

Fettes College

Edinburgh, United Kingdom



Gothic turrets said to have inspired Hogwarts frame Scotland's only sixth form pairing A Levels with a full IB Diploma pathway.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	70/100
Academic outcomes	70/100
University placement	68/100
Prestige & heritage	73/100
Alumni network	72/100
Facilities	73/100
Transparency	62/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The Gothic pile matters here, but not for the tourist-board reason. Fettes has built a clear identity around a **full-fat boarding school** experience on a 100-acre campus in Edinburgh, then paired it with an academic offer that is more flexible than many Scottish rivals: GCSEs, then a genuine sixth-form choice between A Levels and the full IB Diploma. That dual pathway is the school’s sharpest market advantage. Parents who want a traditional British boarding structure without locking a child into one senior route should pay attention. The school is co-educational, takes pupils from 5 to 18, and says ***72%*** are full boarders; ***22%*** live outside the UK, from over 30 countries. That gives Fettes a more international pupil body than many old Scottish boarding schools, without losing the house-based culture families

expect from the category.

Academically, the published signals are strong and unusually specific. Education Scotland gave Fettes “Excellent” grades for curriculum and for raising attainment and achievement, and the school won Sunday Times School of the Year for Academic Excellence 2025 for GCSE and A Level. In the sixth form, the latest figures cited are **38** average IB points and **57%** gaining A*-A at A Level or 7/6 at IB. University outcomes also hold up: in the 2024 leaver cohort of 130, **85%** went to top-100 universities, with 11 to Oxbridge, 53 to Russell Group institutions and Edinburgh the single most common destination with 18 places. This is not a school trading on architecture and history while keeping results opaque. It publishes enough to justify its *serious academic claim*.

The other reason to shortlist Fettes is that it does not force a false choice between scholarship and breadth. The school pushes hard on co-curricular life, and the numbers are again concrete: more than 25 students represented Scotland in sport. The boarding ethos is central, not decorative, and that will suit pupils who want immersion, structure and a strong peer culture. It will also suit families who value pastoral supervision with ambition, rather than a looser sixth-form atmosphere. Fees place it firmly in the premium UK independent bracket: an average annual day fee of **£23,000** across the full ladder, and an average annual boarding fee of **£41,000**.

The best fit is a child who is bright, energetic and happy in a visibly traditional environment with rules, houses, ceremony and competition. Fettes suits students who want options at 16, who can use the A Level/IB split intelligently, and who will make use of a campus built for boarding rather than just tolerate it. It is less persuasive for families seeking a progressive, informal culture or a narrowly specialised academic hot-house. This is a *high-structure, high-opportunity* school with a strong university record, an international boarding population and one of the clearest sixth-form propositions in Scotland.

STRENGTHS

- Fettes is the only school in Scotland to offer the dual pathway of A Level and the IB Diploma in the sixth form.
- The school reports an average of 38 IB points, 57% A*-A at A Level or 7/6 at IB, and 82% of 2025 leavers securing their first-choice university place.
- 85% of 2024 leavers progressed to top-100 universities, with 11 to Oxbridge and 53 to Russell Group institutions.
- The school has been recognised with 'Excellents' from Education Scotland for 'Curriculum' and 'Raising attainment and achievement'.
- Its full-boarding ethos integrates day and boarding pupils alike, supported by a broad co-curricular, evening and weekend programme.

TRADE-OFFS

- Fettes is one of the few remaining full boarding schools - the senior school offers no flexi or weekly boarding, which limits options for families wanting part-time residential arrangements.
- At around £55,000 a year for boarding and roughly £30,000 for day places, Fettes is priced as an ultra-premium proposition and demands a significant financial commitment.
- There is competition for places and not everyone who meets the basic academic standard is admitted, so entry cannot be assumed even for well-qualified applicants.
- The Edinburgh location sits well outside the southern England corridor favoured by many international families relocating to the UK.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points span the Prep School from age 5 through to the Sixth Form. Pupils joining at 11+ usually complete a CAT4 cognitive aptitude assessment, while those entering the Senior School at 13+ join the Third Form (Year 9) via Fettes' own entrance exams or Common Entrance, alongside interviews. Sixth Form entry requires a minimum of six GCSE subjects at grade 6 or better, including English Language and Mathematics. Both scholarship and general routes involve written papers and staff interviews, and early registration is recommended given competitive demand.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (206)

SPORT: David MacMyn, Tommy Armour, Charles Lawrie, Justin Melck, Lewis Robertson, Maurice Berkley, Nelson Henderson, Patrick Blair

MUSIC: Michael Tippett, Lorne Balfe, William Henry Ogilvie, John Purser, Hugh Enes Blackmore, Abimbola Fernandez

DRAMA: Tilda Swinton, John Hay Beith, John Purser, William Corlett, David MacLennan, Louise Linton

VISUAL_ARTS: Tilda Swinton, Edward Wadsworth, Donald Steel, Charles McKean, Derek Shiel, Ian Weatherhead, Arthur Benison Hubback, Archibald Standish Hartrick

LETTERS: David Ogilvy, Angus Deaton, Iain Macleod, John Hay Beith, Michael Tippett, Roderick MacFarquhar, William Henry Ogilvie, Fereydoon Batmanghelidj

POLITICS: Ian McKee, Selwyn Lloyd, John Simon, 1st Viscount Simon, Iain Macleod, Roderick MacFarquhar, Harry Woolf, Baron Woolf, R. H. Bruce Lockhart, Wilfrid Normand, Baron Normand

SCIENCE: David Ogilvy, Angus Deaton, Alan Archibald Campbell-Swinton, Ian Donald, John Hay Beith, Robert Alexander Rankin, Walter Terence Stace, Roderick MacFarquhar

BUSINESS: David Ogilvy, Alan Archibald Campbell-Swinton, John Macqueen Ward, Keith Arbuthnott, 17th Viscount of Arbuthnott, Richard Lambert, Robert Lawrence, Tommy Macpherson, Bill Gammell

WTS RATING 

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