# Harrow British boarding school opens first US campus on Long Island



This autumn, the renowned British boarding school Harrow is set to inaugurate its first campus in the United States, establishing a sprawling 170-acre waterfront estate in Long Island, New York. The school will offer an annual tuition of $75,000, inviting families seeking a prestigious educational experience steeped in British traditions. Classes are to be held within the Bourne mansion, an opulent former residence of a wealthy American businessman, around which contemporary educational facilities will be developed.

A promotional video released by the school provides an idealised vision of life at Harrow New York. Nick Page, former deputy head of Harrow UK, describes the school as “an oasis,” highlighting its tranquil setting amid manicured lawns, lakes, and wildlife, despite its proximity to the vast metropolis of New York City. Situated approximately equidistant from New York City and the Hamptons, the location presents a convenient opportunity for families with seaside homes to send their children to holiday retreats. The video depicts students donning Harrow’s signature straw hats as they engage in painting, soccer, poetry, and other pursuits, including reading works by Lord Byron and studies on Winston Churchill.

While boarding schools have a long-standing presence in the United States, leading institutions such as Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and Phillips Academy in Massachusetts differ notably from Harrow. These American schools do not enforce mandatory uniforms and emphasise sports such as lacrosse and hockey. By contrast, Harrow embodies centuries-old British customs, including traditions where students refer to teachers as “beaks” and label misconduct as “skew.”

British boarding schools have long captivated American imaginations through cultural touchstones like Hogwarts and the novella and film "Goodbye, Mr Chips." The allure extends beyond education to an admiration for British castles, aristocracy, honourifics, lavish events, historical resonance, and the royal family. Increasing numbers of young Americans are reportedly adopting British accents and incorporating British English vocabulary.

Despite hopes from parents that their children will benefit from authentic British educational customs, Harrow New York will be owned, managed, and operated by Amity Education Group, a company also running a Harrow school in Bengaluru, India. This entity operates independently from the original Harrow School in the UK, raising questions about whether this expansion represents a “rent-a-name” approach—offering a prestigious British boarding school image without a direct connection to the original institution’s heritage.

In the UK, boarding schools like Harrow are often seen as synonymous with elitism, partly due to their high costs. The original Harrow charges approximately £61,584 annually for boarding, a figure starkly contrasted with standard university tuition fees in England and Wales, which stand at £9,535. Such schools are viewed by some as gateways to elite social circles, exemplified by the fact that 20 of the UK’s 58 prime ministers were educated at Eton College and 13 attended Harrow or Westminster.

Former Harrow students, interviewed by The Guardian, noted that some of the school’s traditions might strike Americans as unusual, such as the requirement for students to touch the brim of their hats when a teacher passes by. One alumnus, a 28-year-old based in New York, commented that the timing of the school's launch during Donald Trump’s presidency felt “particularly well-timed,” given the political climate’s revisionist tendencies. He observed that the school harbours a culture that values the British empire and “the good old days,” which he felt aligned with a certain nostalgic vision of America.

The history of Harrow dates back to 1572, founded initially to provide free education to 30 poor boys from the Harrow parish. It subsequently expanded to include boarders from outside the local area. Since 1998, Harrow has operated its first international campus in Bangkok, chosen partly for its historical connections to Thailand’s royal family, with 23 princes educated at the UK Harrow. However, financial motivations likely influenced the establishment of international campuses beyond these affiliations.

Selina Boyd, international editor of the Good Schools Guide, told the luxury magazine Spear’s that branded schools like Harrow benefit from parental trust in their established reputations, which can ease the process of opening new schools abroad and quickly establishing credibility compared to unbranded schools.

Looking ahead, Harrow New York will join a global network of 12 Harrow-branded schools in 11 locations across Asia, with two additional campuses slated to open in the United Arab Emirates next year. However, these institutions are owned by three separate companies, creating a complex ownership landscape. Harrow International Schools Limited (HISL), which manages brand licensing, clarified that operational responsibilities rest with each school’s owners, though it asserts that all must adhere to Harrow’s educational philosophy and practices. The organisation maintains oversight through regular evaluations by experienced educational experts who also serve on the schools’ governing bodies.

Some teachers at Harrow schools in Asia, speaking anonymously to The Guardian, have expressed concerns that the schools prioritise profit over educational quality. AISL, which operates several Harrow schools in Asia, stated that it enforces strict compliance with Harrow’s standards. HISL strongly refutes allegations that its expansion strategy amounts to merely “renting out” the Harrow name.

A report from the Private Education Policy Forum highlighted emerging evidence suggesting that relationships between British schools and their international campuses are sometimes limited, with overseas staff describing the arrangement as “exchanging a ‘brand’ licence for a royalty payment.”

For now, HISL anticipates the opening of the Long Island campus, describing the site as “a sprawling, serene and secure” environment equipped with “state-of-the-art facilities” and “exceptional athletic amenities.” Whether the distinctive British boarding school culture will successfully translate to the American context, or meet the expectations of anglophile families, remains to be seen.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.harrownewyork.com> - This website provides information about Harrow International School New York, including its history and the facilities available on its campus. It confirms the school is set to open in the United States.
2. <https://www.harrownewyork.com/campus> - This webpage details the campus of Harrow International School New York, highlighting its waterfront location and the ongoing construction of advanced facilities. It describes the campus as a serene environment.
3. <https://greaterlongisland.com/harrow-boarding-school-of-london-opens-first-u-s-affiliate-in-oakdale/> - This article announces Harrow's first U.S. affiliate in Oakdale, Long Island, detailing its location on the Bourne Mansion Estate and the tuition costs for the upcoming school year.
4. <https://studytravel.network/magazine/news/0/31293> - This report confirms that Harrow International School New York will open in September 2025, establishing itself as a significant educational institution on Long Island.
5. <https://www.niche.com/k12/harrow-international-school-new-york-oakdale-ny/> - This page offers profiles of schools, including Harrow International School New York, listing details such as boarding options and campus setting.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/education> - Although not directly linked to Harrow New York, this general news site (The Guardian) could provide articles about British boarding school culture and the traditions of Harrow in the UK, which are relevant to understanding the context behind Harrow New York.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/apr/26/harrow-new-york-boarding-school> - Please view link - unable to able to access data