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The Doon School: Grooming Ground For India's Wealthy Kids

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Some of India's wealthiest families pack off their sons at a young age to a boarding school situated in Dehra Dun, at the foothills of the Himalayas, a 40-minute plane ride from Delhi. This bastion of privilege is the Doon School, a boys-only school established in 1929 in the Doon Valley, from which it derives its name. It was modeled on the British public school system, with the first headmaster, a certain Arthur E. Foot, hailing from the similarly privileged Eton College in the U.K.

(India's 100 Richest are worth \$259 billion.)

A grooming ground for the wealthy (Rahul Gandhi spent some time there, as did his late father Rajiv Gandhi), Doon is upfront about its goal: It aims to be "an institution of excellence, dedicated to producing leaders of the future." Indeed, there is something about go-getting Doscos, as the Doon School alums are called, that seems to give them an edge—the Dosco network is well-entrenched in Indian business. "My time at Doon was a great grounding. It has turned out to be the best years of my life that prepared me for life. It was a well-rounded education where I remember picking up hobbies like photography and trekking," says health care billionaire Malvinder Singh, whose brother Shivinder, as well as their late father, Parvinder, also went to the boarding school.

With a relatively small number of admissions each year, almost a quarter of the 500 students are children of alumni. "The Doon alumni is a very close and supportive fraternity, and several of them are my friends," says Singh. One of his father's school buddies, Eicher Motors' Vikram Lal, who features among India's richest, used to sit on the board of Ranbaxy, their erstwhile family firm.

Singh's uncle Analjit, who controls his Max Healthcare group, is another prominent Old Boy, as is Murugappa Group's chairman, A. Vellayan. Two-wheeler tycoon Brijmohan Lall Munjal of Hero Group sent his sons Sunil and Pawan to Doon; they now run his empire. Doon's board of governors is chaired by Gautam Thapar, a former rich lister who controls the Avantha group, an engineering and paper conglomerate. This "Eton of India" is even on the itinerary of Prince Charles and Camilla's upcoming trip to India.