

Colchester Royal Grammar School

Colchester, United Kingdom



A state grammar bearing two royal charters, from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I, with its own boarding house and a science-and-languages bent.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	79/100
Academic outcomes	84/100
University placement	80/100
Prestige & heritage	80/100
Alumni network	78/100
Facilities	69/100
Transparency	75/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

What sets Colchester Royal Grammar School apart is the combination of grammar-school selectivity, a boarding offer, and a history that predates most of British schooling. Founded in 1128 and carrying two royal charters, it has the institutional weight parents expect from an old grammar, but the more useful point is current performance. This is a British-curriculum school for ages 11–18, with a **13:1** student-teacher ratio and average class size of **25**: large enough to sustain serious subject breadth, small enough to avoid the anonymity of a giant sixth form. The school’s own language points to challenge and high standards; the harder fact is that its recent destinations back that up. In the 2024 leavers’ cohort of 160, 88% went to top-100 universities, with 14 to Oxbridge and 34 to Russell Group institutions. For a

state school, that is **formidable**.

This is not a school for a child who needs gentle pacing or constant hand-holding. Colchester Royal Grammar suits students who are **intellectually competitive**, self-directed and comfortable in a culture where academic traction matters. The editorial tagline gets to the heart of it: there is a science-and-languages bent, and that combination matters. It signals a school that prizes disciplined thinking, not just general busyness. The boarding element also changes the market position. In the UK, very few state grammars can offer both day and boarding places; that makes CRGS an **unusual proposition** for families who want academic intensity without the fee structure of a full independent boarding school. It sits in a narrow niche: selective, historic, state-funded, and residential.

Parents should shortlist it if they want a school with clear academic ambition and a record to prove it, rather than pastoral theatre or lifestyle gloss. The latest school news also records an Ofsted inspection in April 2026 with “exceptional” in four categories, which adds current regulatory strength to the historical reputation. The alumni floor is strong too: 62 notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata, including 29 scientists and scholars and 11 writers and journalists. That points to a school with a long memory for scholarship. The trade-off is plain. This is a **demanding environment**, and students who thrive here tend to enjoy stretch, precision and the company of other able pupils. For the right child, that is exactly the attraction; for the wrong one, it is **not for the faint-hearted**.

STRENGTHS

- Rated Outstanding by OFSTED, the highest available inspection grade.
- State-funded grammar school status means no tuition fees are charged for day places, unlike comparable independent schools.
- Strong 2024 university progression, with 88% of leavers to top-100 universities and 14 Oxbridge places.
- One of very few state boarding schools, offering a small sixth-form boarding house for up to 30 students at boarding-only fees of £19,050 a year.
- Long institutional history, holding royal charters granted by Henry VIII in 1539 and Elizabeth I in 1584.
- World-class music provision (co-curricular score 9.0), with outstanding sport and drama.

TRADE-OFFS

- The main school (ages 11-16) admits boys only; girls are admitted solely into the co-educational sixth form from age 16.
- Entry at 11+ via the CSSE examination is highly competitive, with far more qualified applicants than places available.
- Boarding is very limited in scale, restricted to up to 30 sixth-form students across two on-site houses, so most pupils commute daily.
- The academic, competitive culture may not suit pupils who need a highly individualised pace or extensive pastoral hand-holding.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry is at age 11 via the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex (CSSE) 11+ examination, comprising English and mathematics papers sat in September of Year 6; scores are age-standardised and there is no fixed catchment, with places awarded on merit and distance used only as a tie-breaker. The school is heavily oversubscribed, with far more qualified applicants than available places. A further entry point exists at sixth form (age 16), which is co-educational; sixth-form applicants must hold English and Maths GCSE at level 4 or equivalent. A small number of sixth-form boarding places are available at fixed boarding-only fees of £19,050 a year, and boarders must hold a British passport or equivalent right of residency. Local Authority applications must be lodged by 31 October, with offers issued around 1 March.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (62)

SPORT: David Smith, Derek Wyatt, Liam Neale

MUSIC: Henri Herbert

DRAMA: Jan Pinkava

VISUAL_ARTS: James Acheson, Jan Pinkava, David Morrison Reid Henry

LETTERS: Giles Smith, Robert Barnard, Andrew Sanger, Charles Benham, Edgell Rickword, John Sutherland, George Biddell Airy, Mike Baker

POLITICS: Charles Gray, Derek Wyatt, Laurie Bristow, Matthew Newcomen

SCIENCE: Francis Hauksbee, Robin Osborne, Robert Barnard, Richard Kemp, Charles Benham, Geoffrey Martin, John Sutherland, George Biddell Airy

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_e5ffbc8473.