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## London's 10 super state schools

Sorry, public schools, even Michael Gove has chosen a state education for his daughter. Joshi Herrmann gives 10 institutions an excellent report

Earlier this week thousands of London parents discovered which secondary school their sons and daughters will have the good (or in some cases, less good) fortune to attend.

Amid warnings that pressure on places is beginning to rival that of primary admissions in the capital, one youngster — Beatrice Gove — would have been forgiven for feeling more pressure than her peers.

Her dad, Michael Gove, had indicated that he would become the first Conservative Education Secretary to send his offspring to a state school, and reports over the weekend suggested that Holland Park, west London's "socialist Eton", was one of the family's six choices.

In fact, Grey Coat Hospital — a high-performing Christian academy school in Westminster — will be responsible for educating Beatrice. "Let's be clear," Gove's wife Sarah Vine wrote in her newspaper column yesterday, "the Grey Coat Hospital (in Westminster) is not exactly Sinkhouse High".

This time last year we learned that Nick Clegg and his wife Miriam González Durántez were sending their son to Fulham's London Oratory School, the strict Catholic outfit chosen by the Blairs for their children.

Holland Park, Grey Coat and the Oratory, which regularly send their best students to Oxbridge and universities of the Ivy League, are three of a growing group of London schools thought of by parents as equal or superior to local private establishments.

With famous parents and high-achieving alumni, London's non-selective "super states" are a far cry from Vine's description of Hammersmith and West London Comprehensive in the Eighties, "where being able to spell your own name was considered a mark of genius".

They are the leading schools named by Tatler in its first-ever state-schools guide last year — the publication of which demonstrated better than anything the blossoming love affair between the middle classes and state education.

Alastair Campbell's oft-quoted claim that New Labour was consigning the "bog-standard comprehensive" to history may not apply universally quite yet, but the parents whose little ones won admission to these state-funded palaces of learning (one of which was attended by Campbell's wife Fiona Millar in its previous incarnation as a grammar) will be the happiest Londoners around this week.

### **Camden School For Girls NW5**

**USP:** Founded by a suffragette, it has a reputation for advancing women's learning and rates as one of the best comprehensives in the land, with the best A-level scores in Camden outside the private sector.

**Famous alums:** Sarah Brown, Lily Donaldson, Geri Halliwell and Emma Thompson.

### **Holland Park W8**

**USP:** An £80 million building, a competition-sized swimming pool and a reputation — admittedly won in the Sixties and Seventies before a subsequent slide in performance — as "the socialist Eton".

**Famous alums:** Anjelica Huston, Hilary Benn, Omid Djalili, Miquita Oliver.

### **St Marylebone C of E W1**

**USP:** Arty enough to have educated Naomie Harris and Lily Cole, it is girls only until sixth form and described by the Good Schools Guide as an "exceptional, successful inner-city school serving a diverse community with a strong middle-class core".

**Famous alums:** Naomie Harris, Lily Cole.

#### **London Oratory SW6**

**USP:** Tutors to the children of the Blairs, the Cleggs and the Harmans, its mix of Catholic discipline and academic rigour is so sought-after that Tatler says “you practically have to have the Pope on speed-dial”.

**Famous alums:** Hayley Atwell, Simon Callow.

#### **West London Free W6**

**USP:** The offer of a “classical liberal education” with small classes and an old-fashioned curriculum this year attracted an amazing 1,125 applications for its 120 places.

**Famous alums:** It only opened in 2011 but its founder, the Tory journalist and author Toby Young, is sure to attract ambitious parents to his pet project.

#### **Grey Coat Hospital SW1**

**USP:** A strong Christian ethos attracts parents like the Goves to this girls’ school, which sits in the top 20 per cent of state schools on the basis of A-level and GCSE results — quite an achievement given that 26 per cent of its students are eligible for free school meals (equal to the national average).

**Famous alums:** Tamsin Dunwoody.

#### **Mossbourne E5**

**USP:** So spectacular was its turnaround that its former head Sir Michael Wilshaw is now the Chief Inspector of Schools in England and head of Ofsted.

**Famous alums:** It only opened in 2004, on the site of the former Hackney Downs School.

#### **Waldegrave TW2**

**USP:** A girls’ school to the age of 16, it feeds many ambitious and well-drilled girls into private institutions, one parent telling the Good Schools Guide that “decent folk will be prepared to break all sorts of rules to get their daughters in”.

**Famous Alums:** Caroline Flint and Dianne Jackson attended its fore-runner schools.

#### **Ashmole N14**

**USP:** Described by the Good Schools Guide as “slick, sensible and effective”, it has produced show business names aplenty.

**Famous alums:** Amy Winehouse, Rachel Stevens.

#### **Fortismere N10**

**USP:** A favourite of north London Lefties because it is a descendant of the experimental Creighton comprehensive.

**Famous alums:** Rod Stewart and Maurice Saatchi attended the schools Fortismere subsumed.