INDIA'S TOP-RANKED BOYS BOARDING SCHOOLS

Although single gender schools are going out of fashion, they have changed with the times and continue to remain popular with conservative middle class households determined to provide their progeny a good start in life

TDS principal Matthew Raggert & students: continuous improvement goal

Dominated by Dehradun-based **The Doon School** (**TDS**, estb. 1935), the league table of India's top boys' boarding schools has not experienced much change in 2016, except that the neighbouring **Welham Boys**' ranked #3 last year, has been elevated to share second rank with the Shimla-based **Bishop Cotton School** which achieved the singular feat of toppling TDS two years ago (2014). **Mayo College, Ajmer, The Scindia School, Gwalior** and the **Sarala Birla Academy, Bangalore** have retained their ranking at the Top 5 table in that order.

Although single gender schools modelled after the renowned public schools of Britain are going out of fashion with the country's fast-expanding newly-rich households increasingly attracted to new genre international schools affiliated with offshore examination boards, India's best public (i.e, private, exclusive) boys and girls boarding schools with decades — even centuries — of tradition have changed with the times and remain popular with conservative middle class households determined to provide their progeny a good start in life. Apart from rigorous, disciplined primary-secondary education, because of their location in the hills, they also offer the advantages of clean air as also excellent sports and co-curricular education facilities.

"Of course, I'm delighted that TDS is ranked India's #1 all-boys boarding school in the EW India School Rankings 2016 for the second year consecutively. Having just been appointed headmaster, I can't claim any credit for it. It's the outcome of the hard work and dedication of the school's talented teachers and previous head **Dr. Peter Mclaughlin**. However, I intend to carry on their good work and we'll be introducing a new curriculum for classes VII-X and innovations in teaching, learning and pastoral care that will enable the school to improve continuously. We are an all-India school for exceptional boys from all backgrounds and we need to be exceptional for them," says **Matthew Raggert**, an alumnus of Newcastle (UK) and Charles Stuart (Australia) universities who served as principal of the Leipzig (Germany) International School's secondary section before he took charge as headmaster of TDS on July 1. Registered in 1935 by former Bengal advocate-general **Satish Ranjan Das** as a nationalist response to boarding schools established in India by British educationists, the wholly residential class VI-XII CISCE Delhi, CIE (UK) and IBO (Geneva)-affiliated TDS has 586 boys and 74 teachers on its muster rolls (tuition fee: Rs.10 lakh per year).

Gunmeet Bindra, principal of Welham Boys' School (estb.1937), is perhaps more satisfied with the second rank awarded by the 3,939 sample respondents in north India to Welham Boys' in the EW India School Rankings 2016. Ever since she was a surprise appointee as the first woman principal of a major all-boys boarding school in 2011, Welham Boys' has been steadily moving up in the EW boys boarding schools league table from #6 in 2013 to #3 last year and #2 in 2016. It's especially noteworthy that Welham Boys' is ranked #1 under the parameter of leadership of all boarding schools — girls and co-ed included. Quite clearly, another male bastion has been breached by woman power.

"This is a proud moment for Welham Boys' which has steadily been moving towards the top of the annual *EW* rankings. Although it's an honour for me to have been at the helm during

this phase, this wouldn't have been possible without the support of the board of governors of the school and our chairman, Mr. Darshan Singh. With several new teachers inducted into the school during the past couple of years, there's an excellent blend of experience and youth in our faculty. This encourages students to discuss their hopes, dreams and concerns with teachers, forming the basis of an enriching and mutually beneficial relationship," says Bindra, an alumna of the Delhi School of Economics and Calcutta University, founder-principal of DPS, Jalandhar and Kanpur and former principal of Vidya Devi Jindal School, Hisar (2007-11) before she was appointed principal of Welham Boys' in 2011.

Welham Boys' Gunmeet Bindra: male bastion breach

But although Welham Boys' has risen in the public esteem over the past year under Bindra's leadership, this 79-year-old school shares its second-spot with Bishop Cotton School, Shimla (estb.1859) led by its highly experienced headmaster **Roy Robinson**.

A notable feature of the 2016 boys boarding schools league table is that three schools promoted by the well-known business house of Birla have made it into the Top 10. The fifth ranked Sarala Birla Academy, Bangalore apart, **Birla Vidyamandir, Nainital** (estb.1947) ranked #7 (#9 in 2015) and the **Birla Public School, Vidya Niketan, Pilani** (estb.1944) are among the Top 10 this year. Meanwhile the #1 boys boarding school in the western seaboard state of Gujarat for the second successive year is the **Atmiya Vidya Mandir, Surat**, ranked #9 this year (#14 in 2015).

"It's very encouraging that the *EW* sample respondents have acknowledged the efforts of all stakeholders — teachers, students and parents — to raise standards across the board in our low profile school. Our sincerity and commitment to the institution is behind our higher ranking every year. Right now our heritage campus is undergoing extensive renovation to contemporise and benchmark Birla Vidyamandir globally. In academics as well we have introduced a new teaching-learning programme, while rifle shooting is a recently introduced sports activity," says **Anil Sharma**, a physics and education postgraduate of Delhi and M.D. University, Rohtak, former principal of the Sanskriti School, Ajmer, Gyan Bharati, Delhi and deputy headmaster of Lawrence Lovedale, who was appointed principal of Birla Vidyamandir, Nainital in 2011.

