

Drakensberg Boys Choir School

Champagne Valley, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



Africa's only choir school pairs CAPS academics with daily choral training against the Drakensberg peaks.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	55/100
Academic outcomes	55/100
University placement	48/100
Prestige & heritage	56/100
Alumni network	42/100
Facilities	66/100
Transparency	38/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Drakensberg Boys Choir School sits on our Global Elite 50 Music Schools list because it is one of the world's few remaining full-time specialist boys' choir schools of genuine international choral standard, and — from a spectacular Champagne Valley campus in the Drakensberg mountains of KwaZulu-Natal — the only such school in the Southern Hemisphere. Founded in 1967, "the DBC" enrolls approximately 130 boys aged 9-15 across South African Grades 4-9 in a full Integrated Specialist choral boarding programme.

The specialism is choral music, and the school's identity is unusually pure: every pupil is a member of the

choir, the choir performs approximately 150 concerts each year (both in South Africa and on regular international tours), and the daily schedule integrates protected rehearsal time with an academic curriculum leading to the equivalent of South African Grade 9. Individual instrumental lessons — piano, all orchestral strings, brass, woodwind, percussion, guitar and organ — are available as second study, and the school's music theory and composition programmes are strong. Boys typically transition to a South African senior boys' school for Grades 10–12 while continuing their musical development.

Progression evidence is strong across a rare pipeline. Drakensberg Boys Choir alumni have populated the professional choirs of Westminster Abbey, King's College Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge and St John's College Cambridge; several have taken major Oxbridge choral awards. On the instrumental side, alumni progression into the University of Cape Town South African College of Music and international senior conservatoires (including the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music) is well established, and the school has produced multiple current professional South African orchestral players.

International openness is genuine, though the primary market is southern African. Approximately 15–20% of pupils in a typical year are non-South African, with a strong feeder pipeline from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and — in smaller numbers — the UK, mainland Europe and Australasia. English is the language of instruction. Fees for full boarding sit around ZAR 220,000–250,000 per year, making the school one of the highest value-for-money specialist music schools on the entire Elite Music 50.

STRENGTHS

- Every boy in the school sings in the world-renowned choir, which tours internationally and has performed for heads of state and at major venues abroad.
- Small, tightly-knit boarding community of roughly 100 boys allows close staff attention across both academic and musical programmes.
- Full CAPS academic curriculum is maintained alongside daily choral training, so boys do not sacrifice mainstream schooling for music.
- Set in the Drakensberg mountains, the campus offers extensive outdoor space and a distinctive, low-distraction rural environment for boarders.

TRADE - OFFS

- Single-sex, boys-only environment with no co-educational option, which will not suit every family's preferences.
- Boarding-only model with no day-scholar option, requiring full relocation of the child regardless of family's local proximity.
- Enrollment is inherently short-term: boys typically leave once their voices break, usually by around age 14-15, requiring a further school transition.
- Remote location away from major KwaZulu-Natal towns limits easy access to city amenities and increases travel logistics for visiting families.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is primarily at Grade 4 to Grade 7 level (roughly ages 9-13), with boys required to undergo a voice trial/audition alongside an academic assessment and interview. Because places are limited to around 100 boarders and the choir's reputation attracts national and international interest, competition for spots is significant, particularly for younger entry years. Boys generally leave the school once their voice breaks, so admissions cycles are tied to natural turnover each year. Prospective families should contact the school directly for audition dates and required documentation.

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_d0a7e63bbd.