was warmed by Putney’s atmosphere — friendly and family-orientated (although no priority to siblings), with a new mindfulness programme keeping wellbeing up to snuff.

Results are punchy — 92 per cent A*—B at A-level with the standout being English Lit, in which 82 per cent of girls got an A*. And their writer-in-residence is clearly doing his job: two girls in the junior school have already published stories. The music is transcendent, and one sixth-former composed a fanfare for the Royal Opera House, which is now one of the school-bell rings (there are 16 different ring variations). When not bashing the academics or winning regattas, girls jet across the globe — skiing in Canada, Spanish trips to Costa Rica and, next up, a physics trip to NASA. They just don’t stop.

**QUEEN’S COLLEGE**

43–49 HARLEY STREET, W1G 8BT
Website qcl.org.uk
Head Dr Frances Ramsey, DP, since 2009; previously director of studies at Westminster School
Pupils 380 day girls Faith C of E
Ages 11–18
Term fees £5,900 Oxbridge
Occasional Registration By November of year before entry; £600 fee Admission North London Girls’ School’s Consortium exam and interview
Alumnae Emma Freud, explorer Gertrude Bell, Dame Hermione Lee
Prep: Head Annie Dempsey Pupils 217 day girls Ages 4–11 Term fees £5,500

Last year, Queen’s College celebrated its best academic results ever, bagging a pleasing 83 per cent A* B at A-level. What a credit to head Dr Frances Ramsey, who’s been quietly upping the academic ante while keeping the vibe relaxed and the school’s famed creative ethos intact. It is set in a stretch of Harley Street townhouses, where you’ll find the walls lined with student artwork (the department is absurdly good) and the former wine cellars packed with musical instruments. A recent production of Sondheim’s Into the Woods was a stonking success and there are plenty of cultural jaunts to all those world-class museums, theatres and galleries just down the doorsteps. When it comes to exercise, these girls don’t let a lack of outside space stand in their way, nipping up to Regent’s Park for a spot of netball and cross-country, and there’s a sports tour to Sri Lanka planned for next year. Sixth-formers benefit from urban perks like pilates at the University of Westminster and lunchtime excursions to Topshop, and will have a plush new rooftop common room next term. Lots of girls are the sisters of Westminster boys, so there’s much fraternising between the two, and QC’s small class sizes make for chummy relationships with teachers. Our mole was struck by the quiet energy of the place — though the feminist society was, she noted, enthusiastically vocal.

**QUEEN’S GATE**

131 QUEEN’S GATE, SW7 5LE
Website queensgate.org.uk
Head Rosalind Kamaray, MSc, since 2006; previously headmistress of Wykeham House School, Hampshire
Pupils 379 day girls Faith Non-denom
Ages 11–18
Term fees £6,300 Oxbridge
Registration By November of year before entry; £600 fee Admission
North London Girls’ School’s Consortium exam, interview and previous school’s report
Alumnae The Duchess of Cornwall, Vanessa Redgrave, Jennifer Saunders
Prep: Head Rosalind Kamaray Pupils 159 day girls Ages 4–11 Term fees £5,550
There’s a boarding-school spirit at this small but perfectly formed Kensington school, where the doors are kept open during the holidays for girls to swoop up in the library. Last year, they notched up 80 per cent A*—B at A-level, and securing a place here has become nail-biting — do note that coming from the junior school doesn’t give you leverage. There’s no ducking the teacher’s eye at the back of the class when numbers are kept low, particularly come the sixth form, where lessons are more akin to private tutoring. Mandarin is this year’s timetable newbie. Sport is blossoming: the U16 netball team have just enjoyed an unbeaten season and there’s a GC sports academy at nearby Queen’s Club. Speaking of royalty, the Duchess of Cornwall returned to her old school in February to cut the ribbon on the