

Harrow School

London, United Kingdom



Perched on its own hill above London since 1572, a full-boarding, all-boys house system still runs on ritual, song and rivalry.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	79/100
Academic outcomes	78/100
University placement	76/100
Prestige & heritage	84/100
Alumni network	84/100
Facilities	82/100
Transparency	72/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Perched on Harrow on the Hill and still run as a full-boarding school for boys aged 13 to 18, Harrow trades on something many rivals no longer have: institutional distinctiveness. This is not a softened version of the British boarding tradition. It is the tradition, in one of its most **ritualised** and **self-confident** forms: houses, rivalry, song, Anglican foundation and a social culture built around total immersion rather than weekly flexi-boarding convenience. That clarity matters. Parents do not shortlist Harrow for a modern, casual interpretation of boarding life; they shortlist it because it offers an older, **high-definition** version of it. The academic structure is supported by a ***10:1*** student-teacher ratio and average classes of ***18***, which gives it room for proper teaching rather than lecture-hall schooling.

ISI and HMC accreditation place it squarely within the established top end of the British independent sector.

The market position is straightforward: Harrow is expensive, highly prestigious and unapologetically niche. The average annual boarding fee across the school is **£63,735**, which puts it in the top bracket of UK boarding. Parents paying that price are not buying novelty facilities or a sprawling co-ed campus model; they are buying brand weight, continuity, access to a deep old-boy network and a boarding culture that still has *real grip*. The alumni floor alone is extraordinary: 2,103 notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata, including 698 politicians and statespersons, 130 business and finance figures, 156 scientists and scholars, and 397 elite athletes. That does not guarantee a child’s future, but it does tell you what sort of institutional pipeline Harrow has built over centuries.

The school also has current academic traction. In the Class of 2024, 165 boys left; 89% went to top-100 universities, with **14 Oxbridge** places, 43 Russell Group destinations and 7 Ivy League admissions. The biggest single destinations were Oxford with 8, Cambridge with 6 and UCL with 12. Those numbers place Harrow exactly where parents expect it to be: strong access to elite universities without reducing the place to a sixth-form crammer. The school’s own language leans hard on “holistic” education, and in Harrow’s case that claim has substance because boarding still structures the whole week, not just the timetable.

The boy who wants Harrow is not searching for a relaxed adolescence. He wants intensity, hierarchy, tradition and a school identity strong enough to shape him. He will cope with formality, relish competition and gain energy from belonging to a house rather than resisting it. Families who want a *softer*, more contemporary, less codified boarding experience should look elsewhere. Families who want an all-boys school with *serious social capital*, durable academic outcomes and a culture that still feels distinct in a crowded market should keep Harrow near the top of the list.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1572 under a Royal Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I, making it one of the oldest continuously operating boys' boarding schools in England.
- Full boarding, all-boys community of around 800-830 pupils spread across a dozen boarding houses, giving a close-knit, tradition-rich house system rare among London-area schools.
- Located on Harrow on the Hill, roughly 30 minutes from central London and about 13 miles from Heathrow, making term travel straightforward for international families.
- ISI's February 2024 inspection found the school compliant in all respects and awarded the rare 'significant strengths' designation to its Super-Curriculum programme.
- Long roll of notable alumni including several British prime ministers such as Winston Churchill and Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first prime minister.

TRADE-OFFS

- Single-sex, all-boys and full-boarding only, with no day option or co-education, which rules the school out for families wanting girls' education or a day-pupil arrangement.
- Fees sit at the top of the UK boarding market, with 2025/26 termly charges of roughly 21,245 pounds (around 63,700 pounds a year), plus registration, deposit and acceptance fees on top.
- Year 9 entry is highly competitive, with only around 160 places available annually against a multi-stage process involving the ISEB Common Pre-Test, a bespoke Harrow Test and interviews.
- Steeped in distinctive, centuries-old customs such as boater hats, morning dress and archaic slang, a traditional public-school culture that will not suit every family's taste.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry is Year 9 (age 13), with roughly 160 places a year, plus a smaller Year 12 (age 16) intake. Registration typically closes by June/July of Year 5 or early Year 6 for 13+; candidates then sit the ISEB Common Pre-Test followed by the Harrow Test, school references and an interview. Year 12 applicants sit subject-specific tests and an assessment day. Non-native English speakers must show strong fluency, as teaching is entirely in English. Academic, music, art, sport and all-round scholarships exist alongside means-tested bursaries, but both are competitive and limited.



ADMISSIONS CALENDAR

The next 4 milestones for Harrow School. Dates confirmed against the school's most recent published admissions calendar — check the official site to confirm before submitting.

Oct 4, 2026

29D LEFT

OPEN HOUSE

Autumn Open Morning

[Official page](#) [↗](#)

May 31, 2027

9MO

REGISTRATION CLOSURES

YEAR 9

Year 9 registration closes

Oct 15, 2027

14MO

ASSESSMENT

YEAR 9

ISEB Common Pre-Test window

Feb 1, 2028

18MO

DECISION

YEAR 9

Conditional offers issued

► 1 PAST DATE

NOTABLE ALUMNI (2103)

SPORT: Charles Yorke, 5th Earl of Hardwicke, Fraser Waters, Gareth Rees, Spencer Gore, Frank Hadow, A. N. Hornby, Alastair McCorquodale, John Hartley

MUSIC: Henry Hugo Pierson, Laurie Johnson, James Blunt, Sandy Wilson, Laurence Fox, George Ratcliffe Woodward, William Hunt, Mike d'Abo

DRAMA: John Galsworthy, George Arliss, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Richard Curtis, Maurice Barrymore, Charles Mendl, Adrian Brunel, James Callis

VISUAL_ARTS: William Henry Fox Talbot, Victor Pasmore, Cecil Beaton, David Mayer de Rothschild, Edward Tennyson Reed, Eliot Hodgkin, Harold Peto, John Spencer-Churchill

LETTERS: John Galsworthy, Alain de Botton, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Byron, Aubrey de Grey, George Arliss, Constantine Phipps, 1st Marquess of Normanby, Richard Brinsley Sheridan

POLITICS: John William Strutt, Adlai Stevenson III, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Byron, Winston Churchill, Stanley Baldwin, Robert Peel, Alan Brooke, 3rd Viscount Brookeborough

SCIENCE: John William Strutt, Michael A. Jackson, Alain de Botton, Winston Churchill, Joseph Banks, Aubrey de Grey, James Bruce, Harold Joachim

BUSINESS: J. Bruce Ismay, Edmund Leopold de Rothschild, Dudley Gordon, 3rd Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair, Gareth Rees, Charles Chetwynd-Talbot, 22nd Earl of Shrewsbury, Charles Rudd, Chula Chakrabongse, Nicky Oppenheimer

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_288ae9e2c5.