

Good for: Parents looking for a school with a great all-rounder offering. Sport and the arts are both strong at Feltonfleet, and the school does well academically. Those who want the option of boarding will also love the school.



Muddy Stiletto's Review March 2024

**What? Where?**

Feltonfleet Prep School is a co-ed day and boarding school for children aged 3 to 13. Sitting on a beautiful 25-acre site just outside Cobham, it's literally just off the A3 which puts it in a handy spot for those up and down the A3 corridor.

It's a forward-thinking school, with a well-established reputation for strong pastoral care and an impressive all-rounder offering. There are just shy of 500 pupils on the register, with an even mix of boys and girls. Entry is gently selective, and while there is some attrition at 11+, most pupils stay on until 13. This year (2024) is the largest year 8 cohort ever.

Feltonfleet started life in Folkestone as a boys' school in 1903 and moved to Cobham in 1916. Girls were accepted in 1994. During World War II the school was evacuated to North Perrott Manor House in Somerset, which later became Perrott Hill School, and the two schools still have a close relationship today with yearly meet-ups.

A five-year strategic plan launched in 2019 has propelled the school forwards in leaps and bounds. In the upper school, Common Entrance takes a back seat to the more progressive Pre-Senior Baccalaureate (PSB), a skills-based curriculum that promotes independent learning, technology use, critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork.

Expect further change too, in the coming years with heavy investment in a new teaching block. The entrance is also set to change, with the school taking ownership of the (no-through) road that currently runs through the middle. Watch this space!

**Facilities**

With no squeeze on space, the facilities here are impressive. There's been heavy investment and the results are quite lovely. With everything from an indoor heated swimming pool to rifle ranges and a state-of-the-art theatre, pupils want for nothing.

The main school building is a handsome neo-Gothic Grade II-listed former mansion house built in 1870. It's home to the head's office and the dining hall, plus the boarding house.

The main entry was remodelled about 10 years ago and is now a bright and airy addition with a glass corridor linking it to the main building. The Ashbee Theatre, with retractable seating for 400 and impressive sound and light systems, forms part of this annex along with a dance studio. The Prep is across the road in Calvi House.

The rest of the school forms a horseshoe around playgrounds and playing fields – with the mansion house in the centre flanked on the left by the Lower School and Middle School classrooms, and on the right by the music block (with several practice

rooms), library, indoor swimming pool and a large sports hall. There's also a well-equipped art room, science labs, computer science room and a wellbeing hub. On the far side of the playing fields there's a large woodland area and pond used for Forest School, cross-country running and supervised play.

Sports wise, there are pitches aplenty, both astro and field, plus hardcourt tennis and netball courts (called The Hard Yard), two shooting ranges, cricket nets and a traditional cricket pavilion.

And in the of the playground, there's a fabulous treehouse – also used as an outdoor classroom – complete with a climbing wall and a slide.

**Sport**

Sport at Feltonfleet is strong, and the school punches above its weight across many sports netting in trophies at a regional and national level. In the 2023 cricket season, Feltonfleet bagged not one, but four county trophies. England cricketer Andrew Rishton is head of cricket, and the school has been named as one of The Cricketer Schools Guide's top 50 cricketing prep schools in 2024. Surrey County Cricket Club use Feltonfleet's facilities for its Talent Pathway training programme.

With two rifle ranges (for air-rifle and .22 shooting) you'd expect shooting to be on fire (sorry, couldn't resist!) – and it is. The pupils here are hard to beat on regional and national levels. But while the sporting successes are relished, the aim is to 'create better athletes... for life'. And with that in mind, there's a wide range of sport on offer including all the usual suspects. Aside from hockey, football, netball, rugby, cricket, shooting, swimming and athletics, there's also basketball, badminton and climbing and gymnastics.



**The Arts**

The arts are also a big deal here. The art studio is a fantastic light-filled space, thanks to windows on both walls and skylights in the pitched ceiling. The head of art lives in a cottage which practically adjoins the studio – so safe to say he lives and breathes art at Feltonfleet. Art is a curriculum subject taught in the art studio from year 3 upwards, and for more advanced artists there's the Art Scholarship Programme. There's also plenty of co-curricular art available.

There's a big music school at Feltonfleet, and for the musically inclined there are opportunities aplenty which start from in the nursery. The school uses the Kodály method to teach music – an approach developed by Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály which uses the voice as an instrument. It's obviously working because 75 per cent of prep pupils are also learning an instrument. As you'd expect, there are more orchestras, bands, ensembles and orchestras than you can wave a conductor's baton at.



**Feltonfleet**  
PREPARATORY SCHOOL



Parents are attracted to Feltonfleet's excellent facilities and nurturing reputation. Children are happy and do well academically without being hothoused.

Like music, drama and dance also enjoys a high profile. Pupils have weekly drama lessons with a specialist teacher from year 3 to year 8, and pupils in years 4, 5, 7 and 8 stage annual school productions. The pre-prep also stage shows throughout the year. Dance is offered as an optional extra, and those who take it up study the syllabus of the Royal Academy of Dance in ballet, free style, jazz and hip hop, and of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing for tap and contemporary dance. In year 4, there's an opportunity to be invited to audition for the London Children's Ballet.