Birla Vidyamandir's Anil Sharma (centre): contemporisation drive

Further down the 25-strong boys boarding schools league table, West Bengal's most famous boarding schools — **St. Joseph's** (#11) and **St. Paul's** (#12), both in Darjeeling — are neck-and-neck again while the **Bhaktivedanta Gurukula & International School** (#16) maintains its position as the top-ranked boys boarding school of Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state (215 million).

India's Best Boys Boarding Schools league table

Rank 2013	Rank 2014	Rank 2015	Rank 2016		Teacher welfare & development	Competence of faculty (200)	Academic reputation	Co-curricular education	Sports education	Life skills education & conflict management	Individual attention to students	Leadership / management quality	Safety and hygiene	Infrastructure provision	Internationalism	Pastoral care	Value for money	Community service	TOTAL SCORE (1500)	CISCE/CBSE Exams Average % *
1	2	1	1	The Doon School, Dehradun	87	189	92	94	91	92	93	92	83	95	90	85	82	83	1348	88
6	5	3	2	Welham Boys School, Dehradun	80	179	91	90	89	82	86	93	81	86	78	84	81	84	1284	88
2	1	2	2	Bishop Cotton School, Shimla	81	177	84	91	92	85	88	91	81	85	83	82	81	83	1284	81
3	4	3	3	Mayo College, Ajmer	82	178	87	89	93	80	85	78	82	95	79	76	79	73	1256	85
4	3	4	4	The Scindia School, Gwalior	77	173	80	90	90	72	80	83	73	92	77	82	78	76	1223	78
7	8	5	5	Sarala Birla Academy, Bangalore	70	164	83	85	86	75	81	81	75	85	69	73	76	69	1172	80
5	6	6	6	Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun	66	147	76	87	91	70	79	80	78	86	72	75	89	74	1170	NA
17	10	9	7	Birla Vidyamandir, Nainital	76	173	87	80	83	71	73	68	80	86	71	77	69	75	1169	85
13	14	8	8	St. George's College, Mussoorie	65	165	86	88	89	61	76	78	77	84	72	78	77	70	1166	84
16	18	14	9	Atmiya Vidya Mandir, Surat	76	168	89	83	80	72	82	72	76	85	68	74	72	65	1162	88
6	7	7	10	Birla Public School Vidya Niketan, Pilani	71	166	75	89	83	70	82	77	72	83	71	77	75	68	1159	74
8	9	10	11	St. Joseph's School, North Point, Darjeeling	72	157	77	83	81	67	81	77	76	85	77	65	77	67	1142	79
9	11	11	12	St. Paul's School, Darjeeling	71	156	84	87	77	64	79	73	80	86	76	68	75	64	1140	82
11	13	12	13	Rashtriya Military School, Bangalore	65	145	76	80	88	65	77	77	73	84	70	64	87	74	1125	75
12	15	18	14	GD Birla Memorial School, Ranikhet	75	143	69	79	76	75	77	76	82	77	62	73	75	74	1113	67
NR	NR	17	15	Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary School (Boys), Mussoorie	70	154	73	78	81	78	72	73	75	81	62	74	73	66	1110	70
NR	NR	13	16	Bhaktivedanta Gurukula & International School, Vrindavan	70	139	78	74	75	75	75	72	80	81	57	79	75	73	1103	77
14	16	15	16	Rashtriya Military School, Chail	62	142	78	78	88	66	75	75	71	81	67	68	86	66	1103	76
19	17	16	17	Sainik School, Ghorakhal	66	150	78	84	91	65	79	74	78	71	57	58	84	58	1093	76
10	12	17	17	Rashtriya Military School, Ajmer	72	142	73	74	87	68	76	75	71	77	59	70	82	67	1093	71
24	25	25	18	Goethals Memorial School, Kurseong	71	158	67	77	75	77	74	73	74	76	57	68	68	71	1086	66
21	22	19	19	Rashtriya Military School, Dholpur	65	143	74	68	86	62	65	74	70	78	58	68	78	69	1058	72
16	19	20	20	Rashtriya Military School, Belgaum	63	139	77	67	85	64	70	73	69	79	56	65	79	64	1050	75
18	20	21	21	Sainik School, Jamnagar	66	143	73	66	82	67	74	71	77	68	60	58	83	59	1047	75
23	24	22	22	Sainik School, Amaravathinagar	61	144	74	65	80	60	65	69	70	67	63	65	79	63	1025	72
NR	NR	NR	23	BK Birla Centre for Education, Pune	65	128	78	71	81	57	60	67	72	81	64	75	67	55	1021	77
20	21	23	24	Sainik School, Satara	63	141	73	67	82	63	63	65	66	65	59	60	78	59	1004	71
22	23	24	25	Sainik School, Rewa	62	129	73	65	83	69	68	64	65	66	56	63	77	54	994	71

* ICSE class X = Red (English + Best four subjects); CBSE class XII= Blue (Five-subjects average); ISC class XII = Green (Five-subjects average) *Source: www.thelearningpoint.net*