

News

Private school fees treble but middle classes get help to pay

Nicola Woolcock
Education Correspondent

Private schools have trebled their fees in real terms since 1980 but their social mix has hardly changed because bursaries help the middle classes.

The average boarding fee has risen from £10,000 a year at today's prices to more than £30,000.

The cost of educating even one child eats up half the income of a family on average salaries, up from a fifth in 1980. Yet schools spend far more on bursaries and scholarships, meaning that the proportion of children from different backgrounds is little changed.

While critics have welcomed the greater subsidies for the children of professionals, they say more should be

most disadvantaged pupils". He suggested a levy enabling children from the poorest families to study free at private schools, rather than bursaries topping up the comparatively well off.

The report said "inexorable" rises in costs had little impact on the number of parents choosing the sector. "Despite real income increases, these fee hikes translated into very significant falls in affordability relative to income."

Schools and extended families, most often financial gifts from grandparents, are helping to make up the difference. "Fee-charging schools have not become more the preserve of the super-wealthy. Instead, it seems that, while some less well-off households are deterred by higher fees, this has been offset by the sector's attempts to broaden its social mix through, for example, the wider use of subsidised bursaries."

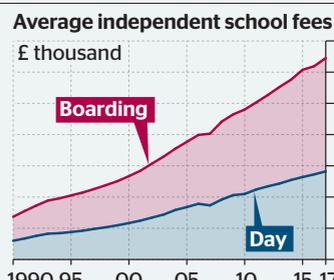
The report assessed whether those paying for private education came increasingly from higher-income families in the 20 years since 1994 but found little change. It added: "There was no change in the proportion of private school parents who belonged to the managerial and professional classes — eight out of every ten families."

The researchers concluded that their findings offered "little support either for the idea that fee subsidies were broadening the social mix of private education, or that charging increases were making it more exclusive".

They added: "Schools often use the unfortunate metaphor of an 'arms race' to describe the process whereby competition to provide the latest, greatest, facilities and the lowest class sizes has driven up costs and hence fees. But the race has been underpinned by the rising incomes of parents. The market has been able to bear the increases."

The data came from annual censuses by the Independent Schools Council, whose chairman, Barnaby Lenon, said: "The proportion of pupils receiving fee assistance has rocketed, as has the amount spent on this." Many schools had taken money from scholarships, available to all, and channelled it to bursaries. Some larger schools now aimed for "means-blind" admissions.

Adding up



Source: ISC census Note: From 2007, the ISC revised its methodology for calculating average fees, taking different fees for different age groups into account, to give a more accurate average.

spent on waiving fees for poor families. Analysis by the Institute of Education at University College London found that the cost of fees as a proportion of income had increased substantially. Families richer than 95 per cent of the population must now spend a fifth of their income educating one child privately, up from a tenth in 1980.

It also found that subsidised bursaries had offset fee rises for professional families, stopping independent schools from being the preserve of the wealthy.

Robert Halfon, Tory chairman of the education select committee, said last month that independent schools should do more to bring in "society's



On the stretch The English National Ballet production of Roland Petit's *Le Jeune Homme et La Mort*, starring Tamara Rojo and Ivan Vasiliev, is part of a double bill with Frank Andersen's *La Sylphide*, at the London Coliseum until Saturday

IRA victim's tribute to Cranberries star

David Sanderson Arts Correspondent

The father of a boy killed in the IRA's Warrington bombing said he did not know that the Cranberries had written their most famous song in tribute to his son until the death of Dolores O'Riordan, the lead singer.

Colin Parry had been completely unaware that *Zombie* was written because O'Riordan was incensed by the 1993 attack in which his 12-year-old son, Tom, died. He said "to read the words

written by an Irish band in such a compelling way was very, very powerful".

Speaking to BBC Ulster he paid tribute to O'Riordan, who was found dead in a London hotel room on Monday aged 46. Police said that her death was not being treated as suspicious. The case has been passed to a coroner.

After the release in 1994 of *Zombie*, the band's biggest-selling single, O'Riordan said she was offended that the IRA had claimed to have carried out the bombing in the name of Ireland.

"When it says in the song 'It's not me, it's not my family,' that's what I'm saying. It's not Ireland, it's some idiots living in the past," she said.

O'Riordan, a mother of three, had experienced health issues in recent years and had battled demons partly arising from the sex abuse she suffered as a young child in Limerick.

Musicians including Michael Stipe and Annie Lennox paid tribute to her yesterday.

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Press critic hired as Paradise leak QC

Matthew Moore Media Correspondent

The head of a press regulation campaign group that helped to draw up the media restrictions approved by the House of Lords is representing the offshore law firm at the centre of the Paradise Papers.

Hugh Tomlinson, QC, the chairman of Hacked Off, has been instructed by Appleby to block further publication of leaked documents detailing its clients' tax avoidance schemes.

Appleby is suing the BBC and *The Guardian* for breach of confidence, and has sought a permanent injunction stopping future use of information in the documents.

The papers revealed that wealthy in-

dividuals had exploited offshore tax havens, including the racing driver Lewis Hamilton, who avoided taxes on a £16.5 million jet, and the Queen's private estate, which invested millions of pounds in a Cayman Islands fund.

Mr Tomlinson's decision to represent Appleby has raised eyebrows given that the Paradise Papers investigation was praised as public interest journalism and that Hacked Off advised peers behind amendments to the Data Protection Bill. Critics say that the amendments would restrict the ability of the press to investigate wrongdoing and obstruct investigations into stories such as the Paradise Papers.

Last week the Lords backed an amendment from Baroness Hollins re-

quiring the government to begin an inquiry into data protection breaches by news media. She said that Hacked Off contributed research and advice on her amendments and that a member of its staff contributed to drafts, although Mr Tomlinson was not involved.

The "cab-rank rule" obliges barristers to take instructions from clients irrespective of who they are. Mr Tomlinson has acted for and against the media. *The Guardian* declined to comment.

Appleby says that the documents were stolen in a cyber-hack. It said: "This case is not about trying to identify journalistic sources or suppressing freedom of speech ... It is for breach of confidentiality including most importantly in legally privileged documents."

Women who breastfeed cut their risk of diabetes

Mothers who breastfed for at least six months cut the risk of diabetes during their child-bearing years by half, a study has found.

Scientists analysed 30 years of data from a US investigation of heart disease risk factors. About 5,000 people aged 18 to 30 joined the coronary artery risk development in young adults study between 1985 and 1986.

Women who breastfed for six months or more were 47 per cent less likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who chose not to breastfeed. Mothers breastfeeding for six months or less reduced their risk by a quarter.

The lead investigator, Dr Erica Gunderson from the US care provider Kaiser Permanente, said: "We found a very strong association between breastfeeding duration and lower risk of developing diabetes, even after accounting for all possible confounding risk factors."

The findings, published in the journal *Jama Internal Medicine*, add to evidence that breastfeeding has protective effects for both mothers and their babies. Research has also shown that it lowers a mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Hormones associated with breastfeeding may have an effect on blood insulin levels, scientists believe.