

North London Collegiate School

London, United Kingdom



Founded in 1850 as Britain's first day school giving girls a boys'-standard education, it still tops national GCSE and A-level tables from its Edgware campus.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	81/100
Academic outcomes	84/100
University placement	80/100
Prestige & heritage	83/100
Alumni network	81/100
Facilities	74/100
Transparency	77/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

North London Collegiate School earns its place on any serious London shortlist because it still delivers the thing many famous schools trade on but no longer own outright: **sustained academic force**. This is a day school in Edgware with a long, exacting history, founded in 1850, and it remains unapologetically intellectual. The hard numbers matter. The student-teacher ratio sits at ***10:1***, average class size at ***18***, and the 2024 leavers’ destinations were formidable: ***26 Oxbridge*** places, 44 to Russell Group universities and 92% to top-100 universities. Parents who want a school that treats scholarship as the

main event, not a decorative feature beside sport and branding, will find NLCS near the front of the field.

What makes it special is not only raw results, but the culture behind them. NLCS was founded as Britain's first day school to give girls a boys'-standard education, and that original seriousness still shapes the place. The school describes itself as ambitious and supportive; the more important point is that it has preserved a **fiercely academic** core without turning robotic. The public case for the school leans heavily on teaching that pushes curiosity beyond the exam syllabus, and on a large co-curricular offer of over 50 clubs and societies, plus sustained investment in music, arts and sport. That matters because schools at this level can become narrow, all score and no range. NLCS pushes hard academically, but it also gives high-achieving girls room to build an identity outside the league tables.

The market position is clear. This is a top-tier London independent day school for girls, academically selective, expensive at an average annual fee of ****£28,739****, and best suited to families who value intellectual stretch more than hand-holding. It carries ISI and HMC accreditation, which places it firmly in the established independent-school mainstream, but its real distinction lies in the density of able peers and the expectation that girls will think, question and perform at pace. The ideal student for NLCS is bright, self-motivated and energised by being surrounded by other **very able** girls. She does not need spoon-feeding; she wants challenge, depth and teachers who know their subject cold. A child who wants a gentler, lower-pressure adolescence or a school built around pastoral cushioning first and academics second will find this a **demanding** fit. A girl who wants serious scholarship, lively company and a culture that still backs female intellect without apology will thrive here.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1850 by pioneering educator Frances Mary Buss, giving the school one of the longest continuous academic traditions among girls' day schools in England, per the motto Frances Mary Buss gave the school she founded in 1850.
- Consistently ranks among the very top schools in England for public exam results, with North London Collegiate ranking 2nd of 3,895 schools for GCSE results and 4th of 2,562 for A-level, and 1st in Harrow on both measures.
- Sixth-formers can choose between A-levels or the full IB Diploma, and around a quarter take the IB, with an average IB Diploma score of 42.69 points reported for 2025.
- Named Independent Secondary School of the Year 2026 by the Sunday Times Parent Power Guide, which also ranked NLCS the number one girls' school in the country.
- Means-tested bursaries are available to pupils joining the Senior School, and a bursary can cover any proportion of the costs of fees including 100% fees, lunches, transport for coach users, uniform subsidy, exam fees and compulsory trips for those eligible.

TRADE-OFFS

- It is a single-sex, girls-only school with no co-educational option, which will not suit every family's preference for schooling.
- Entry is highly selective at every stage: the school admits at 4+, 7+, 11+ and 16+... entry is by school-set written papers in English and mathematics, after which shortlisted candidates are interviewed. Selection is competitive, and even NLCS's own students face grade thresholds to progress into the sixth form, since the school expects an average of grade 7 across GCSEs, and in most cases a grade 8 in the specific subjects a student wishes to continue, applying equally to internal and external applicants.
- Fees are substantial: the Senior School and Sixth Form cost £10,365 a term, about £31,095 a year for 2025-26, with extras such as lunches charged separately, as North London Collegiate School charges lunches separately at approximately £1,215 per year.
- There is no boarding provision, so there are no boarding facilities, meaning families must be able to manage a daily commute to the outer-London Edgware/Harrow site.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points are at 4+, 7+, 11+ and 16+, with 11+ the largest, offering roughly 70 to 75 external places a year via school-set papers in English and mathematics followed by interview. Selection is competitive at every stage. Sixth-form applicants, whether internal or external, are typically expected to hold an average grade 7 at GCSE, with grade 8 in subjects to be continued. Means-tested bursaries, potentially covering full tuition, and merit-based music scholarships are available for those joining the Senior School.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (100)

MUSIC: Judith Weir, Myfanwy Piper, Virginia Astley, Margaret Fingerhut

DRAMA: Rachel Weisz, Anna Popplewell, Jane March, Eleanor Bron, Kate O'Toole, Louie Ramsay, Anna Madeley, Fenella Fielding

VISUAL_ARTS: Agnes Arber, Stevie Smith, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, Myfanwy Piper, Margaret Calkin James, Alison Britton, Peggy Angus, Jessie Mothersole

LETTERS: Noreena Hertz, Anna Wintour, Gillian Cross, Ruth Padel, Tanya Byron, Barbara Amiel, Marie Stopes, Stevie Smith

POLITICS: Alice Perkins, Edith How-Martyn, Ishbel MacDonald, Judy Mallaber, Antonia Romeo

SCIENCE: Noreena Hertz, Ruth Padel, Agnes Arber, Marie Stopes, Eva Germaine Rimington Taylor, Clara Collet, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, Frances Wood

BUSINESS: Anna Wintour

WTS RATING 

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