

Key stage 2

Pupil A – Piece D: an argument

Context: as part of a unit on 'Grimm's Fairy Tales', pupils discussed different sides of issues such as 'Are all stepmothers evil?'. They were then tasked with choosing an issue of their own to argue. Pupil A selected the real-world issue of private schooling.

Are payments for private schools justified?

Swaths of children every year attend private schools across the country before making their way on to prestigious colleges: Eton, Cambridge and Oxford. Indeed, our prime minister ~~travels~~ himself along with several other members of the government attended private school, as did many other figures of authority in a range of fields such as leading medical doctors and the country's most successful lawyers. There is no question that the achievement at private school is unparalleled to state school, but with it costing between £12,000 and £20,000 a year, is it fair? In this argument, I will be considering both sides of the argument before drawing my own conclusion.

The main barrier holding back children from attending private school is the cost incurred. The price tag for such elite education results in the vast majority of the population being unable to enrol. Children from a working or middle class background are, broadly speaking, unable to apply; frozen out due to their bank ~~balance~~ balance.

Some argue this is unfair - there are many children from lower class families whose academic achievements and aspirations are high. They ~~of~~

claim that this divide in education is at the root of inequality in the UK. From the age of 3, children's life trajectories are dependent on their parents' jobs. Only 6% of England's population get to attend private school. 95% of these children have parents who earn over £120,000; the average salary in England in 2023 is £25,971. This discrepancy creates an insular school environment where only those with money can attend, leaving bright-minded poorer children watching from the side-lines with only their hopes and dreams to console them.

Conversely, the Independent School Board argue that their pricing structure is fair and provides exceptional value for money. It is not uncommon for a private school child to have doors opened to a vast array of extracurricular activities, for example: learning to play the flute, attending ballet lessons, receiving football coaching and taking part in drama lessons performances. These activities are led by some of the most talented professionals in their respective fields; this expertise comes at a price. The class teachers themselves are hand-selected from talent pools to ensure that teaching is the finest quality and class sizes themselves are kept small. Pupils receive a broad, rich experience with regular school visits to a wide range of locations, including abroad to experience culture and broaden knowledge. This experience is what makes private schools appealing, but it is costly. The Board also argues that between 5 and 15% of

each school's intake is made up of children from less fortunate affluent background who receive places through scholarship schemes. It is therefore unjust to claim that only children from rich backgrounds can attend. Poorer children can-if they are clever enough.

Some would argue that the results achieved in league tables by private schools are not so surprising. Children born into rich families achieving academic success is not uncommon. When you have your own library and private tutor on hand from birth, the likelihood of academic success is high no matter the educational setting the child is enrolled at. Justification of fees should not be derived from exam results-it is no surprise when cherry-picking the cohorts.

On the other hand, whilst poorer children are selected based on their academic ability, independent schools would argue that a full range of educational needs can be found within their pupil numbers and it is not necessarily true that wealth equals brains. It can be argued that the small class sizes and staff expertise can lead to enhanced progress-making the fees ~~worthwhile~~ worthwhile.

Having considered both sides of this argument, and drawing on my own experience of the application process for a place at a private school, I believe the selection process to be unfair for those from poorer backgrounds.

Having viewed several for myself, it is clear that the education and opportunities on offer are far more superior to those of a state school and it feels unfair that a poorer child should not be able to access such experiences. I believe a full review should take to determine whether the existence of private school and their fee structures has a place in modern-day society as to me it feels rather draconian and elitist.