

Windward School

Los Angeles, CA, United States

A teacher's pension birthed this Mar Vista campus, where a 7-to-1 ratio meets design-thinking rigor for college-bound Angelenos.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	57/100
Academic outcomes	67/100
University placement	65/100
Prestige & heritage	65/100
Alumni network	0/100
Facilities	68/100
Transparency	59/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Windward School occupies a strong niche in Los Angeles’ independent-school market: a non-religious, college-preparatory day school for ages 12–18 that pairs a small-scale classroom experience with an explicit emphasis on inquiry, communication and design thinking. Founded in 1971 by writer and teacher Shirley Windward, it now enrolls around 650 students in Mar Vista and carries WASC accreditation. The operational draw is clear: a student-teacher ratio of ****1:8**** in a school of roughly ****650**** pupils offers access to adults without the social intensity of a tiny boutique school. This is a campus for families who want **serious academic attention**, **high adult visibility** and a culture that treats adolescence as a period for intellectual training, not just credential collection.

What distinguishes Windward is the precision of its stated graduate profile. The school does not hide behind vague talk of “whole child” development; it spells out the outcomes it wants: critical thinkers, effective communicators, resilient problem-solvers, inclusive leaders and ethical, culturally responsive citizens. The strongest thread is the repeated stress on questioning, research, iteration and original solutions. “Design thinkers” is not decorative language here; it signals a school that values process, revision and strategic problem-solving alongside conventional college-prep literacy. That gives Windward an edge for parents seeking **disciplined curiosity**, **intellectual agility** and a community where discussion, writing and collaborative work matter as much as test-ready content coverage.

It belongs on a shortlist because it offers a distinct blend that many schools claim and fewer execute: **close teaching relationships**, an inclusive ethos, and an academically ambitious framework without boarding-school theatrics or religious overlay. The school’s own language leans hard on wellness, empathy and cultural responsiveness, which tells parents that pastoral culture carries weight here. That matters in a city where some academically selective environments still trade too heavily on pressure and polish. Windward’s appeal rests in a more modern proposition: bright students pushed to think hard,

speak clearly, work ethically and engage across difference.

The best fit is a student who wants to participate, not disappear. Windward suits articulate, reflective children who enjoy seminar discussion, sustained writing, collaborative projects and teachers who know them well. It will also suit students who respond to structure and feedback, then improve through revision. Families chasing old-school prestige signalling alone have stronger options elsewhere in Los Angeles. Families who want **purposeful adolescence**, **thoughtful ambition** and a school that takes both intellect and character seriously should pay attention.

STRENGTHS	TRADE - OFFS
- American college-preparatory curriculum in English. - Ages 12-18 focus suits secondary-only families. - Progressive Los Angeles day school with arts emphasis. - NAIS accreditation offers recognised independent-school governance.	- Day-only format; no boarding for international families. - Non-religious ethos may not suit faith-based preferences. - Secondary-only school; no provision below age 12.

ADMISSIONS

Windward School is a non-religious, independent day school in Los Angeles for ages 12-18, which in practice aligns with grades 7-12. The obvious entry point is the start of middle school, with later applications likely considered where places arise, though the school does not publish a fuller admissions map in the material provided. Nor does it set out, in the sources here, a public timetable of deadlines or a detailed description of testing, interviews or written assessments. Families should therefore expect a standard competitive US independent-school process and check directly for current requirements.

What does come through clearly is the kind of pupil Windward says it is trying to shape: critical thinkers, effective communicators, resilient problem-solvers, inclusive leaders, and ethically minded citizens. That suggests selection is likely to look beyond raw academics alone. The school's own language places weight on curiosity, discussion, collaboration, cultural responsiveness and balance, which is consistent with its progressive reputation. Financial-aid or bursary provision is not described in the sources supplied, so it is best not to assume either scale or availability without confirming with the school.

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_0264b9b996.