



YOUR GUIDE TO SENIOR SCHOOL TRANSFER

TOP TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THE PROCESS

**ST MARGARET'S PREP
SCHOOL**





"Education is not the filling of a pail, but a lighting of a fire."

W.B YEATS



INTRODUCTION

We know you want the very best for your child, so our aim with this guide is to help provide you with the advice and guidance and the benefit of our experience to make the transition to Senior School as easy as possible.

Working together in a clear, transparent and timely way, we can make sure that you feel you are asking the right questions, receiving the right advice and ultimately making the very best decision for your child's future success and happiness.

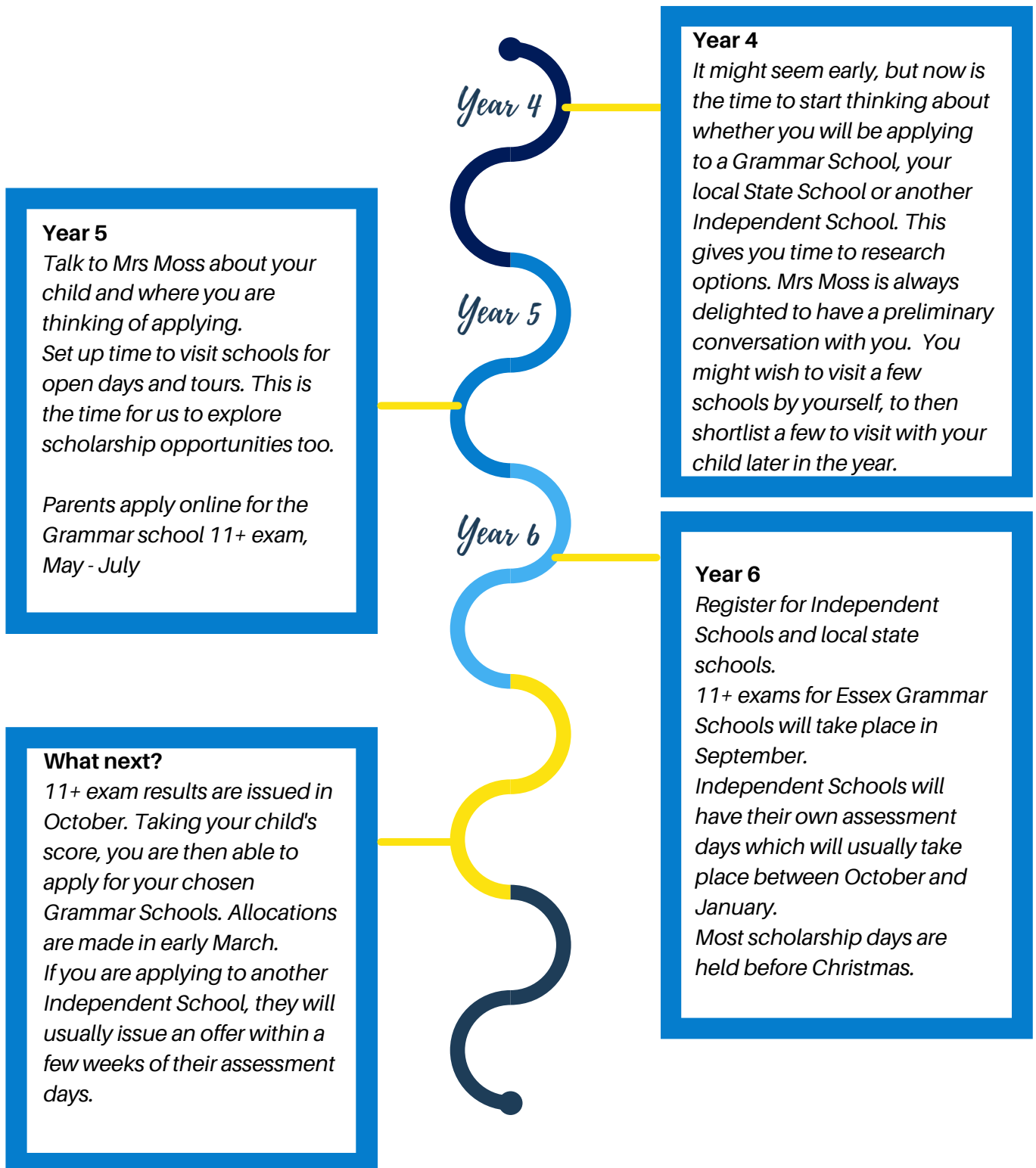


Working at St Margaret's for more than 15 years, I have been proud to see pupils progress to some of the UK's finest schools. Knowing that they have achieved their best and are starting an exciting journey to young adulthood is what inspires our team to continually deliver the very best. We look forward to working with you and your child on the next step in their educational journey.

G. Moss

TIMELINE

Understanding the timeline and process for applying to Senior Schools can help to ensure it is as stress-free as possible.



TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

Some schools use GL, CEM or ISEB assessments, although many will choose to combine the two or use another type of exam altogether. Although GL and CEM broadly cover the same topics there are differences in the way they work and can have an impact on how your child prepares. Secondary



GL Assessment

- Covers English, Maths, Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning/Spatial Awareness
- Most exam papers are either standard format (where answers are written in spaces next to the question) or multiple choice
- The length of the papers vary, although 45 minutes is the average.

ISEB

- Comprises Maths, English, Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning
- All 4 tests take about 2.5 hours
- Tests are online and adaptive
- Multiple choice format
- Candidates only sit test once, the results are shared by ISEB to all registered secondary schools
- Pupils need to watch the timings carefully.

CEM

- Originally developed by the University of Durham to discourage 'teaching to the test'
