

# Maths prodigy, 12, scores maximum points on Mensa test

A boy is officially one of the smartest children in the world after getting the maximum score in a Mensa test.

Barnaby Swinburn, 12, has been accepted into the high IQ society after achieving a test score of 162, the highest possible. Some estimates put Albert Einstein's IQ at 160.

Barnaby's parents, Ghislaine and Christopher Swinburn, said their son has already picked his university course in computer programming. Ghislaine Swinburn, 50, from Bristol, said: "Maths is something Barnaby has always stood

out in because he enjoys it. Sitting the Mensa test was his idea. We don't push him to do anything. He made all his decisions for himself on this.

"We don't even have to ask him to do maths homework because he enjoys it so he just does it anyway. When we found out his test score I was really pleased for him. And he has been very excited about it too."

Barnaby's love for maths goes back at least eight years. His mother remembers that when he was four there was a time when Barnaby could not sleep



**Barnaby loves maths but also enjoys sport and practical jokes**

because he was "trying to calculate how many seconds are in an hour".

He told his parents that he wanted to sit Mensa's test to "understand himself better".

The society welcomes anyone whose

IQ is in the top 2 per cent of the population. Swinburn, a mother of two, said: "I told his dad it would go one of two ways. It could be that he won't get in and he'll be upset, or he would get in and he'd be unbearable because he'd know how smart he is."

Barnaby took the test on December 11. His top score of 162 on the Cattell III B test, which includes a lot of verbal reasoning, put him in the top 1 per cent of people.

Barnaby hopes to study at Oxford University. He wants to become a com-

puter programmer and has "nagged" to be enrolled in programming classes for his birthday in January.

His mother says that Barnaby is far from a boffin and loves sports as well as playing practical jokes.

She said: "I work within the NHS and the pandemic has been so negative and stressful for me. So to see Barnaby do well has been something so nice."

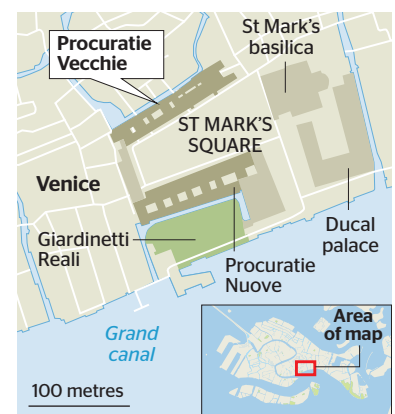
"We don't push Barnaby at all, everything he's done has been his idea."

"It's been a voyage of self-discovery for him and this is just the start."

# Venice landmark opens its doors after 500 years



**The Procuratie Vecchie, left, is undergoing a refurbishment under the eyes of Sir David Chipperfield**



**Tom Kington Venice**

Stretching the length of St Mark's Square in Venice, it is one of the most photographed buildings in the world, yet few among the millions of tourists who stop for a snap have an inkling of what it is or what goes on inside.

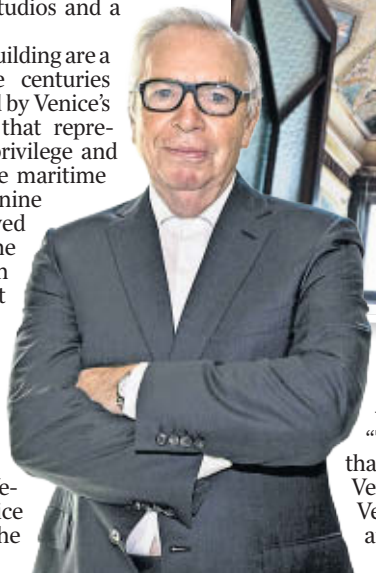
That is all about to change after an army of builders descended on the partly abandoned Procuratie Vecchie for a refurbishment, squeezing in new staircases, installing exhibition spaces and restoring its Renaissance-era wooden beams and 200-year-old gilt ceilings.

The 150-yard-long building is being transformed by the British architect Sir David Chipperfield and will open its doors to the public in April for the first time in 500 years.

