

Clifton College

Bristol, United Kingdom



Founded in 1862 to champion science and equality over classics, its house system still shapes life on this Bristol clifftop campus.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	59/100
Academic outcomes	66/100
University placement	65/100
Prestige & heritage	71/100
Alumni network	11/100
Facilities	72/100
Transparency	61/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Clifton College occupies a distinct place in the British independent market: a historic Bristol school founded in **1862** with a reforming streak still worth noting. Its early commitment to science over classics, and its refusal to reserve status for boarders over day pupils, gave it a more modern starting point than many old public schools. That matters. This is not a country-house fantasy school dressed in ivy and nostalgia. It is a city school with reach, scale and institutional memory, serving children from age **3–18** across day and boarding. Parents who want the architecture and house culture of an old English school, without the dead weight of inherited snobbery, should have Clifton on the list. The line the school pushes — *aim high, stay grounded* — lands because the underlying history supports it.

What sets Clifton apart is the combination of continuity and breadth. A through-school structure from Pre-Prep to Sixth Form gives families a single educational track rather than a sequence of exits and re-entries. The house system still shapes the place, and for the right child that brings *belonging*, *identity* and a durable social framework. Bristol also gives Clifton an edge over more isolated boarding schools: this is a proper urban campus, not a remote estate, which changes the feel of school life and broadens what older pupils can access. The published pupil-teacher ratio of **1:9** points to strong staffing levels. The school also makes a point of its coeducational character; since 1987 it has educated girls across every year group, and that shift is now fully embedded rather than cosmetic. Academic outcomes get celebratory headlines from the school, but aggregate result data are not published in the extracts here, so parents should ask for hard numbers, subject by subject.

The market position is clear. Clifton sits in the upper tier of traditional British schools that offer full pastoral infrastructure, serious extracurricular provision and a recognisable public-school social education, but with a less archaic brief than some rivals. It will suit pupils who thrive in a busy, structured environment and want more than classroom performance from school: sport, performing arts, clubs, outdoor activity and house loyalties all carry weight. The ideal Clifton child is not fragile and not excessively specialised at **13-18**. This is a school for students with appetite: children who want *momentum*, *community*, *pastoral steadiness* and room to develop across multiple fronts. For international families, the attraction is straightforward: a long-established English boarding and day school with strong tradition, a clear all-through pathway and a culture that prizes *confidence with substance* over polish alone.

STRENGTHS

- All-through education from ages 3 to 18 on a single-city footprint
- Boarding and day options add flexibility for local and overseas families
- World-class co-curricular provision, especially in sport and drama, with elite dance and visual arts
- Established in 1862 with a liberal, inclusive founding ethos and longstanding traditions
- ISI-accredited and a member of HMC

TRADE-OFFS

- Anglican foundation and traditional ethos may not suit every family
- English-medium, British-only curriculum narrows non-British pathway options
- Strong co-curricular identity means academically driven families should seek current results directly
- Published fee range is wide, so families must confirm the exact cost for their entry stage

ADMISSIONS

Clifton College is a British co-educational day and boarding school in Bristol for ages 3-18, with entry spanning Pre-Prep (3-7), Prep (7-13) and Upper School/Sixth Form (13-18). The obvious admission stages are therefore early years, Prep, Year 9 and Sixth Form, though the school presents itself as a continuous through-school rather than one with only a few formal intake years. It actively recruits overseas pupils – independent reporting puts the overseas cohort at around 20% and boarders at roughly 30% – and offers a dedicated team supporting international applications.

The public material available to us does not set out the detail parents usually want most: assessment format, interview structure, reference requirements or fixed application deadlines. Bursary and scholarship arrangements should be confirmed directly, as should the exact fee for a given entry stage, since the published annual fee range is wide. What is distinctive is the breadth of entry routes across the full 3-18 age range and the explicit provision made for overseas applicants rather than treating them as an afterthought.

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_2e5aa750fe.