

ISA Awards 2024 Case Study: Junior School of the Year

FULHAM PRE PREP



JUNE 2025

History of the School

Founded in 1996, Fulham School began with a vision of delivering a forward-thinking, holistic education in the heart of West London. It has since grown to encompass Pre-Prep, Prep, and Senior phases, forming a seamless educational journey for children aged 3 to 18. Fulham School embraces an all-through model, underpinned by core values of curiosity, creativity, confidence, and community.

The Pre-Prep is situated on a purpose-designed site in Fulham, nurturing children during their earliest years of formal education. With an emphasis on strong pastoral care, individualised support, and foundational skill-building, Fulham Pre-Prep ensures that every child feels seen, valued, and inspired from the very beginning of their school journey.

The school's educational philosophy centres on helping pupils become intellectually curious, socially responsible, and emotionally resilient. Through a progressive approach that combines academic rigour with the development of soft skills, Fulham Pre-Prep supports children in becoming independent thinkers and effective communicators—traits increasingly vital in the modern world. Small class sizes, exceptional teaching, and an emphasis on oracy and inquiry-based learning define the Fulham Pre-Prep experience. Pupils are nurtured in a warm and stimulating environment where mistakes are embraced as learning opportunities, and individuality is celebrated. This commitment to child-centred education was exemplified in the school's decision to introduce Philosophy into the Key Stage 1 curriculum—an initiative that has redefined classroom culture and ignited deep thinking in even the youngest learners.

Fulham School's evolution over the past two decades reflects its unwavering dedication to progressive education in a rapidly changing world. At the Pre-Prep stage, this vision is realised through a

commitment to both academic fundamentals and emotional literacy. The school has intentionally created a nurturing, inquiry-rich environment that supports each child's unique developmental needs. Facilities are designed to feel both welcoming and stimulating, with open-plan classrooms, calming sensory areas, and curated learning corners that promote independence from the earliest stages. This environment lays the foundation for curiosity, collaboration, and confidence—principles that continue to define a Fulham School education through to the senior years.



Rebecca Tear
Executive Head



<https://www.fulham.school>



Aims

At Fulham Pre-Prep, the aim is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are not only prepared for academic success but are also confident in expressing themselves, open-minded in their outlook, and respectful of others' perspectives. Central to this vision is an emphasis on the development of character alongside knowledge.

The introduction of Philosophy in KS1 was a deliberate move to support these aims. Designed to encourage critical thinking, empathy, and oracy, the programme helps children build the courage to express their views while learning to listen and respond with kindness and reason. Weekly Philosophy sessions empower pupils to explore complex questions in age-appropriate ways, helping them discover that their thoughts matter and their voices can make a difference.

Fulham Pre-Prep also places significant value on fostering curiosity and independent thought across the curriculum. From early literacy and numeracy to science, languages, and the arts, the curriculum is crafted to spark engagement and promote inquiry. Teachers facilitate learning experiences that help children connect ideas, ask questions, and develop their own solutions—ensuring they are not just consumers of information but active participants in their own learning journey.

Equally important is the aim to extend learning beyond the classroom. Fulham Pre-Prep actively involves parents in their children's development. Through regular workshops, contact sheets, and interactive home activities, families are empowered to engage in meaningful conversations sparked by classroom themes. The school also celebrates contributions across the wider community—highlighting student voice through weekly "Philosopher of the Week" awards, encouraging service, and creating a culture where every child feels their ideas are valued and impactful.

In line with its whole-child approach, Fulham Pre-Prep also aims to develop social consciousness and emotional intelligence as core components of early education. Children are actively encouraged to consider not just what they know, but how they make others feel through their words and actions. Weekly classroom rituals—such as group reflections, empathy circles, and peer shout-outs—support the development of kindness, integrity, and active listening. This deliberate integration of character education into daily routines ensures that children grow not only as learners but as considerate members of a diverse community. The result is a school culture where achievement is measured not just by progress, but by how pupils uplift one another.



OUTCOMES

The outcomes of Fulham Pre-Prep's innovative approach to education are both measurable and deeply meaningful. Since the implementation of the Philosophy programme in KS1, the school has seen profound improvements in pupils' confidence, empathy, and communication skills. Teachers report greater participation in discussions, stronger reasoning during learning tasks, and a classroom culture marked by mutual respect and curiosity.

A powerful example of the depth of thought emerging from even the youngest learners can be seen in the reflections shared during Philosophy lessons. Pupils express profound ideas, such as recognising that the life they have may be more fulfilling than the one they imagine they want. These moments highlight not only the intellectual potential of young children but also a broader shift in classroom culture—where previously hesitant students are now more confident in offering their perspectives, questioning ideas, and engaging in thoughtful reflection.

These classroom transformations have extended into family life. Parent workshops and weekly updates have helped embed philosophical discussion into home routines. Parents frequently share how the programme has prompted thoughtful conversations at the dinner table, reduced reliance on screen time, and strengthened bonds through richer dialogue. The academic impact is equally notable. Students' enhanced ability to reason and articulate is now evident across subjects, particularly in writing and mathematics. Interview feedback from competitive next-step schools regularly highlights the articulate and reflective nature of Fulham Pre-Prep pupils. Their ability to form arguments, justify ideas, and engage respectfully in discussion is setting them apart in London's competitive prep school landscape.

The Philosophy programme has also had a marked influence on staff development and pedagogical growth. Teachers have embraced new roles as facilitators of learning rather than directors, gaining confidence in guiding open-ended conversations and managing multiple viewpoints in the classroom. As a result, the entire teaching team reports greater job satisfaction and renewed inspiration, driven by the dynamic, student-led learning environment. The ripple effect of this shift has contributed to a broader culture of innovation across subjects, as educators adopt more dialogic and collaborative approaches throughout the school. Fulham Pre-Prep's success, therefore, extends beyond pupil outcomes—it is equally reflected in the thriving, empowered professionals leading their classrooms.





NEXT STEPS

Fulham Pre-Prep remains committed to continuous innovation in pursuit of excellence. Building on the resounding success of the Philosophy programme, the school plans to further embed critical thinking and oracy across all areas of the curriculum. Plans are underway to introduce age-appropriate Philosophy content to Reception pupils and to explore interdisciplinary connections between philosophical inquiry and subjects such as literature, science, and PSHE.

The school also intends to expand the parental engagement programme, offering new workshops and curated home resources to help families deepen philosophical thinking outside the classroom. These efforts will aim not only to support children's development but to foster a stronger, more connected school community.

Staff professional development will remain a priority, with plans to share the Fulham Pre-Prep model of Philosophy teaching more widely, contributing to sector best practice. The school is also exploring how student-led dialogue—seen in Philosophy sessions—can be extended into other leadership opportunities, such as peer mentoring, assemblies, and co-curricular clubs.

Fulham Pre-Prep's ongoing journey is a testament to what is possible when bold thinking and deep care combine. Through a culture that celebrates reflection, respect, and curiosity, the school is preparing children not just for school entrance exams, but for life.

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