

The Henrietta Barnett School

London, United Kingdom



A free, fiercely oversubscribed girls' grammar in Lutyens' Hampstead Garden Suburb, sending dozens each year to Oxbridge.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	79/100
Academic outcomes	86/100
University placement	81/100
Prestige & heritage	79/100
Alumni network	78/100
Facilities	68/100
Transparency	75/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The Henrietta Barnett School occupies a rare position in London: a selective state girls’ school with the academic pull of a top independent, but without fees. Founded in 1911 and set in Hampstead Garden Suburb, it trades on substance, not gloss. The draw is obvious. This is a school for academically ambitious girls who want a **serious intellectual culture**, high-calibre peers and a route into the most competitive universities. The outcomes justify the reputation: in the 2024 cohort of 100 leavers, ****92%**** progressed to top-100 universities, with ****14**** to Oxbridge and 38 to Russell Group institutions. That is elite academic delivery in the maintained sector.

What makes HBS special is the combination of selectivity, female focus and public-sector access. There are very few schools in England that offer this level of academic concentration for able girls without charging fees. The school’s cachet rests on exam selectivity and university destinations, but also on history: it has long held a place near the top of the state-school hierarchy. Parents do need to read the current picture accurately. The latest Ofsted judgment is “Good”, not “Outstanding”. That does not erase the school’s academic force, but it does matter. HBS remains a *formidable academic machine*, not an untouchable myth.

The right student for Henrietta Barnett is bright, disciplined and comfortable in a strongly competitive environment. She will value ideas, read beyond the syllabus and treat academic pressure as fuel rather than threat. This is not the school for a girl who needs constant hand-holding or who wants a broad church with mixed academic tempo. It suits pupils who want *an exacting peer group*, *a fast academic pace* and the motivation that comes from being surrounded by other able girls. With a student-teacher ratio of **13:1** and average class size of **24**, the structure is not intimate in the boutique sense, but it is focused and efficient.

Why shortlist it? Because for the right child, HBS offers one of the strongest academic bargains in British education: a free day school with deep university traction, a long-established name and a *clear route to competitive higher education*. Its market position is straightforward. Among selective London state schools for girls, it sits near the summit. Parents who want *prestige without fees* and a school that treats scholarship as the main event will find very few stronger options.

STRENGTHS	TRADE - OFFS
• Consistently ranks among the strongest state schools in England for external examination outcomes. • Strong A-level results in 2024, with 46% of grades at A* and 79% at A*-A. • High university progression, with 92% of the 2024 cohort going to top-100 universities, including 14 Oxbridge destinations (eight Cambridge, six Oxford). • Non-fee-paying state grammar school, removing tuition costs that apply at comparable independent schools of similar academic standing. • Music provision is elite (8.8), with very strong drama, sport and visual arts across the co-curriculum.	• Single-sex girls' school only, so it is not an option for families wanting co-education or seeking a place for a son. • Admission depends entirely on the school's own two-round entrance exam plus, for tie-breaks, a published local-priority catchment, so families living further away or newly arrived from abroad face a steep uphill battle regardless of ability. • Acceptance is extremely narrow, with only around 93 Year 7 places against well over 2,000 applications a year, making it one of the hardest state schools in England to enter. • As a day school with no fee-paying route, there is no alternative admissions pathway for relocating families who miss the exam cycle or catchment cut-off.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is at age 11 via the school's own two-round entrance exam (GL-style Round 1 papers followed by an HBS-set Round 2 in English and maths), not the standard local-authority 11-plus. Places are allocated by exam score, with a small number reserved for children in care or on Pupil Premium, and distance from the school used only as a tie-breaker within a published local-priority area. The school typically receives well over 2,000 applications for around 93 places, making it one of the most competitive state entry points in London. There is also a Sixth Form entry route based on GCSE results.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (24)

SPORT: Jo Ankier

MUSIC: Anya Lahiri, Lucie Skeaping

DRAMA: Anya Lahiri, Q6707700, Sarah Solemani, Audrey White

LETTERS: Patricia Finney, Dina Rabinovitch, Kathy Willis, Baroness Willis of Summertown, Susanna Lau, Barbara Conway, Yvonne Green, Rivkah Brown, Susie Steiner

POLITICS: Natalie Evans, Baroness Evans, Munira Wilson

SCIENCE: Helena Cronin, Janet Radcliffe Richards, Kathy Willis, Baroness Willis of Summertown, Miriam Solomon, Michelle Ferris

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_ec388320f4.