- Covers Verbal Reasoning, Non-Verbal Reasoning and Numerical Reasoning
- CEM papers are mixed. One exam combines English and Verbal Reasoning, and another covers Maths with Non-Verbal Reasoning. Standard format or multiple choice
- Timings are allocated to each question and children will need to carefully manage their time.

Own Tests

- These are hugely varied but all contain maths and English
- They may contain a 30 minute essay
- Maths and English are standard in all own tests
- Some schools use Verbal Reasoning and some may use Non-Verbal Reasoning.

WHICH AREAS WILL BE ASSESSED?

1

English

Tests your child's English skills through:

- Comprehension exercises - reading texts and answering questions
- Writing tasks
- Punctuation and grammar problems
- Spelling tasks - spotting incorrect spellings



2

Maths

Tests your child's ability to think mathematically and calculate. They will need to:

- Have a good understanding of number relationships, measurement, mental arithmetic, geometry and data handling
- Know and apply their multiplication tables
- Be able to apply the four number operations accurately (+ - x /), including decimals



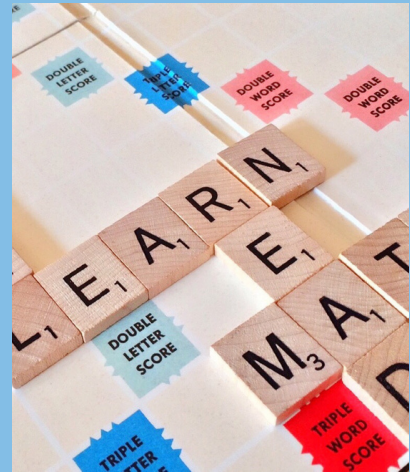
WHICH AREAS WILL BE ASSESSED?

3

Verbal Reasoning

Verbal Reasoning assesses children's problem-solving skills when working at speed and how effectively they can process verbal information. The test will require them to:

- Apply logical thinking
- Find and follow patterns and rules
- Determine word meaning
- Spell accurately
- Apply basic maths skills
- Work systematically



4

Non-Verbal Reasoning



Non-Verbal Reasoning is used to determine your child's potential to think logically and recognise patterns. They will need to:

- Process pictorial information
- Understand how objects relate to each other in space
- Find and follow patterns and rules
- Apply maths skills like rotation, reflection and symmetry

WHICH AREAS WILL BE ASSESSED?

5

Non-Cognitive skills

Many schools have now started to introduce an additional element to their assessment process, to test a child's ability to think creatively, to problem solve and to communicate effectively.

This is usually not something that can be prepared for, which is why schools like to use it as a good measure of a child's spontaneous critical thinking skills.



