

HEAR FROM THE PROFESSIONALS ON FINDING THE RIGHT BOARDING SCHOOL FOR YOUR KIDS

May 2, 2014



Jennifer Ma and Victoria Davies Jones, co-authors of *“Boarding Schools: All You Need To Know”*, share their top tips for researching and applying to boarding schools:

1. What inspired you to write this book?

“Boarding Schools: All You Need To Know” is a collection of insights and advice based on 500+ interviews with schools, heads, education consultants, students and parents. As education consultants at ARCH, we have many parents and students approaching us to seek advice on UK and US boarding school options. Whilst there are many merits to boarding schools, we are aware of the importance to provide objective guidance – boarding schools are not for everyone!

What considerations should I take into account? Which is the “best” school? Have things changed? What are the admissions processes like? What age should I go to boarding? How can I groom transferrable skills that will allow me to excel in boarding schools? If I choose not to go, how can I remain competitive? These are all common questions from parents that we address in the book!

2. What do Hong Kong parents need to know about boarding schools?

Boarding schools are mostly independent schools that aim to provide students who board with a comprehensive, well-rounded academic education. While some things never change, such as school traditions, other areas such as admissions processes, school facilities and curriculums are constantly evolving. It’s important for parents to stay in touch with the latest developments, be proactive with research and start preparation early!

3. What do parents need to know about the admissions process?

For UK boarding schools, the admissions process differs widely between schools. Some assess at an earlier age with pre-tests. Some schools set their own entrance papers whilst most go by Common Entrance. Main subjects are in English, Maths, at times Verbal and Non-verbal reasoning; whilst some may require additional subjects. All schools will conduct an interview and most have a separate arrangement for scholarships.

For US boarding schools, applicants will need to submit a comprehensive application pack including a student statement, parent statement and supplementary work to show other talents or interests. They will need to sit for the SSAT and most likely attend an interview.

For all schools, students should start preparing 2-3 years ahead of the aspired year of entry.



4. What are the common education gaps for students from Hong Kong?

Having helped hundreds of families identify their students’ education gaps and successfully bridging them prior to applications or in transition to boarding schools, here are a few key gaps we’ve seen in students from Hong Kong:

- **Thinking skills and global awareness:** Schools abroad welcome students who have an interest in the world, as these students will most likely appreciate education overseas the most. The ability to communicate and elaborate in-depth is also important for the more competitive schools. This aptitude comes through especially during interviews.
- **Speaking skills:** International students often need more encouragement to speak up, especially when transitioning to boarding schools where small class teaching is promoted.
- **Critical reading skills:** Students either read very little, or when they do read, they tend to go for the plot rather than appreciating and learning vocabulary and linguistic skills from the text. Students beyond the age of 7 should go beyond “Learn to Read” and start to “Read to Learn”. These skills are tested on both the Common Entrance (UK) and SSAT (US).
- **Writing skills:** A lot of students are very creative with the plot but use of language is not effective in relating details. Often students are used to creative writing but both UK and US boarding schools look for ability in analytical writing too.



5. What are the key differences parents should be aware of before deciding to send kids to boarding school or state school?

Extracurricular facilities may also not be of as high a quality as independent schools. Class size also tends to be larger. In the UK, state schools tend to be relatively more strict with curriculum offerings, sticking closely to national standards, whereas independent schools have room for originality.

- **Demographics:** It’s likely that state schools are more diverse in demographics whereas independent schools, simply by default as fees are substantially higher, tend to attract the more privileged segment of society. Having said that, universities have extended a lot of outreach opportunities to state schools hence attending independent schools may not necessarily give the student as much advantage as in the past.



6. What are the benefits of boarding school? Why should I consider sending my kids abroad?

There are many benefits including cultural exposure, a sense of independence and better preparation for universities. Reasons will differ for each family and child. Our book explores the key considerations parents should consider – in particular, the merits of boarding as well as its limitations or concerns.

7. What is the best way of researching a good boarding school?

Parents often go by independent research or by recommendation from friends and family. We highly encourage parents and students to attend school talks, visit the schools and ask questions. They may also approach placement agencies whose primary responsibility is to match students’ academic standards with schools that are receptive of them at that level. Some may approach independent education consultants to seek the “right” school for their child after a more comprehensive and constructive process of evaluation, and more importantly, help them enhance their academic and personal profile to strive for a school that is the best fit.



“Boarding Schools: All You Need To Know” Book Launch Event Details:

What: Meet the authors and Hugh Davies Jones, the former Chairman of Independent School Inspectorate, Independent Association of Prep Schools and Boarding Schools National Standards Committee

When: 9 May, 5-6pm

Where: Dymocks IFC, Shop 2007 – 11, Level 2 ifc mall, 1 Harbour View Street

Exclusive Boarding School Forum Event Details:

What: Hear from UK & US professionals for the latest boarding school insights and admissions tips

When: 10 May, 9am-5pm

Where: Luk Kowk Hotel, Basement, 72 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

RSVP: For complimentary tickets to the forum, email info@arch-academy.com and mention “Sassy Mama”

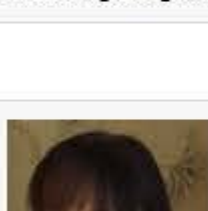
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Jennifer & Victoria



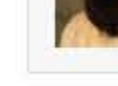
Jennifer Ma, Co-author

Jennifer Ma attended St. Paul’s Co-educational College and Benenden School, one of the top all-girls’ boarding schools in the UK. She was awarded multiple top prizes during her studies in the University of Oxford and graduated with First Class Honors in Economics and Management (B.A., Hon M.A.). Jennifer is co-founder of ARCH Education and involved in the Benenden School Trust as well as the China Oxford Scholarship Foundation – both organizations serve to recruit and fund able scholars from China and Hong Kong to further their studies in the UK.



Victoria Davies Jones, Co-author

Victoria is an author, journalist and communication skills expert, who also advises clients considering a UK boarding school education. After graduating from Cambridge University, she worked for twelve years as a producer and reporter for BBC TV/Radio News. Victoria has a wide range of experience within the UK boarding school system both professionally and as a parent of boarders herself.



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