

Royal Grammar School, Guildford

Guildford, United Kingdom



A working chained library inside a Grade I Tudor schoolroom anchors a 1509 foundation's steady march toward Oxbridge offers.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	65/100
Academic outcomes	68/100
University placement	65/100
Prestige & heritage	68/100
Alumni network	67/100
Facilities	62/100
Transparency	51/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The chained library is the right place to start. Royal Grammar School, Guildford still teaches out of a Grade I Tudor building tied to a **1509** foundation, and that physical continuity matters because the school still behaves like an old English grammar school: selective, male, academically hard-driving and unapologetically traditional. This is a British day school for boys aged 11 to 18, Anglican in foundation, with English as the language of instruction and ISI and HMC on the badge. The average annual fee across the full 11-18 ladder is **£27,987**, which places it in the serious independent day-school bracket without straying into the costliest London territory.

What puts RGS on a shortlist is not heritage alone. The destination data are blunt: in 2024, 175 leavers produced **26 Oxbridge** places, with **90%** progressing to top-100 universities and 48 to Russell Group institutions; Oxford took 14 and Cambridge 12. That is a *fiercely academic* outcome set, and parents should read it as such. This is not a school that hides from competition or softens its edges for the sake of broad appeal. It has the intellectual self-confidence of a place that expects boys to cope with pace, scrutiny and high-stakes university ambition. The alumni record reinforces that pattern: Wikidata alone captures 72 notable former pupils, including politicians, scholars, writers and elite athletes, which points to a school with a long habit of producing men who move into public life.

The catch is obvious. This is a boys’ school with a selective intake and a culture shaped by centuries of grammar-school seriousness. That will suit the boy who wants academic stretch, enjoys being surrounded by other able pupils and does not need a school to dilute pressure with too much hand-holding. It will not suit families hunting for progressive softness, broad-brush inclusivity rhetoric or a relaxed all-rounder environment. RGS’s special quality lies in that *clear-eyed* sense of purpose: *historic without being museum-like*, *ambitious without apology*, and still anchored by one of the most distinctive schoolrooms in England. For the right student, it is a *formidable* place to spend the sixth-form run-up to university.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1509 with exceptional institutional continuity
- Rare chained library in the historic Old Building
- Strong 2024 outcomes: 46% A* at A-Level, 26 Oxbridge, 48 Russell Group destinations
- Both day and boarding places available
- Low 10:1 student-teacher ratio and average class size of 18

TRADE-OFFS

- Highly competitive academic culture may not suit less resilient pupils
- Phased transition to co-education from September 2027 means the mix is in flux
- Anglican foundation may not suit every family
- Fees are substantial at £30,000 day and around £55,000 boarding

ADMISSIONS

Royal Grammar School, Guildford is a selective school for ages 11-18, so the main entry point is at 11+, with later entry possible into older year groups where places arise. The school teaches a British curriculum leading to GCSE and A-Level. Selection has long been part of the school's identity, with academic assessment central to entry. Families should note that from September 2027 the school begins a phased transition to co-education, with girls joining the Prep and Sixth Form first and Year 7 entry following; the exact assessment format for each entry point should be confirmed directly with the school.

The school does not appear to publish a full admissions calendar in the material reviewed, so application deadlines, interview arrangements and financial-aid provision should be checked each year with the admissions office. What is distinctive, besides the school's age, is the continuity of selective entry at a school founded in 1509 and still housed around its historic High Street site, including the notable chained library.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (7 2)

SPORT: Arthur Knight, Bob Willis, David Sydenham, John Derrick, Mark Lambert, Jack Clifford

MUSIC: Jean-Jacques Burnel, Peter Zinovieff

DRAMA: Terry Jones, Simon Bird

VISUAL_ARTS: John Russell, Victor Willing

LETTERS: Martin Tyler, John Parkhurst, Dick Wilson, Matt Bullen, Roland Buerk, Paul Kerensa

POLITICS: George Grey, James Purnell, George Abbot, Alan Everard Montgomery, James Sunderland, Maurice Abbot, Thomas Byam Martin, Arthur Onslow

SCIENCE: Robert Abbot, C. Lloyd Morgan, Maurice Pryce, Peter Eagles, Jeffery Collins, Kate Craig-Wood, Andrew D. Hamilton, Alexander Rankine

BUSINESS: Robert Parkhurst

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_23ea2c51aa.