

# Royal College Colombo

Colombo, Sri Lanka



*Tracing its roots to 1835 as Ceylon's first state secondary school, still marking each term with the storied Battle of the Blues cricket clash.*

## RANKING DIMENSIONS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Overall              | 71/100 |
| Academic outcomes    | 75/100 |
| University placement | 71/100 |
| Prestige & heritage  | 73/100 |
| Alumni network       | 72/100 |
| Facilities           | 68/100 |
| Transparency         | 65/100 |

## EDITOR'S VERDICT

Royal College Colombo trades on two assets that few schools in Asia can match: sheer historical weight and public stature. Founded in 1835, it traces its roots to Ceylon’s first state secondary school, and it still carries that old civic-school identity in its rituals, prizes and sports culture, including the Battle of the Blues cricket fixture that frames each term in the public imagination. This is a non-religious, English-medium day school in Colombo for ages 3 to 18, following the Sri Lankan National curriculum, with Cambridge listed among its accreditations. The average annual day fee is \*\*USD 98\*\*, which places it in a category that barely overlaps with the fee-driven international school market at all. That matters: Royal College is not selling imported polish. It is a national institution with \*serious local prestige\*.

What marks it out is breadth and reach. The school’s own site still reads like a large civic campus rather than a boutique private operation: Olympiad medal celebrations, prefect appointments, prize-giving notices, Advanced Level admissions and a learning management system built out during the pandemic all point to an institution with scale, layers of tradition and a functioning academic engine. The alumni record is *formidable*: **424** notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata, including **131** politicians and statespersons, alongside scientists, writers and elite athletes. That kind of old-boy network carries real weight in Sri Lanka. Parents who want a school plugged directly into the country’s political, professional and cultural bloodstream will put Royal on the shortlist fast.

This is not the place for families shopping for glossy international-school comforts, imported pastoral language or a globally standardised experience. Royal College suits students who are *competitive*, *self-propelled* and happy in a school where honour, rank, sport and public distinction still count for something. A boy who wants a gentler, more managed environment will find stronger pastoral framing elsewhere. A student who thrives on institutional tradition, intellectual competition, visible achievement and national cachet will find Royal College hard to beat. It remains a *high-status, high-symbolism* choice: less cosmopolitan finishing school, more elite public arena.

#### STRENGTHS

- Established as the Colombo Academy by Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton in January 1835, it was the first government-run secondary school for boys in the country.
- Alumni include multiple heads of state, among them J.R Jayawardene, President (1978-1989) and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka (1977-1978) and Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Maldives (1978-2008).
- As a state 'National School', Royal stopped charging fees from its students with the introduction of free education in Ceylon in 1931, and provides education free of charge to this day.
- The school is located on 37 acres where the primary, middle and upper schools sit, with a hostel that accommodates around 230 students from outside Colombo.
- The school's cricket fixture against St. Thomas' College, initiated in 1880, is still known as the 'Battle of the Blues' and remains the highlight of the school sporting year.

#### TRADE-OFFS

- It is a boys' school located in Cinnamon Gardens, Colombo, so it offers no option for daughters and no co-educational social mix.
- Enrollment stands at around 9,500 students, a scale that raises legitimate questions about class sizes and individual attention compared with smaller private or international schools.
- The curriculum runs entirely on the Sri Lankan National syllabus through to GCE O/Level and A/Level, offering no IB or Cambridge pathway for families anticipating an internationally portable qualification.
- Grade 1 intake is politically sensitive: the Ministry of Education has previously halted Royal College's grade one admissions temporarily pending a special investigation into placement irregularities.

## ADMISSIONS

Entry is largely via three routes: Grade 1 at around age six through Ministry of Education zonal, sibling and past-pupil categories rather than an open exam; Grade 6 via the highly competitive national Grade 5 Scholarship Examination; and post-O/Level entry to the A/Level section requiring at least six passes with three credits, including Sinhala and Mathematics. As a free state school there are no tuition fees, but demand vastly outstrips supply and the Grade 1 process has faced government scrutiny over irregularities, so places are not straightforwardly available to newly arrived expatriate families without local residency or category ties.

## NOTABLE ALUMNI (424)

**SPORT:** Edward Grey, Fredrick de Saram, G.E.S. de Silva, Gamini Goonesena, Indrajit Coomaraswamy, John De Saram, Kushal Janith Perera, A M Mubarak

**MUSIC:** Iraj Weeraratne, Dilup Gabadamudalige, Dushyanth Weeraman, Nimal Mendis, Ranidu Lankage, Rohan Joseph de Saram

**DRAMA:** Channa Perera

**VISUAL\_ARTS:** Monte Cassim, Nimal Mendis, Oliver Weerasinghe, Geoffrey Bawa, Harold Peiris, Bevis Bawa, S.R. Kottegoda, Montagu Frank Modder

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WTS RATING 

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