

PRINCE CHARLES GOES TO CHEAM:

It's been happening all over the country - that first day of boarding school - with slightly anxious parents handing over slightly anxious youngsters to a strange new world. Cheam School, in Berkshire, is no different - you can spot the confident old-timers; though after a few roll-calls, they'll all be behaving like old-timers.

Parents are kissed goodbye - and politeness demands that sisters be included, too. They can then be forgotten till Christmas.

Cheam School boys are obviously nautically minded - though some of the more impatient types are more at home with aircraft.

Not to mention assorted armaments...

Oh yes, and literature, too - if you insist. But on the first day, no one has much time for books. Cheam School has 55 acres of grounds, and as there are only 99 boys, that works out at 1.8 boys to the acres if you spread them out tidily. All right, just you try!

What he' doing here. There must, after all, be something different about this new term at Cheam. The boats and aeroplanes are forgotten as a sports car drives up to the door; for it contains a new boy who is making history - Prince Charles, heir to the throne. His parents, too, have brought him here themselves. The family is welcomed by the joint headmaster, Mr. Peter Beck. Prince Charles is in school uniform, except that his tie is black and not blue; for the Court is still in mourning for his great-great-uncle, King Haakon of Norway.

A special welcome for the Duke of Edinburgh; for he is here not only as a father, but also as an old boy; he was a Cheam pupil from 1930 to 1933.

Yes, this eight-year-old boy is creating a great precedent; he is the first heir to the British throne to go to school. He will be the first King of England to have been educated as a boy among other boys. Admittedly, a boy with a rather special destiny - but his rank will count for little in the rough-and-tumble democracy of playground and dormitory. Which is exactly how his parents - and his future subjects - would wish it.