



## THE ROWDOWN INSPIRE TO ASPIRE FOUNDATION TUITION PROGRAMME

- The Rowdown Foundation was set up in 2013 to support gifted and talented children at one school (Rowdown Primary School) in New Addington to pursue their talent where their parents cannot afford to, initially supporting a young pianist, a dancer and a gymnast.
- We noticed:
  - teachers do a great job at getting the majority of pupils ready for secondary school despite the challenges that primary schools in Croydon face;
  - higher attaining pupils such as your children do well at their primary school but the local comprehensive schools have a poor record of progress for these high attainers;
  - parents of these children are generally unaware of their option to apply to selective grammar or independent schools. There is also often a misunderstanding, and even mistrust, of selective schools as being only for the more affluent;
  - even when parents aspire to such schools, they do not have the means to provide additional support to their child to help them compete against the many children applying to them that have been tutored or attend private preparatory schools.
- In 2014, we set up a “Tuition Programme” to help the most academically able pupils prepare for 11+ entrance exams for private, grammar or semi-selective state schools in order to maximise parental choice and access the best possible secondary school education.
- For 2017/18, the Foundation arranged for Trinity School, a local, prestigious independent secondary school, to provide 2 hours of lessons (Maths and English) on a Saturday morning to 15 pupils. The 2018 and 2019 Programme saw 20 Year 5 pupils receiving tuition at Trinity and the start of Year 4 Masterclasses in Maths & English at Royal Russell School for an hour on a Monday after school.
- From 2020, Trinity were able to supply three teachers for the Programme allowing us to increase the number of pupils to around 60 from 12 state primary schools in Croydon and we kept going through lockdown.
- We have also partnered with Atom Learning, an online learning provider, to give all children on the Tuition Programme access to their comprehensive tuition package.
- Over the nine years of the Programme so far, we have helped to place 71 children at grammar (19) and independent schools (52):

### **Grammar Schools**

Non Such (1)  
Sutton Grammar (1)  
Wallington County Grammar School (7)  
Wallington High School for Girls (6)  
Wilson’s (2)  
Other (2)

### **Independent Schools**

Croydon High (10)  
Old Palace (12)  
Royal Russell (7)  
Trinity (9)  
Whitgift (9)  
Woldingham (5)

The children at the independent schools receive financial support from their school in the form of bursaries and scholarships totalling over £700,000 per annum. Fees payable from the parents can be as low as zero and average around £2,500 per annum.

- The extension lessons and masterclasses are designed to further the children's understanding and enjoyment of the subjects with the view of also helping them prepare for entrance exams of selective schools and thereby increase the choice of secondary schools available.
- We also work closely with Wallington Country Grammar School, Whitgift School and Croydon High School who have provided or will provide additional tutoring, access to revision courses, exam practice or confidence-building sessions (all free of charge) to the pupils on the Tuition Programme.
- New groups of Year 4 and Year 5 children will start tuition at Royal Russell and Trinity respectively in January 2024. We have to limit the number of pupils from each primary school to four. Competition for places in each group is high and we have a waiting list. It is therefore imperative that those selected attend every lesson possible, are well behaved and that homework is completed. We ask parents to actively engage with the Foundation to make the most of the opportunity the additional lessons offer to their child.
- We encourage you to strongly consider your child taking the 11+ exams to maximise your choice of secondary school. However, please be honest with us if you have no intention of applying to selective schools as there are many families that cannot afford to pay for their own tuition but do wish their child to sit the 11+ exams so your child is effectively taking their place on this free tuition.
- We provide feedback during the Year 5 tuition to ensure we manage your expectations as to the likelihood of your child's success in any exams.
- Please be aware that the situation regarding selective schools is likely to change in the next few years, subject to a change of government especially. The recent announcement of the closure of Old Palace School is a blow as they have historically been the school that has taken the largest number of our programme graduates. We believe competition for bursaries and scholarships at the independent schools will get tougher for September 2025 entry and this will also increase the competition for grammar school places. Unfortunately, it is quite possible that our successes in previous years might not be repeated.



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### **FAQs**

#### **1. What will it cost me to enrol my child on the Tuition Programme?**

Nothing. Royal Russell and Trinity are not charging the Foundation, the primary school or the Foundation for these lessons. Royal Russell and Trinity will provide all materials your child needs in the lessons and for homework. We are sure your child will ask for more reading or study books, but these will be optional.