6

Informal observations of behaviour



Although not part of the formal assessment process, schools will be looking at informal behaviours in order to make decisions about the whole child and their fit within the school and cohort. Behaviours such as conversation, the ability to listen and receive instruction, their relationships with others and table manners will all feed into a school's decision-making process when competition for places is high.

WHICH AREAS WILL BE ASSESSED?

7

Presentations Rehearsals

Many schools include presentations and interviews as part of the process. Mrs Moss undertake interview practices with each pupil to ensure they are prepared



8

Scholarships



Scholarship applications take preparation and a sound knowledge and love of the subject. Children will be required to show that their passion for the subject extends to outside school.

Do speak to Mrs Howells if your child is considering an Art Scholarship. She will advise you on the requirements of a portfolio.

For children exploring a Music Scholarship, ensure they are involved in the school orchestra, musical groups and choirs both inside and outside school. Mrs Morgan and Dr Fraser can advise and support with this.

For Drama and Dance, pupils need to prepare pieces for their drama and dance assessment and belong to a theatre group outside school. LAMDA exam success is very useful. Mrs Gostelow will be able to advise and support you.

A passion for, and an ability in sport is essential for a scholarship. Sport is assessed through observation, references (from school and external coaches) and a portfolio. Do speak to Mrs Weaver and Mr Lunn for further information

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to Senior Schools, so taking your time to find the right fit will be important.

Understanding your child, and how to get the best from them will help you determine which school feels right.



Talk to us

In March each year, we offer various ways to explore senior schools. One year there will be senior school presentations and the following year, a talk on negotiating the process. Throughout the year, you can arrange 1:1 meetings to talk in details about your aspirations for your child with Mrs Moss. She is delighted to meet with you as many times as needed to help you through this process. Please just email Mrs Walker corinne.walker@stmargaretsprep.com for an appointment.

Understanding your child's academic profile

In those meetings, we'll talk you through your child's academic profile. Using their CAT 4 scores, we'll discuss any differences in performance across the four sets of data and how to interpret the information.

From experience, we will know what kind of CAT 4 range each Senior School will accept, so we can give appropriate advice as to where your child is positioned academically.

Your child's attitude to learning is a key part of the puzzle, so we will talk you through how they apply themselves in specific subject areas.

In discussion with you, we can suggest which schools might nurture both their academic and extra-curricular talents.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

What are your child's strengths? Which areas require more support?

Knowing your child's strengths and areas for support will help you ask the right questions when you visit Senior Schools. Some schools may or may not be right for your child so we can help to guide you on the areas in which they excel and the kind of environment we can see them flourishing in.

If your child works with Mrs Blackburne, we would involve her in the discussion so she can provide her advice and how to submit requests for access arrangements.

What is your child's preferred learning style?

Knowing how your child learns best will be important when it comes to selecting a school. We'll be able to talk you through what kind of learner your child is, and what style of teaching gets the best from them. Your child's attitude to learning, their ability to work independently and in teams, and their use of technology will all help to build up a picture of the kind of environment you should be looking for and the right questions to ask.

What are your child's extracurricular talents and aspirations?

You'll know which sports, clubs and extra-curricular activities are a big part of your child's life - so making sure they can continue these passions with like-minded friends will be an important part of your decision-making process.



"Just remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else."

MARGARET MEAD

SELECTING SCHOOLS



What is the school's ethos? Does it 'feel' like a school in which your child will flourish?

Don't overlook your instincts when it comes to the 'feel' of a school. You will know if a school feels right for your child. Although it may be tempting to apply for the same schools as their current friends, it may not be the right pace, or stretching enough, so being clear with yourself about what feels right will be really important. All children develop, find new friendships and hold on to the important ones from primary school irrespective of the senior school they attend.

What is the learning environment like? Will it suit your child's learning style?

Does your child learn well independently, or do they thrive on teamwork and the opportunity to tackle a problem as a group? Are lessons practical, hands-on and experiential? Does the school use technology to support each lesson? All important questions to ask to build up a picture of the way they teach and if that is likely to inspire your child.

How does the school teach soft/non-academic skills?

