endowments, such as property, are fortunate as are those with well-established traditions and reputations to draw upon. Location also helps and boarding schools within easy reach of airports, train stations and large-scale conveniences have advantages over those in more remote areas, attractive though their locations may be. Having said that, **running costs** will be inevitably higher for schools in the south-east of England due to the higher cost of living and proximity to London. This can, and often does, have a knock-on effect.

So, there you have it. If the average tuition fee is £11,000 per term or £33,000 per year, more than half of this will go towards the school's staffing costs with the next largest chunk allocated to maintenance. Thanks to increased regulatory scrutiny, stricter operational guidelines and greater transparency, it's easier now than ever before to see where and how your paid tuition fees are being utilised.