

# Private school education may damage students' social and emotional development, study suggests

June 25 2020

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Privately educated students are more likely to experience bullying, start drinking earlier and take more risks than their state school counterparts,

a new study has found.

The study, led by the University of York, looked at whether going to private [school](#) benefitted young people's emotional and [social development](#), once family background and prior educational achievement had been taken into account.

The researchers found that attending a private school was of little benefit and actually had a negative impact on some aspects of development.

While private school children are less likely to have behavioral problems, the study found they are 15% more likely to experience bullying over course of secondary school education; 24% more likely to take risks, and are younger when they have their first alcoholic drink, than students attending state schools.

## **Educational resources**

In the UK, seven percent of secondary school children are privately educated. In 2019, [tuition fees](#) cost an average of £18,000 per year for day students or £35,000 for boarders. In the same year, the median household income in the UK was £28,400.

Lead author of the study, Professor Sophie von Stumm, from the Department of Education at the University of York, said: "Private schools expend greater educational resources than state schools for their pupils, including higher-qualified teachers and better pastoral care. Because of this difference in support, we expected much more positive outcomes for private school students—we thought that they would exceed their state-school peers in areas such as volunteering, practicing safe sex and self-control, which require being considerate of others and the consequences of actions.

"In fact we found little difference between private and state school students in these areas and when it came to bullying, risk taking and early consumption of alcohol, private school students fared worse.

"Our study adds to a growing body of evidence that many of the alleged benefits boasted by private schools are actually a product of their selective intake of students rather than the value that the schools add.

"Parents naturally want the best for their children, but for those who would struggle with the astronomical fees, our message is not to feel guilty—private school is not a necessity."

## **Wellbeing across adolescence**

The study looked at data from 2,682 individuals who took part in a large cohort study—2,413 attended state schools and 269 attended private schools.

The researchers analyzed data on family background and prior educational achievements as well as information gathered from questionnaires (conducted with participants between the ages of 12 and 21) on factors including wellbeing, peer victimization, [sexual behavior](#), substance use and anti-social behavior.

The findings of the study suggest that, when it comes to overall wellbeing across adolescence, private and state school students do not differ.

## **Privileged family background**

Professor von Stumm added: "In the wider population we often assume that a private education will have a very positive impact on a child's

development. Our study suggests we have unrealistic expectations of the virtues of a private education, when in reality many of its benefits result from the legacy of a privileged [family background](#).

"Interrogating the role of [private schools](#) in Britain is important because we live in a country where the majority of leaders in politics, business and in the arts were privately educated."

**More information:** Sophie von Stumm et al. Does private education make nicer people? The influence of school type on social-emotional development, (2019). [DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/73gzd](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/73gzd)

Provided by University of York

Citation: Private school education may damage students' social and emotional development, study suggests (2020, June 25) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-private-school-students-social-emotional.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.