"This was a private world and it is a pleasure to turn it into a public place," said Chipperfield, 68, who is known for rebuilding the Neues Museum in Berlin. Funded by the Italian insurance company Generali, the owner of the

building, he is opening up spaces for start-ups run by refugees, exhibitions, workspaces for humanitarian charities, a café, artists' studios and a 200-seat auditorium.

The plans for the building are a departure from the centuries when it was occupied by Venice's procurators, a role that represented the wealth, privilege and power that made the maritime empire tick. The nine procurators who lived and worked in the building were drawn from the city's richest families and cared for the famous basilica overlooking the square, as well as looking after the poor and managing the execution of wills written up by Venetians. Their office was second only to the



doge, the leader of the republic, in terms of prestige.

"They were part of that rigid control over Venetians that made Venice so successful, and the fact they lived

overlooking the most important square in the city symbolised that control," Alberto Torsello, the site manager, said.

Completed in 1532 with 52 arches at ground level, where Venetians gathered, and more than 300 windows above, the Procuratie Vecchie was matched in the 16th century by a twin

building facing it on the other side of the piazza, where the Caffè Florian later served coffee to Goethe, Casanova, Lord Byron, Proust and Dickens.

The shorter, west end of the square was closed in 1810 by a third building put up by Napoleon, who conquered Venice and brought the Venetian republic to an end after 1,100 years.

Two decades later the fledgling insurance company Generali moved into the Procuratie Vecchie and by the mid-19th century employed 1,000 staff there. In 1989 it moved to the mainland, leaving the building mostly empty. Now the firm is back and determined to give St Mark's Square a new purpose. "We hope to bring the piazza back to life, that kind of life which does not simply revolve around tourism," Philippe Donnet, the chief executive of Generali, said.

The buzz of activity is focused on the third-floor rooms, once used as attics by the procurators, where workers are restoring 16th-century beams and brickwork, bringing in big screens for exhibition spaces and putting the finishing touches to the 200-seat auditorium. A modern staircase accesses a new roof terrace offering views across Venice to the snow-capped Dolomites.

Its new role as a destination for charities and start-ups run by refugees would revive the procurators' mission to assist the needy, Donnet said. He added: "We are bringing the Procuratie Vecchie back to having a social purpose."

Chipperfield said that a key part of his restoration involved reopening old entrances and adding staircases that would help the public to access all the floors. "What we need to do is make sense of the original building, of what's been done to it and what it could be," he said. "I think we are finding coherence."

# Family's everyday pot is a Chinese masterpiece worth £160,000

A 400-year-old Chinese pot used as an everyday ornament by a British family has sold for more than £160,000. The blue and white pot, inscribed with a poem, dates from the reign of the Kangxi emperor in the 17th century and once held an artist's brushes.

The 18cm-tall item was acquired in the 1850s by a Briton who traded in silk and porcelain along the Yangtze river. He brought it back to England and for years his Suffolk descendants kept the pot as a decorative object without realising its rarity.



**The 17th-century brush pot has an ancient poem inscribed around it**

They were amazed when it sold for a hammer price of £125,000 at Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers of Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. With fees, the anonymous buyer paid £162,500. The price far exceeded the valuer's estimate of £3,000.

Oriental porcelain was once highly fashionable among westerners who brought it home in quantity from their time in the Far East. Over the past decade demand has rocketed as newly rich Chinese collectors seek to "buy back" their heritage.

The inscription was written by Wang Bao, an ancient poet, and instructs a divine ruler to appoint wise and virtuous ministers.

The family, who wish to remain anonymous, sold two other pots that came back with their ancestor, including one that showed the emperor at a meeting with his officials, which sold for £22,000.

Kangxi, whose personal name was Xaunye, was China's longest-reigning emperor, ruling between 1661 and 1722. He defeated revolts by feudal lords

and saw off tsarist Russia in border disputes, bringing economic and political stability.

Yexue Li, head of Asian sales at Sworders, said: "Brush pots with classical texts represent a key moment in the early history of the Qing dynasty. By using poems and stories from antiquity, the emperor was implying that he was part of a continuous line reaching far into Chinese history."

"We realised how valuable this could be when we discovered a similar example in the British Museum."