



'The UK Boarding Schools Specialist'

Preparing for Boarding School Life

Once the decision has been made to enrol your child at boarding school, the next task is to prepare them for what lies ahead. Taking them out of what they'll perceive to be as their comfort zone, is likely to involve tears and bouts of homesickness, both of which are to be expected. By focusing on the preparatory areas below though, the transition from home life to boarding school life on the other side of the world can be made that little bit easier.

Discussion

In the preceding months, invest time into discussing the upcoming move. Sit down together and read through the joining instructions as well as look at various sections on the school's website. Discuss which subjects/electives hold appeal, which co-curricular and extra-curricular activities they'd like to try or perhaps what aspect of the school play would they like to be involved in.

Homesickness

Be honest and straightforward, homesickness will be a factor. Big or small, it's important to talk about it beforehand and come up with a plan or strategy for when those pangs hit. How often do you plan to communicate and by what means? Is the wi-fi strong enough to allow FaceTime or LINE Video Calls? Have you considered the time difference and boarding house rules as far as permitted screen time/mobile phone usage is concerned? Keeping busy will also be important, especially in those initial months so encourage your child to take advantage of all the games, activities, sport and excursions on offer. As they say, 'a busy student is a happy student!'

Routine, Structure and Independence

Developing a routine and daily structure also goes a long way to overcoming homesickness. To help with this process, help your child develop a routine in the weeks (or even months) leading up to the move, similar to what they'll encounter at school. Encourage them to wake up at 7:00 o'clock for example and have breakfast, lunch and dinner during fixed times each day. Before going to bed, have them prepare their clothing (and/or pack a bag with belongings if required) for the following day so there's no last minute rush. As well as routine and structure, boarding schools help to foster independence in their pupils. Therefore, help your child become more independent at home. This could involve making their own bed, being able to make basic snacks or being able to balance homework with various household chores. The more practice your child has at being independent, the easier it will be once they've commenced at boarding school.

Familiarisation

Getting lost or not knowing where a certain classroom or building is on the school grounds can be a trigger for homesickness. Look at a map of the school and familiarise your child on where everything is located.

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The Thai Connection

Make enquiries as to whether there are any other Thai students starting and if so, consider meeting up beforehand. Even if they're not in the same year or same class, it's still nice to bump into a familiar face during breaks, especially until new friendships have been formed. Alternatively, enquire as to whether there are already Thai students enrolled at the school. Invite them for a meal and seek their feedback on those aspects of the school that perhaps your child is nervous or unsure about.

School Uniform and Kit

Allow a sufficient amount of time to finalise your child's school uniform and kit order in the months leading up to the move. The last thing they need (or want) is to be embarrassed if they look different in front of their peers because they forgot to order a tie or purchased the wrong type of football boots. It can act as another trigger for homesickness.

Keep the Brain Active!

If your child is starting boarding school in September when the British academic year begins, it's important that they've remained mentally active over the holiday months. This is because come the first day of term, they'll need to 'hit the ground running'. Alongside time spent playing PS4 or chatting to their friends on LINE, gently and gradually incorporate more stimulating activities into their holidays. Reading books, online maths challenges or even visits to art exhibitions and local cultural attractions, anything that will help stimulate and keep their brain ticking over.

New, New and more New

Even if your child is coming from a British curriculum school in Bangkok, they will still find the boarding school experience in England to be 'new' in more ways than one. New phrases and terminology, new sports and new food options to name just a few. What is 'Prep Time'? How is the sport of cricket played? What is 'Bangers and Mash'? To minimise anxiety and feeling completely out of place, spend time with your child finding out the meaning to some of these things beforehand. If opportunity allows, why not try some Bangers and Mash or even watch a game of cricket!

Arrival

Arriving in the UK a few days before the start of school will help with overcoming jet lag, making any last minute uniform (or other) purchases as well as make friends. These days, most schools will run mandatory induction programmes designed to make the transition as smooth as possible. Pupils receive guided tours of the school, are assigned 'buddies', told who to speak to when there's a problem and briefed on the main rules and regulations that govern the school. The Boarding House staff will organise activities to help 'break the ice' and ensure pupils are kept especially busy at weekends.

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