

Highgate School

London, United Kingdom



Chartered by Elizabeth I in 1565, this Highgate grammar school now founds access academies alongside its Oxbridge-bound sixth form.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	79/100
Academic outcomes	81/100
University placement	79/100
Prestige & heritage	80/100
Alumni network	79/100
Facilities	76/100
Transparency	75/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Highgate trades on two things at once: old English academic seriousness and a modern access agenda. Chartered in 1565, Anglican in foundation and now fully co-educational, it runs a British senior school and sixth form with a clear scholarly bias, but the point is not old-school narrowness. The school talks about scholarship and independence rather than exam drilling, and the numbers back up a sixth form with real traction: from 175 leavers in 2024, 91% went to top-100 universities, with 26 to Oxbridge and 50 to Russell Group institutions. That places Highgate in the **hard-edged academic** bracket of London day schools. The average annual fee across ages 11 to 18 is ****£32,787****, which is expensive, but not absurd by top north London independent standards.

What marks Highgate out is breadth without drift. A **10:1** student-teacher ratio and average class size of **18** give it room to teach ambitiously without turning every lesson into a lecture hall. The school's public language is full of co-curricular breadth, charitable partnerships and emotional readiness for adult life; plenty of schools say the same, but Highgate has the institutional weight to make it credible. Its alumni footprint is deep, with at least 302 notable former pupils catalogued in Wikidata across politics, scholarship, journalism, the arts and sport. That matters less as bragging rights than as evidence of a school that has produced influence across many fields, not just a conveyor belt into finance and law. ISI and HMC accreditation place it squarely inside the established British independent mainstream.

This is not a school for a child who wants a soft landing or low-pressure anonymity. It suits bright, self-propelling students who want a *serious intellectual culture*, a substantial sixth form, and peers who are aiming high without needing constant theatrical motivation. It will also appeal to families who want academic prestige without a purely transactional exam factory, and who value bursary provision as part of a school's moral credibility. Highgate belongs on a shortlist because it combines *historic heft*, strong university outcomes and a broader civic instinct in a way few London day schools manage cleanly. For the right pupil, it offers a *demanding but grown-up* education rather than a polished hothouse.

STRENGTHS

- Independently inspected by the ISI and found compliant against the regulatory standards, with WSA listing the school as academically rigorous and heavily oversubscribed.
- Strong published university destinations: 91% of the Class of 2024 progressed to top-100 universities, including 14 to Oxford, 12 to Cambridge, 14 to UCL and 10 to Imperial College London.
- The school publishes its examination results openly; its 2024 A-level cohort recorded 48% A* and 80% A*-A, and it publicly reports Russell Group and Oxbridge placement each year.
- An all-through structure from Pre-Prep to Sixth Form (ages 4 to 18) allows continuity through Junior and Senior School without an external transfer at 11.
- Long institutional history (founded 1565) with a strong co-curricular offer — world-class music, sport and drama — and established academic partnership programmes such as the co-founded London Academy of Excellence Tottenham.
- Extensive on-site facilities, including an indoor pool, gym, sports hall, astroturf and specialist teaching spaces, verified on the school's own site.

TRADE-OFFS

- Boarding was phased out and the last boarders left in 1997; Highgate today operates as a day school only, which matters for relocating families expecting residential places.
- Entry is academically selective: 11+ candidates sit English, maths and non-verbal reasoning papers followed by a second-stage interview, meaning places are not guaranteed even for capable applicants.
- Day fees of £30,000 place it at the premium end of the London day-school market before any registration deposits or exam-board charges.
- With close to 1,500 pupils across the school, families seeking a small, intimate pastoral environment may find the scale a limiting factor.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry points are at 4+, 7+, 11+ and 16+, with occasional places considered in other years subject to availability. The 11+ route (the largest intake) requires a paper-based exam in English, maths and non-verbal reasoning, a school report, and for successful candidates a second-stage interview and taster day, with the application deadline around 6 November for September entry the following year and offers issued in February. The process is competitive and academically selective. Entrance tests can be sat abroad by arrangement for a supplementary fee, and a registration deposit (GBP 4,000 at most stages, GBP 5,000 at Sixth Form) is payable on acceptance.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (302)

SPORT: Douglas Lowe, Tagge Webster, William Knightley-Smith, Thomas Latham, William Seagrove, Walter Robins, Phil Tufnell, Colin Drybrough

MUSIC: John Tavener, Gerard Hoffnung, Daniel Hope, Zak Starkey, Alan Bush, Crispian Mills, Guy Jonson, John Hassall

DRAMA: Freddie Highmore, Geoffrey Palmer, Harry Thompson, Adrian Lyne, Roland Culver, Daniel Hope, Gregg Sulkin, Tom Hooper

VISUAL_ARTS: John Tavener, Gerard Hoffnung, Hussein Chalayan, Philip Hepworth, Mike Davies, David Keynes Hill, Richard Rivington Holmes, Reginald Blomfield

LETTERS: Owen Barfield, Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Tavener, Walter William Skeat, Harry Thompson, Murray Walker, Gerard Hoffnung, Alex Comfort

POLITICS: Anthony Crosland, Robert Atkins, Charles Clarke, Robert Halfon, David Burrowes, Bernard Jenkin, Jeremy Lefroy, Desmond Ackner, Baron Ackner

SCIENCE: Owen Barfield, Walter William Skeat, Charles Clarke, Arthur Tansley, John Ellis, Franz Sondheimer, John Venn, Howard Hayes Scullard

BUSINESS: Hussein Chalayan, Victor Chandler, John Cockburn, Hilton Clarke, Peter Austin, John Robert Porter, Jason Holt, Ronald Grierson

WTS RATING 

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