

# Stowe School

Stowe, United Kingdom



*Boarders learn inside a Grade I neoclassical mansion set within an 18th-century landscape garden that shaped English garden design.*

## RANKING DIMENSIONS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Overall              | 64/100 |
| Academic outcomes    | 71/100 |
| University placement | 69/100 |
| Prestige & heritage  | 73/100 |
| Alumni network       | 20/100 |
| Facilities           | 74/100 |
| Transparency         | 64/100 |

## EDITOR'S VERDICT

The selling point is not subtle: Stowe puts adolescents inside Stowe House, a Grade I neoclassical mansion in an 18th-century landscape garden with real cultural weight. Plenty of British boarding schools trade on heritage; few operate on this scale, and fewer still make the setting central to daily life rather than a prospectus backdrop. Opened in 1923, Anglican in foundation, and accredited by ISI and HMC, Stowe sits in the top tier of the traditional English boarding market, but with a more *\*visibly theatrical\** physical identity than its older competitors. That matters. For some children, the estate will feel *\*electrifying\** and expansive; for others, it will feel oversized and performative.

Parents should shortlist Stowe for three clear reasons. First, it offers full-immersion British boarding in a setting that no urban day school can match. Second, its outcomes hold up: in the Class of 2024, **80%** of **210 leavers** went to top-100 universities, with **9 Oxbridge** places and 45 Russell Group destinations; Oxford, Cambridge and Durham all feature prominently. Third, its alumni footprint is deep and unusually broad, with 236 notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata across politics, business, writing, the arts and sport. That points to a school with reach, networks and cultural confidence, not a narrow exam factory. The fee level confirms the market position: an average annual boarding fee of **£58,560** across the full ladder, or **£35,700** for day pupils. This is *expensive*, and families are paying for environment, tradition and peer group as much as for classroom delivery.

The right student for Stowe wants boarding to feel *large-scale* and socially alive. This is not the intimate, monastic model of English schooling. The school suits teenagers who will use the estate, enjoy the drama of the place, and thrive in a community with status, history and a strong sense of occasion. It also suits families who want a British curriculum in English without sacrificing breadth of destination at university level. Children who need a small, tightly contained academic culture or a stripped-back, utilitarian campus may find Stowe too *grand* for comfort. Children with appetite, confidence and some independence will get more from it.

STRENGTHS

- Set on a Grade I listed estate around Stowe House and its historic landscape gardens, a distinctive campus among British boarding schools.
- World-class co-curricular provision: sport (9.7), music (9.6), drama (9.3) and visual arts (9.2) all sit in the top band, with a Steinway music school and purpose-built theatre.
- Strong 2024 outcomes: 25% A\* and 32% A at A-level, with 80% of leavers reaching top-100 universities and 9 Oxbridge places.
- Broad Russell Group progression, with Durham and Exeter the most popular 2024 destinations alongside Bristol, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Warwick.
- House-based pastoral system central to school life, reinforced by boarding staff working alongside academic staff.

TRADE-OFFS

- Boarding fees of £55,000 per year (and £30,000 day) are high by national standards and exclude extras.
- Entry is selective: UK candidates sit the ISEB pre-test plus reference and interview, and overseas applicants take UKiset and further exams, so places are not guaranteed even for capable applicants.
- The rural Buckinghamshire location means a longer journey from central London and international airports than schools closer to the capital, a factor for relocating or frequently travelling expat families.
- The traditional boarding six-day week, with Saturday and Wednesday afternoons committed to sport and activities, leaves less unstructured weekend time than some day-based alternatives.

## ADMISSIONS

Main entry points are 13+ (Year 9, around 180 places) and 16+ (roughly 40 sixth-form places), with a small number of 14+ spots. UK applicants sit the ISEB pre-test plus reference and interview; overseas candidates take UKiset followed by English, Maths and Science exams. Sixth-form applications are typically made a year in advance. Selective but broader-based than the most hyper-competitive London day schools; academic, art, music, sport and all-rounder scholarships plus means-tested bursaries are available. Boarding is predominantly full, with weekly or flexi options on designated open weekends.

## NOTABLE ALUMNI (236)

**SPORT:** Adam King, Jason de la Peña, Oliver Bertram, Patrick Sherrard, Laddie Lucas, Robert White, Sean Morris, Ben Duckett

**MUSIC:** Sofia and the Antoinettes, Henrik Takkenberg, Harry Gregson-Williams, Roger Hodgson, Crispian Mills, David Fanshawe, Giles Martin, Howard Goodall

**DRAMA:** Henry Cavill, Michael Birkett, 2nd Baron Birkett, David Niven, Miranda Raison, Michael Deeley, Edward Hardwicke, Crispian Mills, Howard Goodall

**VISUAL ARTS:** John C. Corlette, Nigel Henderson, Michael Ventris, Harry Gregson-Williams, George Haig, 2nd Earl Haig, David Wynne, Alexander Talbot Rice, David Shepherd

**LETTERS:** Kate Spicer, Algy Cluff, Peter Lewis, James Reeves, Kate Reardon, Kevin Andrews, Laurence Whistler, Oscar Humphries

**POLITICS:** John Henniker-Major, 8th Baron Henniker, Martin Buckmaster, 3rd Viscount Buckmaster, Laddie Lucas, Peter Hayman, Peter Henderson, Baron Henderson of Brompton, Peter Vanneck, Robin Kinahan, Robin Maxwell-Hyslop

**SCIENCE:** Tim Lancaster, Susie Alegre, Kevin Andrews, Peter Fenwick, Simon Digby, Michael Ventris, Alistair McAlpine, Baron McAlpine of West Green, John Shepherd-Barron

**BUSINESS:** Peter Bryan Sanderson, Sir Richard Lexington Sutton, 9th Bt., Guy Pelly, Will Wynne, David Gilbert, Algy Cluff, John David Eaton, Marc Koska

WTS RATING 

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