

Sherborne School

Sherborne, United Kingdom



Beside the abbey it has neighboured for 1,300 years, seven historic boarding houses still set the rhythm of school life.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	72/100
Academic outcomes	72/100
University placement	70/100
Prestige & heritage	75/100
Alumni network	74/100
Facilities	75/100
Transparency	65/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Beside Sherborne Abbey, this is a boys’ school where place matters as much as programme. Sherborne has operated on the same site for more than ****1,300 years****, with its current foundation dating from 1550, and that continuity still shapes the school’s character: seven historic boarding houses, a town-centre setting, and a rhythm of life built around boarding rather than day-school convenience. It takes boys from 13 to 18, teaches in English, and runs on a British curriculum. The result is **distinctly old-school** in the literal sense, not the cosmetic one.

What puts Sherborne on a shortlist is not novelty but density of tradition combined with a serious

boarding culture. This is not a commuter school with dormitories attached; boarding is the organising principle, even though day places exist. Parents looking for a co-educational sixth form pathway or a softer, more informal campus culture should look elsewhere. Sherborne's attraction lies in a *deeply rooted* institutional identity, strong peer culture and the kind of adolescent independence that a full boarding environment can produce. Its membership of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference from 1869, and of the Eton Group and Boarding Schools Association, places it firmly in the old public-school market: established, competitive and expensive. The average annual fee is **£29,722** for boarders and **£21,142** for day pupils.

The boy who thrives here wants a school with ritual, structure and historical weight, not one that treats tradition as branding. He will value houses, community and the texture of daily life in a small Dorset town. He also needs enough self-possession to handle a setting that is *highly codified* and unapologetically traditional. Sherborne suits families who want a British boarding education in its classic form: academically purposeful, socially formative and *not for the faint-hearted*. It does not sell modern gloss. It offers inheritance, order and a very clear sense of what it is.

STRENGTHS

- Sherborne is a British full-boarding school in Dorset, re-founded by King Edward VI in 1550 on far older cathedral-school roots, making it one of the oldest schools in England.
- Full boarding is central: the school is one of the few in the UK where boys live on site seven days a week, across seven boarding houses.
- Results are strong: in 2025 nearly a third of A-level grades were A*/A, one in six pupils achieved straight A*/A, and all six Oxbridge candidates met their offers, with most leavers going to Russell Group universities.
- World-class provision in sport, music and drama, reinforced by joint activities with neighbouring Sherborne Girls under the "Separate Yet Together" partnership.
- A broad curriculum including less common subjects such as Classical Civilisation, Greek and History of Art, plus BTEC courses in Creative Digital Media, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and Sport.

TRADE-OFFS

- Sherborne is a single-sex boys' school for ages 13 to 18, so families wanting co-education for the full secondary phase must rely on joint activities with the neighbouring girls' school.
- Fees are ultra-premium, at around GBP 44,000 a year (WSA), a significant barrier to access.
- The rural Dorset location is a real commute for London-based families, even with direct train links to London Waterloo.
- Flexible day arrangements are a recent change: only from the 2026-27 academic year is Sherborne introducing Day Boarding and a lower-cost day-only option, so these are still bedding in.
- The school is grounded in Christian values with two chapel services a week, which families seeking a fully secular environment should factor in.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry points are Year 9 (13+) and Sixth Form (16+), with limited earlier entry via the linked prep school. Boys sit the ISEB Common Pre-Test plus Sherborne's own assessment days, including an interview; Common Entrance, where taken, is used mainly for in-school setting rather than as a hard admissions bar. Registration by the end of Year 5 is recommended for 13+ testing, and Sixth Form places are conditional on GCSE results. The school describes itself as not highly selective, though demand for boarding places, especially from overseas families, makes early registration advisable.

WTS RATING 

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