

Abingdon School

Abingdon, United Kingdom



On the banks of the Thames just south of Oxford, a nine-century foundation whose boathouse has long fed Oxbridge rowing crews.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	77/100
Academic outcomes	79/100
University placement	77/100
Prestige & heritage	78/100
Alumni network	77/100
Facilities	77/100
Transparency	73/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

On the banks of the Thames just south of Oxford, Abingdon trades on two things that still matter in the English independent market: age and output. Founded in 1256, it has the weight of an old public school but now runs as a co-educational day and boarding school for 11-18 rather than a museum piece. The academic case is straightforward. In the 2024 leavers’ cohort of 155, ****84%**** went to top-100 universities, with ****20 Oxbridge**** places and 38 Russell Group offers; the school also states that ****89%**** of students secured their firm-choice university. That is a strong set of destinations by any measure. Add ISI and HMC, Anglican roots, and a site with genuine rowing pedigree, and the school lands as a ***serious*, *high-expectation*** Oxfordshire option with more institutional heft than many newer co-ed

competitors.

What makes Abingdon distinctive is the combination of old-school infrastructure and a modern broadening of the offer. The school pushes hard on life beyond the timetable, and here the numbers are concrete enough to count: ****150+**** co-curricular activities and 200 career-guidance volunteers. That matters because schools of this type can drift into narrow academic production lines; Abingdon is working against that. The move to co-education is the biggest structural shift in the foundation this century, and parents should read that for what it is: a school in transition, not a finished article. For some families that is a strength — energy, change, a wider social mix. For others, it raises practical questions about culture, identity and how quickly traditions adapt. Those are fair questions to ask on a visit.

Fees place it in the expensive but not ultra-prime bracket: an average annual day fee of ****£28,500**** across the full 11–18 ladder, and an average annual boarding fee of ****£54,560****. That buys a school with strong university delivery, a substantial co-curricular menu and a notable alumni base that runs to 210 catalogued figures in Wikidata across politics, science, the arts and sport. The pupil who will want Abingdon is bright, busy and comfortable in a **structured**, **competitive** environment. Rowers, musicians, ambitious all-rounders and academically driven pupils with Oxbridge or Russell Group aspirations fit naturally here. Children who need a very soft, small-scale, **hand-holding** school will find stronger matches elsewhere. Abingdon suits families who want tradition without full social stiffness, boarding without remoteness, and a school that still takes outcomes seriously.

STRENGTHS

- Rated Excellent by the Independent Schools Inspectorate
- Strong 2024 A-Level outcomes, with 36% of grades at A* and 68% at A*-A
- Strong university destinations: 84% of 2024 leavers went to top-ranked universities, with 20 to Oxford or Cambridge
- One of England's oldest schools, with a founding date verified to 1256
- Set on a 35-acre campus in the centre of Abingdon, just south of Oxford, with strong arts, science and sport facilities
- Full and weekly boarding available from age 13 within a settled house system

TRADE-OFFS

- Currently a boys' school; co-education is being phased in only from September 2026 (Year 7 and Sixth Form) and September 2028 (Year 9), so a full mixed intake is not yet in place
- Boarding is a minority experience, so the school culture is predominantly day-based rather than a full boarding environment
- Boarding fees are substantial at £55,000 per year, a significant recurring cost for relocating families
- Entry is selective: external candidates sit an entrance examination, and Sixth Form applicants typically need strong GCSE grades in their chosen subjects

ADMISSIONS

Main entry points are age 11 (Year 7), 13 (Year 9) and 16 (Sixth Form). Abingdon Prep pupils receive continuous-assessment offers into Year 9; external candidates sit Common Entrance or the school's own examination. Sixth Form entrants generally need strong GCSE grades across their chosen A-level subjects, alongside references and interview. Co-education is being introduced in stages: girls join Year 7 and the Sixth Form from September 2026, and Year 9 from September 2028, so admissions criteria for girls are still being finalised at some entry points.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (210)

SPORT: Jon Dunbar, David Tanner, Nathaniel Watkins, Phil Baker, Felix Newman, Jamie Cook, Ian Middleton, Theo Brophy-Clews

MUSIC: Joseph Kennedy, Thom Yorke, Jonny Greenwood, John Bennet, Thomas Dolby, Philip Selway, Colin Greenwood, Ed O'Brien

DRAMA: Wayne Yip, Eddie Eyre, Jamie Anderson, Joseph Kennedy, Christopher Wray, Tom Kempinski, Jonny Greenwood, Tom Hollander

VISUAL_ARTS: Harold Gilman, Thomas Dolby, William Boxall, James Allison, Theo Green, Philip Johnson, Harry Redfern, Henry Medd

LETTERS: Willoughby Weaving, Richard Graves, George Rowley, Edward Castle, Jonny Donahoe, Jamie Anderson, Michael Bateman, Tom Kempinski

POLITICS: Edward Castle, Nicholas Kay, James Dashwood, Henry Dawkins, William Bennet, Clive Alderton, George Knapp, Edward Morant

SCIENCE: Eddy Joseph, Richard J. Thompson, Q457134, William Boxall, Chris Dobson, Ben Macintyre, Colin Ronan, James Allison

BUSINESS: Paul Robert Virgo Clarke, Francis Maude, Thomas Dolby, Thomas Tesdale, Tim Parker, John Roysse, Lacey Robert Johnson, Matthew Harding

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_8ea26931a5.