#### **2. What do I need to do?**

You will need to complete our simple enrolment form which will be given to you by your primary school. Please complete all contact details including email as this is our preferred method of communicating with you. And then all you need to do is to make sure your son or daughter turns up to the lessons each week and completes their homework. They probably won't need too much encouragement, but your enthusiasm and commitment will help them a great deal.

#### **3. How long is the Tuition Programme?**

Each element of the Tuition Programme runs from January to December. For those starting the Year 5 programme in January 2024, this means you will attend lessons at Trinity School on each Saturday morning of their term time until the end of the Autumn Term (ending just before Christmas) in Year 6. For those on the Year 4 element at Royal Russell, this will also run for the duration of term time 2024 on a Monday afternoon. It is expected that the majority of these children will progress onto the Trinity lessons for 2025, giving them two years of additional learning opportunity ahead of 11+ exams in their Year 6. Please note that enrolment at Trinity following Royal Russell is not certain and we will re-assess each child's suitability with all those involved, including parents.

#### **4. Is attendance at the lessons compulsory?**

Enrolment on the Tuition Programme is voluntary but once enrolled, we expect the children to attend every lesson. This is vital if the pupil is to make the most of this opportunity. There will be times when a child is ill, there is a conflicting activity at their school or a family issue (e.g. no adult being available to get the child to Royal Russell or Trinity). In such cases, parents must notify Royal Russell, Trinity or the Rowdown Foundation as soon as possible informing them of the reason for the absence. A contact number or email will be provided for this purpose.

We also expect the pupil to be fully engaged during the lesson and treat teachers, staff, their classmates and the property of the school providing the lessons with respect at all times.

**We reserve the right to cancel a pupil's enrolment if there is persistent absence or misbehaviour.**

**5. Will I have to enter my child for 11+ exams?**

By enrolling on the Tuition Programme, there is no requirement to enter your children for 11+ exams (when they are in Year 6) for grammar or independent schools but we hope you keep an open mind to maximising your options for secondary school, which is the main aim of the Tuition Programme. We will actively encourage you to apply for 11+ exams and support you and your child in any way we can.

**6. What is the difference between a grammar school and a private or independent school?**

A grammar school is a school that is still funded by the state (like your local secondary school, free to use) but it awards places solely on the basis of academic ability, tested through an entrance exam, often called the 11+, as this is the age when it is sat (usually in the first term of Year 6). The London Borough of Croydon does not have any grammar schools but the neighbouring boroughs of Sutton and Bromley do. The Sutton schools include Wilson's (boys), Wallington County Grammar (boys) and Wallington High School (girls). The Sutton schools share an initial test for the 11+ but then most have a second exam on which they award places. These schools form part of the Common Admissions process through the local authorities. Therefore if you are told your child has passed the exam, this does not mean they definitely have a place until local authority places are given out in March.

An independent (or private) school is one that is outside the state system and charges for pupils to attend. Annual fees are usually around £16-24,000 per annum. Like a grammar school, admission is gained through an 11+ entrance exam most often in the January of Year 6. Scholarships are awarded based on a student's academic, sporting or artistic ability and often cover 10-50% of the annual school fees. Also, parents may qualify for a bursary, which acts as a reduction in school fees linked to household income levels: the lower the income the greater the reduction in fees. Bursaries are most likely to be offered in order of academic achievement so only the children towards the higher reaches of the exam results will qualify for a bursary.

The level of competition for places at grammar schools is very high; at independent schools it is high, but not quite as high as grammar schools. However, with bursaries awarded according to academic performance, we believe that the level of performance required to gain a place at a grammar school is probably about the same as that required to be offered a place with a bursary at a private school.

Please note that all the grammar schools are single sex schools, as are the majority of independent secondary schools: only Royal Russell locally is co-educational.

**7. Will my child fit in at a selective grammar or private school?**

Yes. All the independent and grammar schools have made clear statements that they wish to have children from all ethnicities and backgrounds (cultural or financial) to have access to their schools. The fact that most of the grammar and independent schools in the area are actively helping the Foundation to set up the Tuition Programme for your children shows this. The children from the Tuition Programme that have started at grammar or private secondary schools are all settled and making friends and the most of their opportunity.



