



*'The UK Boarding Schools Specialist'*

## Choosing a School

Given there are approximately 500 independent boarding schools in the United Kingdom, narrowing this number down to a manageable shortlist that aligns with your requirements can be a challenging undertaking. AIBC Thailand can help you with this process by offering impartial guidance as well as drawing attention to the pivotal points outlined below.

### *What age do I want my child to start?*

First and foremost, parents need to decide on the age or year group they want their child to start. Think about their readiness (and your own!), the main entry points and the school type/pathway you have in mind for them. Boarding for international pupils in a preparatory school can start from the age of seven (Year 3) and while this may seem very young, it allows pupils to transition faster and start the multi-year 'preparation' for entry to a top senior school. Prep schools also tend to be small, very family-oriented with bright, cosy shared bedrooms and lots of games and fun activities at weekends and in the evenings. At senior school level, the main entry points are 11+ (Year 7), 13+ (Year 9) and 16+ (Year 12). Schools may have a few spaces available at 12+ (Year 8) or 14+ (Year 10) but bear in mind, the demand for these spaces will be higher.

### *How much will I need to budget each year?*

On average, senior school tuition fees alone will set you back approximately £33,000 per year. On top of this are the 'extras' (eg. uniform, sports gear, trips and outings, individual music lessons), guardianship expenses, airport transfers and flights home every half-term which brings the total budget to somewhere between £40,000 and £45,000 per year. If budget is an important factor in the decision-making process, more affordable options are available though are likely to come with strings attached. Another way to stay within a fixed budget is to apply for an academic, musical, sport or artistic scholarship which can help to reduce tuition fees by as much as 15-20%. They are merit-based and designed to attract bright and talented pupils via a competitive examination and interview process.

### *How much will I need to budget each year?*

Ask yourself whether the school's location is important to you. Do I want a school located within a large town or city environment (with nearby conveniences, good transport links) or perhaps the peace and quiet of the countryside where there are fewer distractions and wide open spaces? Give thought to where the nearest international airport is and how long transfers will take each time.

### *Single-Sex or Co-Education?*

There are numerous arguments for and against single sex education but at the end of the day, the decision should be made by you and your child, together. Do you think your child would perform better without the distraction of the opposite sex? Or would they perhaps develop more rounded social skills if they were in a co-educational school environment? There's no right or wrong answer on this question, it's all about what's the right fit for your child.



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## *How many full boarders are there?*

Overseas based families will usually place an emphasis on those schools with high numbers of full boarders. A full boarder is a pupil that stays at the school 7 days a week as opposed to a weekly boarder (who goes home on weekends) or a flexi boarder (who may only stay at school a few nights per week). A school with a full boarding house at weekends will usually mean a wider range of activities on offer and most importantly, your child won't feel lonely. Be sure to also check whether there's a balance of nationalities in the boarding house so as to ensure that English is the common language at all times.

*Once consideration has been to the questions above, focus should be placed on the specific areas below that will help to further narrow down your shortlist.*

## *Specialisations*

As well as providing a large variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities for pupils, many boarding schools will also specialise in specific areas and/or have particular strengths. If your child has a particular sporting interest or skills set in music or the performing arts for example, it may be worth refining your search for a school that has the facilities, specialist staff and experience to nurture this talent.

## *English Language Support*

All boarding schools licensed to enrol international students are required to offer English as an Additional Language (EAL) lessons and have specialist teachers on staff. The number and frequency of lessons will be decided as part of the admissions process. Several schools now operate standalone International Study Centres (ISCs) which work with newly- arrived international students preparing to transition into the British education system and provide them with English lessons (usually in small groups) and help them overcome any cultural barriers.

## *Religion and Traditions*

As part of the shortlist selection process, take the time to learn more about each school's history and whether they have any specific traditions. Some may have a special uniform for formal occasions or require pupils to learn Latin or be addressed by their surnames only for example. At the same time, look at whether they have any religious affiliations and if so, to what extent is this enforced at the expense of pupils of different (or no) faiths.

## *Pastoral Care*

And finally, research each school's approach and track record on pastoral care and read through their most recent Independent Schools Council (ISC) inspection reports to ensure they've been awarded highly in all categories accordingly. British Boarding Schools are renowned the world over for their high levels of care and security around-the-clock. They will also have comprehensive policies in place to cover a wide range of matters, including alcohol and internet/mobile phone usage, and how breaches are managed.

### **AIBC Thailand**

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