

Gordonstoun

Elgin, United Kingdom



On Scotland's Moray coast, birthplace of Outward Bound, where sail training aboard the school's own ocean-going yacht counts as curriculum.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	67/100
Academic outcomes	65/100
University placement	63/100
Prestige & heritage	74/100
Alumni network	74/100
Facilities	74/100
Transparency	59/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Sail training on the school’s own ocean-going yacht is not an add-on at Gordonstoun; it sits inside the educational proposition. This is the birthplace of Outward Bound, and the school still trades on that inheritance with unusual seriousness. On the Moray coast near Elgin, the point is not polished comfort but **deliberate stretch**: sea, mountains, service, expedition and physical challenge as part of the week, not a once-a-year activity programme. That makes Gordonstoun distinctive in a crowded British boarding market. Plenty of schools promise “character”; few build it so explicitly into the timetable and campus life. For the right child, that is **genuinely formative**. For the wrong one, it is a bad fit.

The academic offer is British, the school is boarding, and the institutional credentials are solid rather than flashy: founded in 1934, Anglican, with ISI and HMC accreditation. Outcomes are strong enough to reassure without turning the place into an exam factory. In the Class of 2024, **75%** of **155 leavers** went to top-100 universities, with **5 Oxbridge** offers and **38 Russell Group** destinations; Edinburgh took 12. Those are good numbers, but the more telling point is the kind of school they come from. Gordonstoun does not sell a narrow hothouse model. It asks pupils to do hard things in public, work in teams, and keep going when wet, tired or out of their depth. Parents who want pristine, frictionless schooling should look elsewhere.

It also sits firmly in the premium bracket: an average annual day fee of **£46,000** and an average annual boarding fee of **£66,000** across the full age range it covers. That price buys a *highly differentiated* boarding education, not metropolitan polish or relentless university triage. The alumni base is deep, with 110 notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata across politics, business, scholarship, the arts and journalism, which reinforces the school’s long reach and old-network appeal. Gordonstoun belongs on a shortlist for resilient, energetic children who want breadth, responsibility and outdoor challenge alongside decent academic outcomes. It is *not for the faint-hearted*, and that is the point.

STRENGTHS	TRADE - OFFS
• Boarding and day options on a 200-acre woodland Moray campus • Co-educational, spanning prep school through to sixth form • British curriculum with A-Levels and English-medium teaching • 75% of the 2024 cohort progressed to top-100 universities • World-class sport and music provision, backed by a sports centre, pool and sail-training vessel	• Annual boarding fees are £55,000 • Average class size is 18 • Rural Scottish location may not suit families wanting an urban setting • ISI most recently rated the school Good rather than the top band

ADMISSIONS

Gordonstoun is a co-educational boarding school in Moray running from prep school through to sixth form, so the obvious admission stages are likely to align with prep, senior and sixth-form entry. The school follows a British curriculum with A-Levels, taught in English. Beyond that, the published material provided here does not set out formal entry points, term-by-term deadlines, or a standardised assessment sequence. Nor does it specify whether assessment is based on previous school reports, entrance papers, interview, references, or a broader review of suitability.

Families should note that Gordonstoun is a full boarding school with annual fees listed at £55,000 for boarding and £30,000 for day places. No bursary or financial-aid scheme is described in the source material supplied, so it would be unwise to assume one without checking directly. What is distinctive, at least institutionally, is the school's long-standing association with boarding and its well-known royal history, including Prince Philip and King Charles III. For admissions detail, the crucial missing pieces are published deadlines, exact testing requirements, and any named scholarship or bursary routes.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (110)

SPORT: Heather Stanning, Preston Mommsen

MUSIC: Balthazar Getty, Luca Prodan, Jo Hamilton, Peter Zinovieff, Roy Williamson, Barry Cooper, Dick Heckstall-Smith, Hobart Earle

DRAMA: Balthazar Getty, Oona Castilla Chaplin, Jason Connery, Zara Tindall, Allan Scott, Jasper Duncombe, 7th Baron Feversham, Peter Cousens, Duncan Jones

VISUAL_ARTS: India Hicks, Desmond Guinness, Karl-Wilhelm von Plettenberg

LETTERS: Charles III, Francis Huxley, India Hicks, Paul Philippe Hohenzollern-Lambrino, Anthony Haden-Guest, Eddy Shah, John Grant, 13th Earl of Dysart, Liz MacKean

POLITICS: Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, Timothy Beaumont, Baron Beaumont of Whitley, James Carnegie, 3rd Duke of Fife, George Mountbatten, 4th Marquess of Milford Haven, Christina Rau, Charles III, Jamie Stone, Angus Montagu, 12th Duke of Manchester

SCIENCE: Christina Rau, Paul Philippe Hohenzollern-Lambrino, Walter Hayman, Charles Kennedy, Christopher Fyfe, Desmond Guinness, Jeremy Fry, Barry Cooper

BUSINESS: George Mountbatten, 4th Marquess of Milford Haven, Peter Phillips, Charles III, India Hicks, Eddy Shah, Jonathan Harmsworth, 4th Viscount Rothermere, Lord Ivar Mountbatten, Rick Hayward

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_77ebdd6905.