

N Zealand knocks Britain off top school perch

[Print](#)

By David Turner, Education Correspondent
Published: Dec 27, 2007

New Zealand's private schools are nudging ahead of their British forebears to top the global league table for English-speaking education, prestigious international research suggests.

The findings could give New Zealand an edge over Britain among wealthy Asians seeking the best education for their children - particularly since New Zealand's top schools are generally cheaper.

Among English-speaking countries, New Zealand tops the league table of private schools in the Pisa education survey, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in maths and in science - the dominant subject in the latest survey of 15-year-olds. British private schools beat their New Zealand counterparts only in reading.

The findings, included in the voluminous Pisa 2006 results published earlier this month, come at a time when British private schools - which have historically dominated the market for international high-school students - are finding it harder to attract large numbers of foreign pupils.

The number of foreign students at schools belonging to Britain's Independent Schools Council fell 2 per cent year on year to 20,852 in January 2007.

Heads of marketing at British schools said the increasing expense of a private school education, largely because of rising teacher pay, has put off some parents. For overseas parents, the strong pound has made British education all the more expensive.

This year's annual fees at Eton College, Britain's grandest private school, are £26,490. This compares with NZ\$40,000 (£15,484, \$30,727, €21,221) for overseas students at King's College, Auckland, one of New Zealand's most prestigious academies - even though King's College, like many New Zealand schools, charges higher fees to overseas pupils.

New Zealand's independent schools, which have for many years attracted from abroad large numbers of Chinese and Japanese children, are considerably cheaper than British schools. Some rich Asian parents want an English-speaking education for their children, to give them an extra tool as adults when competing for jobs.

Lynda Reid, principal of St Cuthbert's College, a prestigious New Zealand girls' school, said: "New Zealand independent schools represent the best value on the planet." She said there was also "a perception" among parents that New Zealand was safer "to send your 14 or 15-year-old daughter to than the UK or the US".

US private schools underperformed both British and New Zealand schools where figures were available.

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2008