**8. What are the benefits of my child attending a grammar or independent secondary school?**

These selective schools all benefit from having children of a similar academic ability and/or smaller classes and therefore can structure learning in such a way as to ensure that the vast majority of them reach their full academic potential. They usually have better access to extra-curricular activities and hence are able to offer your child a more rounded learning experience in terms of sports, technology and the arts. They place high expectations on their pupils who are willing to engage because of the facilities on offer.

**9. If my child were to pass the 11+ for a private school, how could I possibly afford the fees?**

Fee paying schools such as Royal Russell, Trinity, Croydon High, Whitgift and Woldingham have scholarship and bursary schemes that make their annual school fees (in the region of £16,000-£25,000 pa) affordable to families on low income. However, to qualify for a bursary or scholarship, the pupil has to be among the top performers in the entrance exams. The 52 children that we have helped to reach these schools so far were ranked high enough and are paying fees that average just £2,500 (with a range of £0 to £13,000 - which is exceptional and skews the average a great deal - dependant on parental income) each year thanks to bursaries and scholarships.

We have strong relationships with these schools who actively look to make good offers to children on the Rowdown Foundation Tuition Programme meaning that, on occasions, our children have received preferential treatment.

Please note that the Foundation cannot currently offer financial support for school fees. We might be able to help towards initial costs of uniform, equipment etc but it will always depend on our level of funding, which cannot be assured.

In terms of registration fees for these schools (usually £50-130), the Foundation has been successful in negotiating with all the schools for a significant reduction for pupils on the Tuition Programme.

**10. How can I find out more about these schools so I can ensure they are a good fit for my child?**

The Foundation has a very good relationship with the majority of these schools and will provide information on them and organise group visits for pupils on the Tuition Programme. Participation in the Tuition Programme will give you a good insight into Royal Russell and Trinity, but the other grammar and independent schools also often offer opportunities for pupils from state primary schools to participate in various activities. We encourage you to take these up when you can. In previous years, we have organised for children on the Tuition Programme and their parents to visit the schools, have a tour and meet the head teacher, senior staff and the admissions teams.



**11. Will I feel pressurised into applying to these schools if I do not think they are a good fit?**

No. We will always leave the final choice of secondary school to you and your child. Nobody knows your child better than you. But we ask you to come along on the visits with an open mind!

**12. What are the chances of my child passing the exams?**

There is no guarantee of success at the exams or being offered places at these selective schools and there will be disappointments along the way. However, given the track record so far, we believe that all the children nominated have a good chance in these exams if they work hard and continue to progress. We will provide feedback to ensure you are realistic about your child's prospects and opportunities so you can make informed decisions about where to apply.

**13. How will the lessons be structured?**

The Foundation will leave this to Royal Russell and Trinity to explain. The schools are in touch with the primary schools and each other to make sure the lessons are an extension of what the children are learning in their school. They will be stimulating and entertaining as well as challenging. The feedback we have received from the pupils currently having tuition is unanimously positive.

In addition, we have recently started a partnership with an online learning resource, Atom Learning. It is hoped that all children enrolled on the Tuition Programme in 2024 will have access to this valuable resource and the teachers will structure work and homework using this.

**14. Will there be homework?**

Yes. It will be set each week and the expectation is that it will be completed on time and to a high standard. Failure to do so could jeopardise the pupil's place on the Tuition Programme. The teachers will be aware that the children are also set homework by their school and it will be a reasonable amount. You are asked to provide support and encouragement to your child to complete their homework.

**15. How will my child get to Royal Russell or Trinity for the lessons?**

The onus is on you to get your child to either Royal Russell or Trinity on time. Lessons normally start at Trinity at 9.30am with classes finishing at 11.30am. Lessons at Royal Russell will start at 3.45pm. Please do not be late for drop off or pick up. Both schools are easily accessible by public transport and have parking available.

Why not get together with the other parents from your primary school to put a rota together to share the duties?

**16. Will we need to provide computer and internet access for homework?**

It will be very useful if your child has access to a computer and internet access at home. The question as to whether this is available is on the enrolment form.