

French and Spanish families are buying £15m London penthouses to ensure places at top state schools

Parents feel confident state-educated children have a better chance getting into Oxbridge than a child at Westminster or St Paul's

By Zoe Dare Hall
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Sudbrook House in Richmond, priced £5.95m and near various excellent state schools

With just a few weeks to go until the start of a new school year, many wealthy families are settling into homes that have ensured places in some of London's most sought-after schools. No, not Eton. Not St Paul's, but London's finest state schools.

In 2021, even the exceedingly wealthy are forgetting private schools, which are culturally passé. More than that, boarding has lost its charm too, says Nina Harrison at Harington buying agency. "Even if you're considering it, [it's not] a gentle walk through beautiful Knightsbridge streets with the nanny and the Cockapoo," she explains. "The closest ones are an hour's drive if you're lucky."

Instead, residents of areas where the average house price runs into multi-millions are looking to state education.

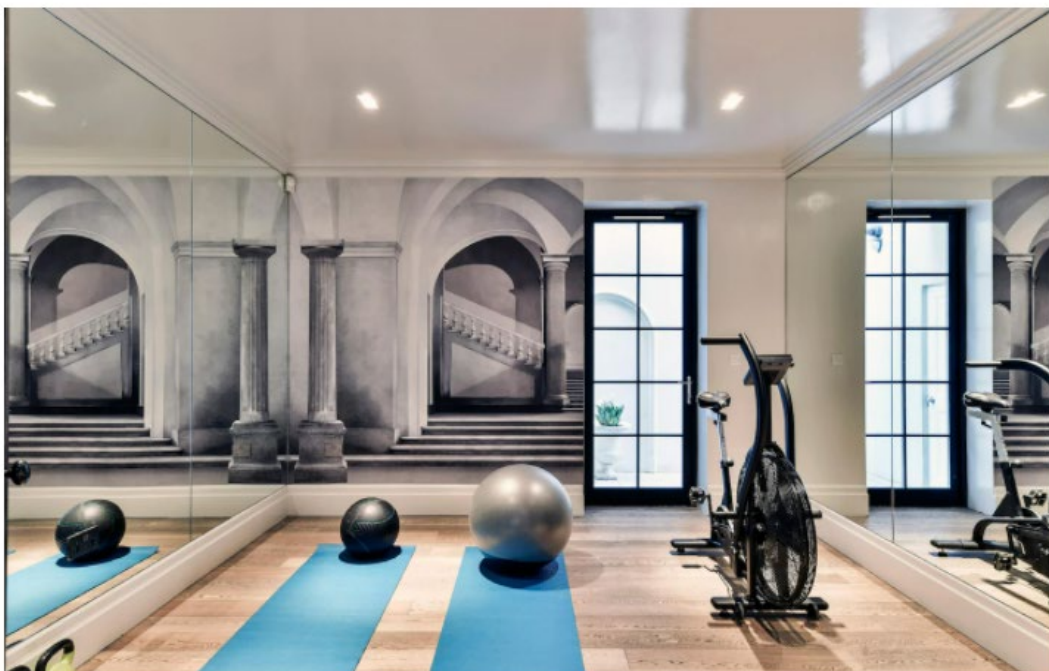
"Most of the world – with the exception of Australia and India – firmly believe that sending a child off to board at 13, [let alone eight, is cruel](#)," says Harrison, who says wealthy French and Spanish buyers in London right now are particularly keen on the state option. And they will often pay a premium of 10-15% for a property near the best non-fee-paying schools.



The entertainment room at Sudbrook House

The titchiness of catchment areas for London's best state schools means being able to walk to school is a given. But walkability is a highly prized factor in parents' choice of school – private or state - in wealthy areas such as Marylebone, says Martin Bikhit, MD of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices London.

“Marylebone has always been renowned for its village vibe, and schools within walking distance definitely add to that. If there's one thing Marylebone has in abundance, too, it's excellent state schools,” he says, mentioning Hampden Gurney C of E, voted London's top state primary two years ago. Within a five-minute walk, Bikhit is marketing [this large two-bed, garden square apartment for £3.5m](#).



The gym at Sudbrook House

Buyers of mansions in Richmond aren't averse to a spot of free schooling either. David Rich-Jones at Richstone Properties is the developer of Sudbrook House, a new [six-bed mansion on sale for £5.95m or available to rent for £30,000 a month through Knight Frank](#) and UK Sotheby's International Realty – and he's confident the eventual taker is likely to be drawn as much to the local, non-fee paying schools, including The Vineyard primary and Grey Court academy, as the private ones.

Fulham also has its “non-fee paying magnets”, says Will Watson from The Buying Solution, notably the Ecole Marie d’Orliac primary school and the L’Ecole des Petites nursery – popular, as you might guess, with French buyers. “They want good homes with gardens in a very residential area. The terraced ‘Lion’ townhouses on the Peterborough Estate in Parsons Green are ideal and they sell for £2.5m upwards.”