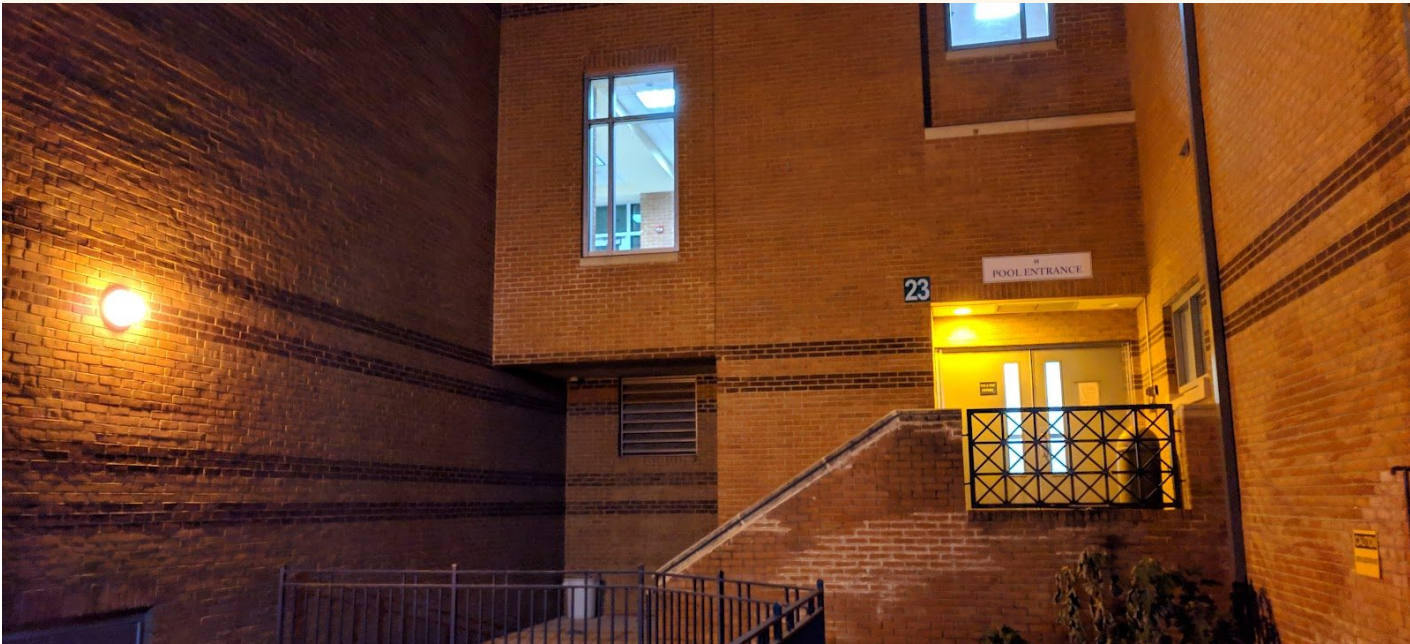


Holton-Arms School

Bethesda, MD, United States



On a 57-acre Bethesda campus, girls test the century-old creed 'I will find a way or make one' through original lab research.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	74/100
Academic outcomes	75/100
University placement	74/100
Prestige & heritage	74/100
Alumni network	74/100
Facilities	75/100
Transparency	71/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Holton-Arms occupies a clear niche in the Washington area market: a long-established, academically serious girls’ day school with the confidence to make intellectual ambition central to its identity. Founded in 1901, it pairs that age with a campus large enough to matter — **57 acres** in Bethesda — and a scale that stays personal. The published **1:8** student-teacher ratio tells the story: this is a school built for close teaching, close oversight and high expectations. Its own creed, “I will find a way or make one,” captures the culture better than any admissions slogan: **driven**, **self-possessed**, **curious** and unwilling to coast.

What marks Holton-Arms out is the combination of girls-only education, academic pressure and a strong language of purpose. The school does not frame learning as passive attainment; it frames it as preparation for action, leadership and public contribution. That matters for families who want more than polished college counselling and a busy timetable. Holton pushes girls to write persuasively, solve problems creatively and connect classroom study to wider global questions. The all-girls setting will suit students who thrive without the social drag of mixed-school performance politics and who benefit from an environment where girls take every seat at the lab bench, on the stage and in leadership roles. For the right child, that is **freeing**.

It belongs on a shortlist for parents seeking an American curriculum school with real academic intent, strong mentoring and a clear sense of institutional identity. It also has the weight of history without the complacency that can infect old schools. The student body spans ages ***8-18***, and with ***667*** students listed for 2021-22, Holton is large enough to offer range and small enough to know its pupils well. NAIS accreditation gives the expected independent-school baseline, but the stronger point is cultural: Holton has a coherent view of what it wants girls to become. That coherence is **bracing** and **exacting**.

The best fit is a girl who wants to be stretched, not managed; who values strong teaching; and who is ready to contribute across academics, arts, athletics or service rather than hide at the margins. This is not the right school for a student who wants anonymity or a low-pressure ride through adolescence. It is right for the student who likes standards, responds to challenge and wants a school with a **fierce** belief in female capability. For ambitious families in the DC orbit, Holton-Arms is a **serious contender**.

STRENGTHS

- Ranked the #1 private high school in Maryland by Niche's 2024 Best Schools rankings, based on academics, test scores and outcomes.
- Low student-teacher ratio of roughly 7:1 to 8:1 with average class sizes around 16 students across grades 3-12.
- Substantial financial aid commitment, with a \$6.4 million financial aid budget in the 2025-26 school year.
- Well-resourced 57-acre campus including a 400-seat performing arts theater, indoor competition pool, science wing and multiple libraries.
- Long institutional history since 1901 with an alumnae network of over 6,000 women worldwide, offering strong networking and mentorship traditions.

TRADE - OFFS

- Tuition is high, listed at \$60,535 for the 2026-27 school year, a significant cost for relocating families without aid.
- Single-sex (girls only) from grade 3 through 12, which will not suit families seeking a coeducational environment.
- Day school only with no boarding option, so it is not viable for families who cannot establish a local Bethesda-area residence.
- The school drew sustained national media scrutiny in 2018 when alumna Christine Blasey Ford's allegations against Brett Kavanaugh became a major news story, a association some families may want to research before enrolling.

ADMISSIONS

Holton-Arms admits girls into grades 3, 7 and 9 as primary entry points, with occasional openings elsewhere. The application process requires a school transcript, recommendation letters, a student essay/questionnaire, and an interview; the stated application deadline is January 10. As Niche's top-ranked Maryland private school with average SAT scores around 1390-1440, competition for places is significant, particularly at the Lower and Upper School entry years. Financial aid is need-based and determined case by case rather than by income thresholds.

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_ebd200cfc9.