**Littlies**  
Children start in nursery at Calvi House and progress through to reception and year 1. The classrooms at Calvi House are bright and light with a lovely neutral decor. Many of the resources and toys are made from natural materials like wood, and there are lots of loose parts (like blocks, tyres, boxes and crates) to promote creativity. Each classroom flows to an outside space, and there's also a dedicated Forest School and woodwork room. The nursery also has a lovely sensory room.

It's a two-form entry and there's specialist teaching for games, music, languages and swimming. The pre-prep follows the Little Wandle Phonics Programme which teaches children to read in small steps.

From Calvi House, children progress to year 2 across the road in a dedicated year 2 house which offers a great transition into the prep school whilst still having their own indoor and outdoor space. Most of their specialist lessons are taught in the main school buildings.

**Academics**  
Feltonfleet is fast gaining a strong reputation for its robust academics – largely due to the move to the Pre-Senior Baccalaureate in 2019 and a mastery approach to learning (making sure pupils have mastered key concepts before moving onto the next). The transition is paying dividends, and parents are happy with the progress and most are now choosing to stay on beyond 11+.

Year 3 and 4 is predominantly topic-based learning, with specialist teaching in French, digital learning, design technology, music, drama, art and PE. Children are set by ability in English and maths at year 3, although this is fluid changing termly if need be.

By year 5, all subjects are taught by specialists and by year 7, pupils are also set by ability in French, Spanish, Latin and science. From year 6, children have their own iPad, which they use across all lessons. Feltonfleet is an Apple distinguished school, and all teachers are trained in Apple technology.

Most year 6 pupils stay on to year 8. In 2023, pupils went on to a range of schools. St John's Leatherhead was the most popular choice in 2023, followed by Epsom College, Claremont Fan Court and Reed's School. Year 8 leavers also moved on to Wellington College, Brighton College, King's College School, St George's Weybridge, Gordon's School, Notre Dame School, Queen Anne's Caversham, Pangbourne College, Cranleigh School, Hurstpierpoint College, Reading Blue Coat School, Sutton High, and Marymount International School. Pupils were awarded scholarships across the board for art, drama, DT, music, sport and academic.

**Pastoral Care**  
Feltonfleet has a strong reputation for its pastoral care. The school's tagline 'Individuals really matter' seems to hold true. There's a holistic approach, and the school goes by the core values of honesty, responsibility, respect and kindness.

As well as a formal pastoral tracking system, there are weekly staff meetings where pupil information is shared on a 'need to know basis'. I quite liked the 'need to know' clarification, it seems to me that all teachers and staff need not know everything about a child. Investment in teacher training is prioritised, as is early intervention in the life of any problem. Form teachers are the first port of call for most pupils, supported by heads of year and the deputy head (pastoral) who has expertise in dealing with pastoral and child development issues.

There's a dedicated wellbeing centre – a quieter space tucked away from the main school buildings with sofas and games. A counsellor is also based here and children can self-refer or be referred by a teacher, head of year or parent. Mindfulness sessions, led by pupils, are held at the beginning of each lesson.

**Boarding**  
Feltonfleet is predominantly a day school with flexi-boarding offered Monday to Thursday from year 3 upwards. It's a small boarding house – centrally located in the main school building above the headmistress' office – with 50 beds across separate boys' and girls' dormitories. Dorm rooms are relaxed and cheerful separated by a cosy common room. Pretty bunting decorates the girls' rooms and there are posters aplenty in the boys' dorms. Children are able to decorate their own spaces to make it more homely.

While a handful of pupils board for the full four nights, the reality is that most live locally and do one, two or three nights. It's seen as good preparation for those looking to move to a senior boarding school.

**The Head**  
Shelley Lance has been at Feltonfleet since 2010, and in the role of headmistress since January 2018. She was deputy head for five years before that, having been brought in to advise on the pastoral care framework. Before Feltonfleet, Shelley was a member of the senior leadership team at Whitgift School in South Croydon.

A self-titled 'reluctant head', she's certainly no career headteacher and relishes the time she spends in the classroom. She teaches religious studies to year 8.

Charming, down-to-earth, hands-on and welcoming, Shelley is popular with children and parents. She hasn't been afraid to make major changes – and has certainly made her mark. Her five-year strategic plan which is approaching completion.

A headteacher can easily get pinned to the chair, she says, and keen to avoid that fate appointed a strong leadership team which includes a senior deputy head which gives her the time to think strategically and be on the ground. And on the ground she is, quite literally, greeting pupils every day as they arrive at school. Her office is also strategically located in the corridor that leads to the dining hall, and her open-door policy means she's very approachable.

Her husband Ed Lance is an assistant head at Epsom College. They have a son, Henry, who goes to Feltonfleet.

**Quirks**  
Boarders are known as Feltonfleet Knights and all take part in a knighting ceremony, complete with swords. It's an official induction into the boarding houses. No wonder boarding is popular.

**Wraparound Care**  
An extended day is available from 6.30am to 6.30pm. There is also an extensive extra-curricular programme which includes clubs like archery, judo, tennis, shooting, design, gardening, knitting, dance, music art and design.

**Transport**  
The school runs daily coach and mini-bus services from a number of locations, including Wimbledon, Putney, Esher and Southfields. New routes are considered according to demand.

**Word on the Street**  
Parents are attracted to Feltonfleet's excellent facilities and nurturing reputation. Children are happy and do well academically without being hothoused.

[www.feltonfleet.co.uk](http://www.feltonfleet.co.uk)

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