

SOUTH EAST

PUBLIC

**ARDINGLY COLLEGE ●●**  
**Haywards Heath RH17 6SQ**  
*Website* ardingly.com  
*Head* Ben Figgis, since 2014; previously deputy head of Oakham  
**Pupils** 814. **Day:** 265 boys, 217 girls; **boarding:** 171 boys, 161 girls  
**Ages** 11–18 **Term Fees** **Day:** £8,995; **boarding:** £13,520 **Bursaries** 7% of pupils, up to 100% **Alumni** *Journalist* Ian Hislop, *screenwriter* Ed Whitmore, *TV presenter* Ed Petrie  
If you like your schools good-looking, then this is the one for you. Designed by renowned gothic revivalist Richard Herbert Carpenter in the mid-19th century, its smart, ecclesiastical-style red-brick buildings are spread across a showstopping country campus. Here, manicured green lawns embrace a reservoir that is the focal point for such starter-integration events as treasure hunts, building rafts and chucking each other into the water. Equally hearty is the annual cross-country run, which is eagerly anticipated by all: 'I love it and so does everyone else!' says one pupil. Meanwhile, sporting strengths include football, hockey and swimming. (With the head of swimming being Karen Pickering MBE – who set two world records and was four-times a world champion – it's unsurprising her squad is known around the country.) And free time is filled with clubs, the most innovative of which is the solar car project, whose members have designed and built a solar-powered vehicle, and had their work nominated in the Clean Air category for the global Earthshot Prize endorsed by Prince William. The school is currently developing the concept of a 'world-ready' education, fostering social skills as well as academic; and the diversity of the children, evident in their 30-plus nationalities, is celebrated by the dishing-up of global cuisines (though pupils still love chicken goujons). 'This international contingent makes full-boarding very lively, and the campus is bursting with activities at weekends,' says one parent. 'Ardingly is definitely Sussex's best-kept secret.'

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