

The Brearley School

New York City, United States



Founded in 1884 to match boys' schools in rigor, this Upper East Side day school still leads girls' education in humanities and Ivy placement.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	80/100
Academic outcomes	83/100
University placement	82/100
Prestige & heritage	80/100
Alumni network	79/100
Facilities	71/100
Transparency	78/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Brearley’s case rests on an old claim and a hard one to sustain: that girls deserve the same intellectual seriousness long reserved for boys’ schools. Founded in 1884 for exactly that reason, it still operates as a **fiercely academic** Upper East Side day school with a clear liberal-arts spine. The school covers ages 5 to 18, teaches in English, runs an American curriculum, and posts a striking ***6:1*** student-teacher ratio. That ratio matters here because Brearley is not built around scale, spectacle or glossy innovation rhetoric; it is built around close teaching, heavy reading, discussion and the expectation that students will think for themselves. The school’s own language is blunt about this: students are expected to challenge assumptions, collaborate and relish “this life of the mind”.

What puts Brearley on a shortlist is not just prestige, but coherence. Plenty of expensive New York schools promise ambition. Brearley offers a **disciplined intellectual culture** with unusual consistency from Kindergarten through Class XII, backed by NEASC and NAIS accreditation and reinforced by serious provision beyond the classroom: drama, music, visual arts, dance, athletics and off-campus learning all have visible space in the school's structure. The alumnae footprint adds weight. Wikidata alone records 64 notable alumni, including writers, journalists, scientists, scholars, actors, directors and artists, with three verified star-tier drama award winners. That breadth fits the school's profile: strong verbal training, confidence in argument and a humanities-heavy tradition that travels well into elite universities and public-facing careers. The average annual day fee is ***\$69,600***, which places Brearley squarely in New York's **top-price bracket**.

This is not a school for a child who wants anonymity, hand-holding or a soft academic landing. It suits the girl who reads voraciously, writes with force, enjoys argument, and does not wilt in a room full of other very able students. It also suits families who want an all-girls education without a religious frame and who value **serious scholarship** over campus sprawl. Parents should still ask hard questions about current academic outcomes, because the school does not publish aggregate exam-result data in the public domain. Even so, the proposition is clear: Brearley offers a **high-pressure, high-reward** education for intellectually ambitious girls, with the confidence and network that follow from a school that has done this work for well over a century.

STRENGTHS	TRADE-OFFS
• Founded in 1884 to provide its students with a college-preparatory education equal in rigor to that of boys, giving it one of the longest continuous histories among New York girls' schools. • The student-to-faculty ratio is 6:1, allowing for close academic attention across the school's 13-grade span. • In the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, Brearley placed 124 students at Ivy League schools, reflecting strong outcomes for its small graduating classes. • The school stated that it covered 100% of admitted students' demonstrated financial need, and in 2024 announced that students with household incomes at or below \$100,000 will attend Brearley for free. • For 2025, Niche ranked Brearley the nation's top girls' school and the nation's third-best private K-12 school, a third-party ranking rather than a school claim.	• It is a American all-girls private school, so families wanting a coeducational environment for a daughter will need to look elsewhere. • Tuition for students K-XII in the 2025-2026 school year is \$66,800, placing it among the costliest day schools in Manhattan even before fees for trips, uniforms or extras arise elsewhere. • Admission is narrow: estimates put the acceptance rate at 9-12% at K, 6th, and 9th grade entry, the school's principal intake points. • The largest entry point is kindergarten, with smaller numbers admitted at later transition years, and openings shrink considerably after kindergarten, which is a real constraint for relocating expat families arriving mid-childhood.

ADMISSIONS

Brearley is a single-track K-12 day school for girls. Applications open in early September and close in early-to-mid January, with specific deadlines varying by grade. Most seats are filled at kindergarten, with far fewer places at later grades, so timing of application matters strategically. Candidates sit the ISEE or SSAT, plus the school's own math and English assessments, submit a graded essay with teacher comments from an English or history class, provide recommendations from math and English teachers, and attend in-person student and parent interviews. Estimated acceptance at main entry years is roughly 9-12%.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (64)

MUSIC: Mary Rodgers, Yeou-Cheng Ma

DRAMA: Betty Furness, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi, Jenny Bicks, Nora Johnson, Genevieve Angelson, Devika Bhise, Jane Stanton Hitchcock, Ann Davenport

VISUAL_ARTS: Malvina Hoffman, Dorothy Draper, Q5372801, Q6759426, Mary Pinchot Meyer, Winifred Holt, Minnie Mortimer, Flora Blanc

LETTERS: Malvina Hoffman, Alice-Leone Moats, Betty Furness, Elizabeth Fishel, Holly Peterson, Judith Jones, Mary Ellin Barrett, Nora Johnson

POLITICS: Caroline Kennedy

SCIENCE: Virginia Grace, Sarah Fraser Robbins, Beryl Benacerraf, Jean Layton Gordon, Anne d'Harnoncourt, Q104717064, Laurie Schneider Adams, Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan

BUSINESS: Alexandra Wilkis Wilson, Caryn Marooney

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_eac962a39a.