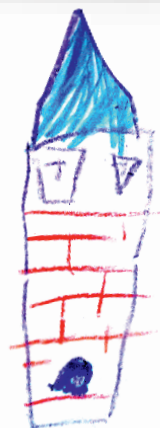


GAME CHANGERS

Absolutely everything you need to know about the very best nurseries in the UK, from when to apply to what to wear at pick-up. By Larushka Ivan-Zadeh, with Celia Thursfield



When you pack your hospital bag, you need stuff for you, to neutralise the medievalness of what is about to happen. Rabbit-sized clothes for the impending babe. And a file. Containing local nursery-school application forms, filled out except for date of birth and name, paper-clipped to stamped addressed envelopes and ready to post. You will already have toured local nurseries, you see. Do this and all will be well. Because nursery school is the beginning. And beginnings can be beautiful.





LONDON

RINGROSE KINDERGARTEN CHELSEA

SW3 (ringrosec Chelsea.co.uk)

FEES £3,210 a term

AGES From 2½

'The go-to nursery for down-to-earth Chelsea-ites,' says our researcher. Or as one mum puts it: 'Chelsea without the flashiness.' Established in the Fifties, this is a favourite with families who have been in the area for generations. No wonder. Ringrose is the traditional English nursery personified. The setting is a light-filled church hall, from where the children, in their neat neon-pink bibs, skip merrily over the road to play with balls and hoops in the privately hired playground. But it's not all milk and skittles. 'We are very much a school rather than a playgroup,' says headmistress Miss Lucy, who has been here for 25 years. Pupils leave thoroughly equipped for top preps like Glendower, Francis Holland, Eaton House and Wetherby, but inside reports tell us that academia 'is not pushed down their throats.' Children are encouraged to go at their own pace.' Kindness and gentleness are touchstones. Signing up at birth is a must to avoid the dreaded waiting list, capped at six or so per place.



THE NEXT STEPS...



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