It is now well known that universities and employers seek young people with the soft skills to work collaboratively, lead empathetically and be cognitively flexible. Ask each school how they build those opportunities into day-to-day life.

SELECTING SCHOOLS

What kind of enrichment opportunities does the school offer?

A wide range of sporting, musical, creative and technology clubs should give you a sense of the commitment the school has to the 'whole child'.

What are the specialist facilities? And are there any planned investments in the infrastructure or technology that your child might benefit from?

Although a school shouldn't ever be judged solely on its buildings, looking at the specialist space, the equipment per pupil and the appetite for investment in future developments will all help your child's learning experience and provide opportunities for wider subject choice.

Can you meet with students?

Seeing pupils in action and hearing about the school in their own words will help you to visualise if this is the right setting for your child.



What are the deadlines for application and what is the process?

Each school manages the admissions process slightly differently, so make sure you know in plenty of time what is needed from you and when.

Keep us informed

We have a wealth of experience in successfully preparing the children for a wide range of senior schools. Please keep us fully informed with your current choices so we prepare your child for each assessment.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD

Making sure you have the right preparations in place can help to spread the workload, manage time well, and minimise any stress involved.



Revision

The trick to any revision is to try to keep it fun. Sometimes it is better to not discuss the exam itself but simply work in opportunities to practise some of the key topics. Continue to support your child with their normal homework, whilst introducing a focus on the subjects areas that are likely to be assessed. Making sure your child works in a quiet environment and is able to complete tasks within a certain timeframe are all good exam skills to learn.

Reading and spelling

Reading widely is essential for the development of vocabulary and accurate spelling, so make sure your child spends regular time each week reading a diverse range of books, both fiction and non-fiction. Reading lists are available in the Hub on Cognita Connect.

Online platforms

Once you know which assessment test is likely to be used, start to get your child used to the question format so they are comfortable with the way the assessment will look. We use ATOM Learning and Century Tech, both of which provide AI-based questioning to help to support preparation for the11+ and pre-tests.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD

Interview preparation

An interview is a key part of an assessment process, not just testing your child's communication skills, or their knowledge of a subject, but also their values and their ability to articulate them. Although the majority of interview preparation will be led by us, you can support your child at home by regularly discussing current affairs and by subscribing to a weekly newspaper such as The Week Junior. At the end of Year 5, pupils will be supplied with a list of typical questions so they can prepare answers with you before their 1:1 rehearsals with Mrs Moss

To tutor or not to tutor?

By working with us to understand your child and by following a process that is timely and well thought through, your child should not need additional tutoring in order to attain a Senior School place that is a good fit. However, we do encourage a suitable level of revision over the summer holiday, Year 5 to Year 6, especially for children taking those early entrance exams in September.

Whether to tutor your child is very much an individual decision, and it may be helpful to read around the pros and cons. Further information is available in the Hub on Cognita Connect.

Wellbeing

Build in plenty of time for fresh air, exercise, rest and fun! No school wants children to feel unnecessarily stressed by the preparation for assessments so try and make sure there is plenty of down time. Continue your life as normal and allow children to shine as individuals!





MANAGING OUTCOMES

In the majority of circumstances, the outcome will be hugely positive and we will be delighted on your behalf. If you find yourself in the position of holding several offers, then Mrs Moss is more than happy to talk to you again to give further advice to help your decision-making.

If the news isn't quite as you had hoped please do talk to us again at this point so we can talk it through.

- We will usually have been informed by the school of the outcome at the same time as you, occasionally with some feedback, but not always.
- We will be keen to meet with you to talk through any specific factors that may have contributed to the outcome, such as the number of applicants per place, your child's performance in tests and the interview or whether the school was perhaps not the right fit.
- We'll continue to support you as a family to find the right school.



Remember that your child will not be defined by this outcome, but how they respond to it.

How to Develop and Inspire in Maths

It is really easy for anyone to extend their child's mathematical thinking. Doing puzzles that involve numbers or spatial skills is a great start. Trying to foster an inquisitive approach to number helps enormously – so asking 'why do you think that happens?' or 'why does that method work?' will really help your child to understand that maths is not just about answers or right and wrong.

