

Lycée Henri-IV

Paris, France



Storied Left Bank lycée prizing the French Bac and its feeder classes préparatoires to France's grandes écoles.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	80/100
Academic outcomes	89/100
University placement	85/100
Prestige & heritage	84/100
Alumni network	80/100
Facilities	62/100
Transparency	65/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Lycée Henri-IV sits on the Left Bank as a public French lycée with a very specific purpose: serious preparation for the French Baccalaureate and, beyond that, the concours culture that feeds France’s grandes écoles. This is not a broad church school trying to be all things to all families. It is **fiercely academic**, tightly aligned to the French system, and strongest for students who want intellectual pressure rather than pastoral cushioning. The school’s published profile is compact and clear: ages 15 to 20, French Baccalaureate curriculum, instruction in French and English, and day-only provision.

What puts Henri-IV on a shortlist is the combination of selectivity, scale and outcomes. A ****10:1**** student-

teacher ratio and average class size of ****18**** give it a more intimate teaching setup than the myth of the vast anonymous state lycée suggests, while its recent destinations confirm the school's real centre of gravity: École Polytechnique (15), ENS Ulm (16) and HEC Paris (18). That is **elite French higher education**, not generic university progression. The school also carries IBO accreditation, though families should read that in context: the defining academic identity here is still the French Bac and the preparatory route attached to it, not an international-school hybrid. Its alumni bench is **extraordinary**: 695 notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata, with deep strength in politics, scholarship and letters.

The appeal, then, is narrow but powerful. Henri-IV suits students who are **high-octane**, self-directed and comfortable in a culture where academic status is earned through hard comparison and sustained performance. It will suit francophone or near-francophone pupils far better than international families hunting for a soft landing in Paris. Parents looking for glossy facilities, broad co-curricular branding or heavy pastoral hand-holding should look elsewhere. Parents looking for a school with intellectual seriousness, social prestige and a direct line into France's most competitive institutions should keep Henri-IV very close to the top of the list.

STRENGTHS

- As a public lycee, tuition is free aside from meals and boarding fees, since fees are not charged in France's state system.
- Its classes preparatoires (CPGE) achieve a 100% baccalaureat pass rate and are consistently ranked among the strongest in France for entry into the grandes ecoles.
- The school runs 24 CPGE classes across scientific, literary and economic/social tracks, admitting close to 1,100 students a year from across France and abroad.
- A mixed on-site boarding facility (internat) is available for pupils travelling from outside Paris, alongside nearby overflow housing.
- The school occupies the historic Abbey of Sainte-Genevieve site in the Latin Quarter, a listed historic monument next to the Sorbonne and the Pantheon.

TRADE-OFFS

- Entry to the CPGE is extremely competitive; the flagship MPSI science class reportedly admits around 6% of roughly 7,500 applications for 96 places.
- Selection for both the lycee track and the prep classes leans heavily on an applicant's existing school reputation and grade transcripts, which can disadvantage students from less well-known or non-French educational backgrounds.
- The curriculum is exclusively the French Baccalaureate route with no International Baccalaureate or bilingual international section, which may not suit families seeking an internationally portable diploma.
- As a demanding CPGE-focused public lycee, the workload is intense, with multiple weekly oral exams (colles) and written tests reported as standard for prep-class students.

ADMISSIONS

Entry to the college and lycee general track is via the national Affelnet platform, requiring Henri-IV to be listed as a priority wish plus a supporting dossier; places are scarce and academically competitive. The renowned classes préparatoires (CPGE) recruit separately and exclusively through Parcoursup, based on baccalaureat-level grades, teacher assessments and the reputation of the sending school; some CPGE tracks report single-digit admission rates. There are no tuition fees as a public school, though boarding and catering carry charges.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (695)

SPORT: Charles Bernard

MUSIC: Karol Beffa, Louis Laloy, Raphaël, Didier Haudepin, Joseph Tagliafico, Eugène Caillot, Guy Béart, Philippe Léotard

DRAMA: Henri Auguste Barbier, Pierre Daix, Jean Chérasse, Karol Beffa, Julien Luchaire, Raphaël, Didier Haudepin, Emmanuel Suarez

VISUAL_ARTS: Joseph Vigier, Jules Itier, Raphaël, Nasreddine Diné, François Deslaugiers, Guillaume Gillet, Gustan Le Sénéchal de Kerdréoret, Charles Lecoœur

LETTERS: Plantu, Paul Nizan, Henri Auguste Barbier, Paul Veyne, Claude Aveline, Jean Clair, Pierre Daix, Jean Mistler

POLITICS: Michel Sapin, Théodore Steeg, Paul Nizan, Alain Bombard, Claude Aveline, Narcisse Leven, Jean Mistler, René Dumont

SCIENCE: Célestin Bouglé, Paul Nizan, Alain Bombard, Paul Veyne, Jean Clair, Pierre Daix, Henri-Jean Martin, René Dumont

BUSINESS: Denis Hennequin, Jean Maillard, Jean Tannery, Jérôme Monod, Barthélemy-Prosper Enfantin, Jean Sarkozy, Emmanuel Macron, Auguste Legrand de Villers

WTS RATING 

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