

Lycée Louis-le-Grand

Paris, France



A Jesuit foundation from 1563 in the Latin Quarter, its prepa classes top national rankings across nearly every track.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	81/100
Academic outcomes	90/100
University placement	85/100
Prestige & heritage	87/100
Alumni network	80/100
Facilities	62/100
Transparency	65/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Lycée Louis-le-Grand occupies a rare position in French education: a state lycée with the weight of national myth and the results to justify it. Founded in 1563 and set in the Latin Quarter, it feeds directly into the most selective parts of the French system. The headline fact is not ambience or architecture, though both carry **serious old-Paris gravitas**; it is the strength of the classes préparatoires. Few schools can claim such dominance across scientific, literary and commercial tracks. For families targeting the French elite-grandes-écoles route, Louis-le-Grand sits near the top of the list. It is public, academically exacting and strikingly accessible on price if a boarding place is secured: ***€2,500*** a year for boarding is low by international standards.

This is not a soft landing. The school operates in French, follows the French Baccalaureate, and serves students aged 15 to 20 in an environment built around competition, selection and pace. A student-teacher ratio of **12:1** sounds intimate on paper, but an average class size of **30** tells the real story: this is not boutique education, it is high-pressure public excellence. The attraction lies in intellectual density, peer quality and a culture where ambition is normal. Its recent destinations — École Polytechnique, ENS Ulm and HEC Paris — confirm the point with unusual clarity. This is a place for students who want *the hardest academic company in the room* and do not need pastoral hand-holding to keep going.

What sets Louis-le-Grand apart is the combination of prestige, cost and outcomes. Many schools sell exclusivity; Louis-le-Grand offers *institutional seriousness* without private-school fees. That gives it a powerful market position for French-speaking families, expatriates already embedded in the French system, and international parents who understand how the prépa pipeline works. It earns a place on a shortlist because it delivers *a direct line into France’s academic upper tier*, not because it packages itself attractively. Families seeking broad co-curricular polish, intensive bilingual delivery or a gently managed sixth form experience should look elsewhere. Families seeking *ferocious academic stretch* should not.

STRENGTHS

- The classes préparatoires have maintained a dominant position in national rankings for decades, ranking first in the MP track for admission to Polytechnique and the four ENS schools, giving strong outcomes for university progression.
- The school maintains a 100% baccalaureate pass rate, with 58.2% of students earning the top distinction (mention tres bien) in 2024.
- As a public school with no tuition fees, admission runs through the Parcoursup platform, combining a tradition of academic excellence with broader access to elite-track education.
- Located in the Latin Quarter, the school has about 1,800 students and can house 340 of them in its boarding facilities, easing logistics for families outside Paris.
- Former students include writers Moliere, Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire, philosophers Voltaire and Jean-Paul Sartre, scientists such as Henri Poincare, and seven former presidents of the French Republic, reflecting a long academic tradition.

TRADE-OFFS

- The CPGE track alone recently received around 22,500 applications for fewer than 450 available places, making entry statistically very difficult for most applicants.
- The school teaches exclusively the French Baccalaureate curriculum with no IB or other international track, which may not suit expat families seeking a globally portable qualification.
- Boarding capacity is limited to 340 places against a total student body of about 1,800, meaning most pupils must find their own accommodation in an expensive city.
- The environment is built around intense, exam-focused preparation for competitive entrance exams, with a strong culture of academic emulation among ambitious peers, which suits driven students but offers little breathing room for those wanting a broader, less pressured schooling experience.

ADMISSIONS

Entry occurs at two main points: seconde (lycee, via the Paris Affelnet system) and post-baccalaureate classes preparatoires (via Parcoursup, open nationally regardless of residence). CPGE places are allocated on grades, teacher assessments and a written motivation letter, with no interview or informal pre-selection. Competition is severe, with tens of thousands of prepa applications for a few hundred places annually. Foreign students outside the AEF network may apply directly to the headmaster with grade transcripts and a handwritten French motivation letter.

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_9cd8887af3.