

St. Frances Academy

Baltimore, MD, United States



Founded in 1828 as the nation's first Black Catholic school, now fielding a No. 1-ranked football dynasty in East Baltimore.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	47/100
Academic outcomes	38/100
University placement	45/100
Prestige & heritage	55/100
Alumni network	48/100
Facilities	52/100
Transparency	35/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

St. Frances Academy occupies a rare place in American schooling: a Catholic high school founded in **1828** as the nation’s first Black Catholic school, with deep historical weight and a current profile driven by elite athletics. In East Baltimore, that combination gives it a market position few schools can match. This is not a polished, generic college-prep brand. It is a school with **institutional memory**, **serious cultural significance** and a public identity tied to both faith and competition. Parents who want a school with lineage, religious structure and a clear sense of mission will find a compelling case here. Parents who want a broad, manicured independent-school experience with glossy academic signalling need to ask harder questions.

What puts St. Frances on a shortlist is the force of its identity. It serves pupils aged **14–18**, offers the US High School Diploma, teaches in English and operates as a day and boarding school under Catholic leadership, with Middle States accreditation. The football programme gives the school national visibility and attracts a student who wants high-stakes sport, disciplined routines and a campus culture shaped by performance. That matters in market terms: St. Frances is not selling pastoral tranquillity or progressive experimentation; it offers *competitive intensity*, *urban grit* and a strong communal tradition. For the right family, that is a strength, not a drawback.

The best fit is a student who wants structure, expects adults to set standards and is comfortable in a school where religion and athletic ambition are part of daily life. A boarder who wants a soft landing, endless subject choice or a resort-style campus will find stronger options elsewhere. A student-athlete, or a teenager who values *clear expectations* and *earned pride*, will read the place differently. The same goes for families who care about Black Catholic history and want that heritage to carry real weight inside the school, not sit as a line in a prospectus. St. Frances earns attention because it is distinctive, old, faith-based and competitive all at once. In a crowded US school market, that is a *powerful differentiator*.

STRENGTHS	TRADE - OFFS
• Founded in 1828, it is the oldest continuously operating Catholic school for Black students in the United States. • Run by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first Catholic religious order founded by women of African descent. • Its football program gained national prominence under coach Biff Poggi, who later became a college football coach at Michigan and Charlotte. • Offers a boarding option alongside day enrollment, allowing it to draw students beyond the immediate Baltimore area. • Located in a historic Baltimore neighborhood with deep ties to the city's African American Catholic community.	• Editorially unranked, with no published data on standardized test averages, AP/IB course breadth, or college matriculation lists. • Small, urban campus footprint limits the scale of facilities compared to larger day-boarding schools. • Public information on tuition, boarding fees, and financial aid structures is limited on the school's own website. • Reputation is heavily weighted toward its athletics programs, which may not reflect the broader academic offering.

ADMISSIONS

Admission is managed directly through the school for both day and boarding students, with applications typically including transcripts, a personal interview, and in some cases standardized test scores. As a Catholic institution founded by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, it welcomes students of all faiths but maintains a religious character in daily life. Boarding places are limited and often linked to athletic programs, particularly football and basketball, making competitiveness for those slots higher than for day admission.

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_705aaba2bf.