We can't recommend enough the NRICH website.

<https://nrich.maths.org>

It has some interesting articles for parents and brilliant activities and puzzles for children. Many activities can be experimented with online and there are games to play too. NRICH covers every area of the primary curriculum. Teachers at St. Margaret's use these activities in lessons – but there is such a wealth of material here, we would be really happy for you to use these activities at home with your able mathematician.

In particular you might like to look at the 'Be a Mathematician' section. NRICH say:

'Mathematicians often know lots of mathematical facts, but, more importantly, they think about maths in different ways. These activities are grouped to help you to practise thinking like a mathematician'.

Spatial Awareness

Activities that involve building or constructing will help with spatial aspects of Maths. This is an aspect of Maths that can be overlooked – and forms such a significant part of the curriculum. Lego, Meccano, building marble runs, making models are all useful places to start.

Primary Maths Challenge.

Every year we take part in the 'Primary Maths Challenge' with our more able students in Years 5 and 6.

The website: <http://www.primarymathschallenge.org.uk>

Allows you to access past papers if you would like a family challenge!



Maths Inspiration (continued)

Games

Any games that you play with your child that involve strategies will help them to develop their mathematical brain. There are a wide range of board games that involve strategic thinking – or that involve numbers. Chess is another game that you might like to play. Sudoku puzzles are great number challenges that your child could do by themselves or with you.

The Mathematics Association

Has a suggested list of Parents Apps that you might like to try – although they do not directly endorse these.

https://www.m-a.org.uk/resources/APP_List_for_Parents.pdf

MyMaths

There are lots of games to enhance mathematical learning on MyMaths. So feel free to use the activities and games here to enhance what your child is learning in their maths lessons in school.



How to Develop and Inspire in English

Bias

Look at newspaper, journal or magazine articles.

What is the main argument?

Is there an element of bias in the text?

Do you agree with the article? Why?

How might you summarize the content of the article for a peer?

Point of view

Give pupils a figure (historical, celebrity, political etc.) from whose point of view they must write.

For example: Looking at the origins of human rights, students could be asked to respond from the perspective of a 15th century monarch or a celebrity.

Creativity

Ask pupils to animate inanimate objects, paying attention to their qualities in the process.

'Stone was a sad old thing. All day he sat brooding, his grey body giving off a dull, depressing aura. Never would you see his face, turned, as it was, toward the ground in lamentation.'

Fact and Opinion

Separating fact and opinion is an important skill in everyday life - when in contact with the media, talking with others, at work etc. Ask students to pull apart articles, reports or other texts in order to discern which aspects are factual and which are opinion.

Extend by: Challenge to think about the comparative validity of fact and opinion.

Asking what 'facts' can be definitely known.

Speeches

Students write a speech promoting what they believe;

Produce a presentation to persuade the audience of the veracity of their ideas;

Speak to other students individually and try to convince them face-to-face.

Extend by evaluating their attempts at influencing others and how they would advise others to go about it.

Debating

Students are given a consequence (or cause) for which they must develop an argument.

Example:

The most important consequence of not listening to your parents is...

You save your ears from being worn out

You miss potentially life-changing information

You fail to get a complete picture of their world

They might not listen to you

Read

Read a selection of literary shorts - 21 stories covering English literary heritage and contemporary writers. ISBN: 978 1 906101 32 9

How to Develop and Inspire in Science

Days Out

Royal Observatory, Greenwich, London
The Science Museum, London
Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire
The Royal Institution, London
Manchester Museum of Science and Industry
National Space Centre, Leicester
We The Curious, Bristol
Glasgow Science Centre
Life Science Centre, Newcastle

Useful Websites

www.howstuffworks.com
www.nasa.gov/kidsclub
www.natgeokids.com
www.youngoceanexplorers.com
www.discoverymindblown.com
www.sciencekids.co.nz

Science at home

<https://www.science-sparks.com/science-worksheets/>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/z2pfb9q>

How to Develop and Inspire in Music

Try something new!

