

King's Hospital

Dublin, Ireland



Chartered by Charles II in 1669, this Liffey-side campus still channels its Blue Coat School past into modern boarding life.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	68/100
Academic outcomes	75/100
University placement	72/100
Prestige & heritage	86/100
Alumni network	15/100
Facilities	84/100
Transparency	82/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

King’s Hospital has a claim few Irish schools can match: a foundation charter from ****1669****, a Church of Ireland identity that still governs the place, and a move from inner-city Dublin to an ****80-acre**** Liffey-side campus that gives boarding real physical scale. This is not a faux-historic school trading on invented tradition. The Blue Coat legacy is built into the institution’s story, governance and symbolism, from the royal charter to the governors’ role as trustees of the founding ethos. For parents, that matters. Schools with this depth of inheritance tend to know what they are. King’s Hospital does. It offers the Irish National Curriculum through the Leaving Certificate in English, with boarding at the centre rather than as an afterthought. The result is a school with **old institutional confidence**, **a strong sense of continuity**

and a campus large enough to support serious school life beyond lessons.

What puts it on a shortlist is the combination of history, governance and breadth. This is a co-educational secondary school for day pupils and boarders, but the structure around boarding is unusually explicit: a deputy head pastoral who also serves as head of boarding, house teams, prefects, mentors and a student council with regular meetings. That signals a school that takes the mechanics of adolescent life seriously. The senior team also gives performing arts and sport cabinet-level status, which tells parents something useful about priorities. So do destinations: Trinity College Dublin ****25****, University College Dublin ****20****, and Cambridge ****1****. Those numbers point to a school that feeds Ireland’s leading universities well, without pretending to be a UK conveyor belt. The atmosphere reads as **close-knit without being cloistered**, **grounded rather than glossy**, and **tradition-led but not antiquarian**.

The school’s market position sits in a distinct niche: an Irish boarding school with Anglican roots, a long national history and enough scale to feel substantial, but not a mass institution. Families who want a boarding education in Dublin, not in rural isolation, will find that attractive. Families who value **ordered pastoral care**, visible leadership and a school community anchored by governors as well as staff will also pay attention. The critique is straightforward. King’s Hospital does not sell itself through published headline academic data, and parents who want a heavily quantified outcomes pitch will not get one. Nor is this a school for families seeking a secular culture scrubbed clean of religious heritage. The Church of Ireland character is integral, even with the school’s stated language of inclusion and diversity.

The pupil who fits King’s Hospital is the student who wants a full school life, not a narrow exam factory: someone happy in a structured community, willing to join in, and comfortable in a school where identity, ceremony and belonging still carry weight. Boarders who benefit from rhythm, expectation and a clearly defined community will do well here. So will day pupils who want access to that same infrastructure. It suits students with academic ambition for Irish universities, an appetite for sport or the arts, and enough resilience to thrive in a school with **real institutional memory** and **a boarding culture that asks for commitment**.

STRENGTHS

- Established in 1669, King's Hospital is a private Irish boarding school that has been running effectively for almost 300 years, making it one of the country's oldest establishments.
- The 80-acre campus is close to Dublin City, offering easy access to major motorways, train links, and Dublin Airport, and sits beside the River Liffey.
- While it is a Church of Ireland school, it has grown more diverse over recent years with about 45 per cent of its students from a Catholic or other belief background.
- Among its past pupils is Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, while former president Mary McAleese sent her son there.
- The school states it is the first school in Ireland to receive the IQM Inclusive School Award.

TRADE - OFFS

- The admissions selection process prioritises practising Church of Ireland families followed by siblings, which can disadvantage non-affiliated or newly arrived expat families competing for day places.
- The school teaches only the Irish National Curriculum and Leaving Certificate, with no IB or A-level option, which can complicate continuity for families expecting to move again internationally.
- Past coverage has referenced bullying allegations and, separately, governors meeting to discuss claims of a dormitory incident involving a hockey stick, indicating pastoral issues have surfaced publicly in the past.
- University progression in 2025 was mainly to Irish universities with the majority moving onto Trinity College Dublin and University College

Dublin, so the school's outcomes track are domestic rather than globally diversified.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is chiefly at Form 1, age 12, with day-place applications opening for a three-week window each autumn for the following September's intake. The admissions policy prioritises practising Church of Ireland families, then siblings, ahead of general applicants. Day applicants submit a birth certificate, a non-refundable registration fee, and a religious affiliation certificate where relevant; no interview is required. Boarding applicants face additional steps, including a PPS number and an interview, with a non-refundable 1,000 euro deposit due once an offer is accepted. Mid-stream entry to Forms 2-5 is also possible subject to availability, and separate arrangements exist for overseas/UK applicants.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (24)

SPORT: Robin Roe, Angus McKeen, Carlos O'Connell, Natalya Coyle, Grainne Clancy, Noel Mahony

MUSIC: Lisa Hannigan

DRAMA: Tom Murphy, Randal Plunkett, 21st Baron of Dunsany

LETTERS: Tom Murphy

POLITICS: James Cross, Leo Varadkar, Harvey du Cros, Robert Dowds, Roderic O'Gorman

SCIENCE: James Cross, Jonathan Coleman

BUSINESS: Harvey du Cros

WTS RATING 

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