

1 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 Do you have a favourite school subject? Is there one that you would particularly like to study or that you think would be useful to study in more detail?
- 2 Do you think it is good to focus on the subjects you enjoy most at secondary school, or should you wait until university to specialise in a subject area?
- 3 Which subjects do you think will be more useful in the future?

2 Read the texts. Which is the only home-based school?



Schools with a difference

In the UK, not everyone's secondary education is standard. There are a minority who, for various reasons, receive a different type of schooling focused on technology and the arts. We interviewed five students around the world to find out more.



BRIT School

This is a performing arts school near London and I came here when I was 14 years old. I've always wanted to be a musician and have been writing my own songs for years. I also play the piano, guitar and violin. So I applied to the school and managed to get a place following an audition. You must show a great love of music and the relevant skills if you want to get on the course and it's hard work, but I love it! The school is for anyone who wishes to make a career in the arts and entertainment industry, whether you want to sing, dance, act, and more. But it's not all about studying your passion either, you also study the usual curriculum subjects like maths, English, history, geography, too.

Jack, aged 16

Interhigh School

I don't have to go to school, my school comes to me! Living in a remote part of the Shetland Islands in Scotland, the nearest secondary school is quite far away, so I do my learning online. I've had my lessons like this for two years now and I've adapted easily! Interhigh teaches via the internet, and there are about 500 students aged 10–19 studying this way. I'm in a class of 18 students and we get live lessons from a teacher from 9.30 to 12.30 each day. I communicate with my teacher and the other students through voice, text and interactive presentation. In the afternoons, I virtually visit the library to do my homework, go to one of the school clubs or catch up with friends in the online common room. Just one thing, you can't do without a laptop and a good internet connection!



Megan, aged 17



STEM Academy

Mine is a specialist school catering to 16–19-year-olds with a passion for STEM-

related subjects: science, technology, engineering and maths. I got my place last year following an interview and assessment procedure, and I'm studying maths, computer science, chemistry and physics A levels because I'd really like to be an engineer one day.

Aisha, aged 16



The Boat School

My school is very unusual – it floats on water! The Boat Schools of Bangladesh is an independent school system that started in 2002 to help teach 70,000

children like me who can't get to school during the annual floods in my country. My school begins the day as a boat-bus, which picks us up from stops along the river. When all the students are on the boat, it docks and class starts! Each Boat School has laptops, the internet and a small library, and everything is powered by solar panels. Students who achieve good marks get a solar hurricane lantern to take home. This gives them light to do their homework in the evening.

Farhan, aged 13



RADA

My dad's an actor and my mum's a stage manager, so I come from a theatre background. I decided to follow

my parents and attend RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) in London, where I'm studying a Foundation course in acting. I have classes and workshops on movement, voice training, singing and acting for screen. We also have lessons for part of the time on the history of theatre. I hope to go on to university and do a degree in acting.

Emily, aged 18

3 Read the texts again. Choose the correct word or phrase.

- 1 Students only have lessons for half a day at **RADA / Interhigh School**.
- 2 Students at the Boat School **bring / don't bring** laptops from home to class.
- 3 If a student is interested in a career in theatre, they could apply to **only the BRIT school / either the BRIT school or RADA**.
- 4 You must have some **musical / technological** equipment to study at Interhigh School.
- 5 The STEM Academy focuses on **all school / scientific** subjects.
- 6 The **Boat School / STEM Academy** uses alternative energy methods to power technology.
- 7 Jack, Aisha and Emily have chosen their schools to focus on their **passion / achievements**.
- 8 Megan attends a school **to improve her IT skills / that offers convenience**.

4 Complete the table with the words and expressions in the box. One type of school can be used twice.

encourages a technical career focus | independent | offers creative and academic subjects |
 online | performing arts | specialist | teaches children affected by extreme weather |
 trains students specifically in acting skills | virtual classrooms

	Type of school	Specialist feature
BRIT School	_____	_____
Interhigh School	_____	_____
STEM Academy	_____	_____
Boat School	_____	_____
RADA	_____	_____

5 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 Given the choice, which of the schools in the texts would most interest you? Why?
- 2 Do you know of any schools in your country that offer a specialist secondary education? Do any of them interest you?
- 3 Do you think it is good to have schools like these available for students who wish to focus on a particular subject or specialist area?
- 4 How do you feel about online learning?

DID YOU KNOW?

There are some other unusual schools around the world:

- The *Train Platform Schools* of India programme educates about 4,000 students across the country on train platforms where the children would otherwise be begging train passengers for money. The schools cater to the needs of the street children who have no school to go to, and teach them to read and write as well as learn songs, drama, music and other interesting things.

PROJECT

- 6 **Research another school that teaches the arts or technology, either in your country or another country. Think about how it benefits the students, what kind of technology they use there and what you need to do to get a place.**

- 7 **Present the information to the class.**

VOCABULARY FOCUS

audition [n]: a short performance in which you sing, dance or act so that someone can decide if you are good enough to perform

beg [v]: to ask people for money or food, usually because you are very poor

cater to [v]: to provide people with something they want or need, often something unusual

common room [n]: a room in a school or university where students go to relax

passion [n]: a strong enthusiasm or interest

performing arts [n]: types of art that are performed in front of an audience, e.g. music, dance, plays

virtually [adv]: relating to computers or appearing on the internet