Change your radio station or listen to a folk/jazz/classical/blues programme
Listen to or, even better, visit 'The Proms' during the summer www.bbc.co.uk/proms
Look out for open air concerts eg Thetford Forest, National Trust venues
Try a West End show
Join a local choir or orchestra eg Colne Valley Training Orchestra www.cvyo.net/home
Watch a ballet or an opera
Ask friends and family what their favourite pieces of music are and then listen to them.
Like reading different genres of books? See how many different genres of music you can listen to.
Try composing something to sing or play



Concerts and venues: Local:

The Apex, Bury St Edmunds www.theapex.co.uk/
Cambridge Corn Exchange
www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk
Colchester Arts Centre
www.colchesterartscentre.com
Haverhill Arts Centre
www.haverhillartscentre.co.uk
Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden www.saffronhall.com
Snape Maltings www.snapemaltings.co.uk
West Road, Cambridge www.westroad.org

Concerts and venues: National:

The O2 Arena, London www.theo2.co.uk
The O2 Academy, Birmingham
www.academymusicgroup.com
The Royal Albert Hall, London
www.royalalberthall.com
The Sage, Gateshead www.sagegateshead.com
The Southbank Centre, London
www.southbankcentre.co.uk

How to Develop and Inspire in Sport

Join a Club

Rugby:

Haverhill & District RFC, Braintree Rugby club, Chelmsford Rugby Club, Sudbury RUFC, Colchester Rugby Club

Football:

Halstead Town Youth FC, Headingham United FC, Dunmow Rhodes Youth FC, Witham Town FC, Haverhill Rovers FC, Rayne Youth FC, A.F.C Sudbury

Hockey:

Braintree HC, Chelmsford HC, Colchester HC, Witham HC, Haverhill HC

Netball:

Braintree Youth NC, Brookshaw Stuart NC, Chelmsford Junior NC, Conquerors NC (Chelmer Park), Great Dunmow Junior NC, Kats Netball Club (Colchester), Sudbury NC

Athletics:

Colchester and Tendring AC, Braintree and District AC, Chelmsford AC, West Suffolk AC (Bury St Edmunds)

Cricket:

Colchester and East Essex CC, Sudbury and District CC, Halstead CC, Rayne CC (Braintree), Witham CC, Kelvedon and Feering CC, Haverhill CC

Watch the Elites - local teams

Colchester United www.cu-fc.com

Ipswich Town FC www.itfc.co.uk

Essex County CC www.essexcricket.org.uk

Try a different sport

Playing other sports develops: hand-eye coordination, balance, agility, cardiovascular endurance and reaction time. All can be transferred between sports to help you develop further!



How to Develop and Inspire in Art and DT

Local Galleries and workshops:

Firstsite – Colchester – exhibitions and workshops
Gainsborough House – Sudbury – exhibition of Thomas Gainsborough’s art – Saturday morning art classes- printing studio and workshops
The Minorities Gallery – Colchester Colchester School of Art’s public gallery
The Munnings Art Collection – Dedham
The Henry Moore Foundation – Much Hadham
Braintree District Museum – Braintree
Warner Textile Archive - Braintree

Websites:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids>
<https://www.accessart.org.uk/>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/>
<https://thebigdraw.org/>

Design Galleries

Design Museum – London
V&A Museum
Geffrye Museum – London
Tate – London, Liverpool and St Ives
Oxo Tower Wharf, a creative hub at the heart of the Bankside Design District.
MOMA – New York
Guggenheim – New York
Visit IKEA. Habitat or The Conran shop – for design inspiration

Design inspiration websites:

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/blog/popular-primary-dt-resources>
<https://designmuseum.org/whats-on/families/create-and-make>
<https://www.stem.org.uk/primary-dt-resources>
<https://babbledabbledo.com/80-easy-creative-projects-for-kids/>

National Galleries

Hayward Gallery
National Portrait Gallery
Royal Academy of Arts
Saatchi Gallery
Serpentine Gallery
Tate Modern – multimedia guide
Tate Britain
Victoria and Albert Museum
Dulwich Picture Gallery – creative activities
Whitechapel Gallery



Notes

Notes



*Education is the most powerful weapon which
you can use to change the world.*

NELSON MANDELA



St. Margaret's

Preparatory School

Where happy children make excellent progress



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EXCELLENT

COGNITA

An inspiring world of education