



The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Limited

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The Editor
Sydney Morning Herald

The content of the article ('Private schools all but vanquished from top 10 list', 15 December) belies the headline. Independent schools achieved exceptionally well in the HSC against any measure, with the sector's representation in the Distinguished Achievers (36%), All Round Achievers (40%) and First in Course (30%) lists far exceeding the 22% they make up of the candidature. It should be remembered that very few independent schools are academically selective and the most valid comparison is with other comprehensive schools, making these results even more noteworthy.

Far from being 'vanquished', independent schools have clearly shown, again, that they have earned their excellent reputations with a strong focus on quality teaching and the hard work of their dedicated staff and students. These things, combined with strong family support, are the ingredients that assist any child to reach his or her potential. Belittling the achievement with a sensationalist and inaccurate headline still doesn't diminish the great work of the schools and their students.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Newcombe'.

Dr Geoff Newcombe
Executive Director
Association of Independent Schools of NSW

Sydney Morning Herald

Title: [Private schools all but vanquished from top 10 list](#)

Author: Andrew Stevenson - EDUCATION EDITOR and Jen Rosenberg

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Page: 1

THE stellar performance of students at NSW selective high schools continues apace with only one private school, Moriah College, making the top 10 of the Herald's annual list of top-performing schools as judged by HSC results.

Sydney Grammar (ninth last year, now 12th) and SCEGGS Darlinghurst (13th) both dropped from the top 10 this year.

James Ruse again topped the rankings, based on HSC subject scores of more than 90 compared with number of students. Among the elite academic schools, North Sydney Boys produced particularly outstanding results, moving from eighth to second place.

Yesterday 71,415 students began accessing their HSC results from 6am; this morning from 9am those who hope to enter university will learn their ATAR university entrance rank.

There were 31 non-government schools in the Herald's top 50, including Wenona, with its results helped by Madeleine Pulver, the Sydney schoolgirl who had a fake collar bomb chained to her neck at her home in August.

Madeleine scored more than 90 in advanced English.

A slim majority (52.3 per cent) of the 16,420 students on the Distinguished Achievers List - those with a result of more than 90 in a subject - are from non-government schools. Some 36.7 per cent are from independent schools and 15.6 per cent from Catholic systemic schools.

The principal at North Sydney Boys', Robyn Hughes, said selective schools would "share the love".

"The selective school principals are an incredibly collaborative network," she said. "We meet on a regular basis through the year and we share in each other's successes."

But Ms Hughes rejected any suggestion her school was an "academic hothouse".

"It's not about that coaching culture; it's about the holistic development of these young men, really getting them engaged in a wider world and seeing beyond themselves.

"This group of young men have done a lot outside of just pursuing academic excellence and that's what I think is the secret of their success. It's a balancing act, but that's where they get joy and engagement and, ironically, the busier they are the more organised they have to be with their study."

Julie Greenhalgh, the principal of Meriden, which rose from 53rd to 18th, said the improvement was the result of strong departmental leadership and changes at the school.

"I think we're seeing the fruit of some very, very good programs in our junior school and our junior secondary years, really focusing on the quality of teaching and learning," she said.

Hunter Valley Grammar School leapt from 199 to 51. The principal, Paul Teys, said it was the school's best result on record. "We've been on a journey the last few years to lift our performance so these kids have been part of that strategy and they are the beneficiaries of the whole school effort in lifting the HSC performance," he said.

That strategy included a focus on individual or small tutorials, examination technique and information days, but he said the most effective was the relationship between the staff and students and students' involvement in their school.

"We've got a young group of people who are really committed to their school and that's the most significant feature of these results," Mr Teys said.