

Herlufsholm

Næstved, Denmark



Founded in 1565 on a Benedictine monastery site by the River Susaa, pairing Danish national rigor with an English-taught IB Diploma.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	48/100
Academic outcomes	52/100
University placement	50/100
Prestige & heritage	57/100
Alumni network	14/100
Facilities	58/100
Transparency	40/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Herlufsholm sits in a niche that very few European schools can claim: a ****1565**** foundation, a boarding tradition rooted in Danish elite education, and a route that combines the Danish national curriculum with the IB Diploma in English. The setting matters here. This is not a suburban international school with borrowed heritage; it occupies a former Benedictine monastery site by the River Suså and trades on centuries of ritual, continuity and social memory. That gives it a ***strong sense of place***, a ***serious institutional identity*** and a level of cultural weight that newer schools cannot manufacture. For families who want Denmark rather than a generic international-school experience, Herlufsholm belongs on the shortlist.

What marks it out is the pairing of old-world boarding culture with a wider outward-facing programme. The school advertises more than **30** extracurricular activities, alongside Round Square projects, conferences including Model United Nations, exchange opportunities across multiple continents, The Award programme and a certified talent-development track. That points to a school that expects pupils to stay busy and visible beyond lessons. The offer is broad, but the centre of gravity is clear: *structured adolescence*, *high-contact community life* and a school day shaped as much by house, activity and tradition as by classroom teaching. Families drawn to this model will value immersion. Families who want looseness, informality or light-touch pastoral culture will not.

Herlufsholm's market position is therefore distinct. It is for parents who want a boarding school with *deep-rooted tradition*, Danish academic grounding and an English-taught IB option for the final stage. It also carries unusual alumni depth: **126** notable alumni catalogued in Wikidata, including **24** politicians and statespersons, which underlines the school's long-standing place in Denmark's establishment. Recent destinations are solid rather than theatrical: University of Copenhagen, Aarhus University and Copenhagen Business School lead the list. The school does not publish the kind of headline-grabbing outcome data that highly commercial international schools use as sales ammunition, so parents must buy into the institution and culture as much as any spreadsheet.

The right student for Herlufsholm is ambitious, socially robust and comfortable with tradition. This is a school for teenagers who want *belonging with demands attached*: communal life, organised activity, expectations of contribution and a visible school identity. It suits pupils who thrive when adults set a framework and peers share it. It does not suit the independent drifter, the contrarian who resists ceremony, or the child who wants an anonymous, flexible sixth-form experience. For the right family, that clarity is the attraction.

STRENGTHS

- One of Denmark's oldest continuously operating boarding schools, founded in 1565, with a historic campus near Naestved on Zealand.
- Offers both the Danish Gymnasium track and the International Baccalaureate Diploma, giving pupils a recognised route to Danish or international universities.
- Full boarding infrastructure with on-site houses, sports facilities and grounds, suited to families wanting a traditional residential school environment.
- Long-standing ties to Denmark's social and cultural elite, giving pupils exposure to a well-networked alumni base within Denmark.
- Combines academic study with structured extracurricular life (sport, music, outdoor activity) typical of established European boarding schools.

TRADE - OFFS

- In 2023 Danish media investigations (DR/Politiken) documented serious bullying, violence and alcohol misuse among boarders, leading to the headmaster's and board's resignation and to Crown Prince Christian's withdrawal from the school.
- Fees are not published transparently on the school's own site, making cost comparison with other European boarding schools difficult for prospective expat families.
- Curriculum delivery is predominantly in Danish outside the IB stream, which can limit accessibility for non-Danish-speaking newcomers.
- Its reputation is now closely tied to the 2023 scandal, and independent, up-to-date evidence of remediation (new safeguarding culture, oversight) is still limited in public reporting.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points exist at several stages of Danish grundskole and at the three-year gymnasium/IB level. Applications are made directly to the school, typically requiring academic records, an interview, and sometimes a trial period; boarding places are limited and demand has historically been strong given the school's social profile. Following the 2023 scandal, prospective families should expect closer questioning from the school itself and heightened media and parental scrutiny of safeguarding practices during the admissions process.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (126)

SPORT: Vagn Ingerslev

MUSIC: Ejnar Forchhammer, Jan Maegaard

DRAMA: Pilou Asbæk, Sven Holm, Ejnar Forchhammer, Otto Zinck

VISUAL_ARTS: Ulrik Plesner, Erik Holtved, Per Iversen, Paul Anker Ammentorp, Svend Fournais

LETTERS: Georg Carstensen, Jesper Brochmand, F.J. Billeskov Jansen, Alexander Thorsøe, Sven Holm, Georg Forchhammer, Martin Vahl, Frederik Bruun

POLITICS: Christian Albrecht Bluhme, Christian Ludvig Tillisch, Michael Pedersen Friis, Bernt Johan Collet, Frederik Bruun, Johan Hegermann-Lindencrone, Peder Reedtz, Per Gudme

SCIENCE: Stephen Hansen Stephanius, Georg F.L. Sarauw, Jesper Brochmand, F.J. Billeskov Jansen, Peter Erasmus Christian Kaalund, Alexander Thorsøe, Georg Forchhammer, Christian Fenger

BUSINESS: Georg Carstensen, Eiler Lehn Schiøler, Bernt Johan Collet, Christian Hartvig, Peter Winther-Schmidt, Q136645539, Count Christian Ahlefeldt-Laurvig, Christian Stadil

WTS RATING 

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