

Dulwich College

London, United Kingdom



Founded in 1619 by an Elizabethan stage actor, its 75-acre South London campus still runs on three historic boarding houses.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	81/100
Academic outcomes	81/100
University placement	79/100
Prestige & heritage	84/100
Alumni network	83/100
Facilities	82/100
Transparency	75/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The fact that Dulwich still runs three historic boarding houses on a 75-acre South London campus matters, because this is not a day school with a token boarding offer bolted on. Boarding sits inside the school’s identity, and that gives Dulwich a different texture from many London independents: more self-contained, more communal, more structured. It is an old Anglican school, founded in 1619 by Edward Alleyn, but the real point for parents is not antiquity for its own sake. It is the combination of scale, routine and institutional confidence that still shapes daily life. With a ****10:1**** student-teacher ratio and average class sizes of ****18****, Dulwich has the resources to run a full academic and co-curricular programme without feeling diffuse.

The school sells the whole-child line hard, as every major independent school does, but there is substance behind it. The website gives unusually concrete detail on personal development: around ****100**** focused hours across the senior years covering mental health, emotional literacy, digital citizenship, careers and life skills. That is more useful than vague pastoral rhetoric. The co-curricular offer also has real range, from Combined Cadet Force and Duke of Edinburgh to community action, expeditions and serious creative work. Parents looking for a **thin, exam-factory education** should look elsewhere. Dulwich is built for boys who can use breadth well: able, busy, **well-drilled** and ready to commit to a crowded school life rather than drift through it.

Academically, the destination data is strong and specific. In the Class of 2024, there were 235 leavers; 90% went to top-100 universities, with 30 to Oxbridge, 60 to Russell Group institutions and 2 to the Ivy League. Cambridge took 16 and Oxford 14. Those are not decorative headline wins; they show a school with a serious university pipeline and the advising machinery to support it. The average annual fee is £28,736 for day pupils and £65,210 for boarders, which places Dulwich firmly in the **expensive, top-tier London independent** bracket. Parents paying that level need more than polish and tradition. Dulwich earns its shortlist place because it offers a rare mix of metropolitan access, full boarding culture, **hard-edged academic ambition** and a pastoral structure that is more organised than sentimental.

The best fit is a boy who wants a **busy, high-expectation** school with strong adult oversight and enough institutional heft to support sport, music, service, pastoral care and university preparation at once. It will suit families who value British tradition and are not put off by formality, hierarchy and the inherited rituals of an old public school. It will not suit every child. Boys who want a progressive, informal atmosphere or a lighter-touch culture may find Dulwich **too structured** and too conscious of its own traditions. For the right pupil, though, that structure is the attraction.

STRENGTHS	TRADE - OFFS
• Founded by Edward Alleyn in 1619, it is one of England's oldest and most distinguished boys' day and boarding schools, set on a large south London campus twelve minutes from central London. • The school publishes strong verified results: in 2025, 70 per cent of A-level grades (including EPQ) were A*/A and 93.5 per cent of GCSE grades were 9-7. • The majority of leavers progress to leading universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL and other Russell Group institutions, as well as Ivy League destinations such as Yale. • The school awarded £5.5 million to support over 210 bursary awards in 2025-26, widening access beyond fee-paying families. • A thriving boarding community of around 140 pupils from over 20 nationalities boards in four houses on a green campus, with housemasters and matrons living on site.	• Girls can access places at the nursery and pre-prep, but must transfer to a different school at Year 3 (aged 7), so this is not a continuous co-educational option. • Fees are among the highest in London: £30,000 per year for day pupils and £55,000 per year for boarders. • Entry is highly competitive: around 160 boys are interviewed for around 70 places at 11+, and applicants are expected to sit within the top 15 per cent of national academic ability. • Boarding is a minority experience within a much larger day-pupil body: Dulwich has a small, international boarding community of around 140 pupils across four houses, alongside well over a thousand day boys.

ADMISSIONS

Dulwich College is academically selective with entry points at 4+, 7+, 9+, 11+, 13+ and 16+; boarding begins from Year 9. The main 11+ round involves computer-based English, Maths and Reasoning tests plus a creative writing paper, followed by interviews, with roughly 160 candidates interviewed for around 70 Year 7 places. Applicants are expected to sit within the top 15 per cent of national academic ability. Music, art and sport scholarships are offered at various entry points, alongside a substantial bursary programme that awarded £5.5 million for over 210 bursaries in 2025-26. Registration typically opens well over a year ahead of entry, and open mornings are recommended before applying.

WTS RATING 

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