

Learning Advantages

Keystone Tutors offers key considerations and advice for sending your child to UK boarding school.

— By Amelia Kendall

In the many years we have spent advising parents on which UK schools to choose for their children, we are often asked the same questions. We thought we would use this article to answer a few of the most typical.

Is the UK education system worth it?

The appetite for a British independent school education is often attributed to the sector's high academic standards and centuries-old prestige. We feel that both reasons do not fully capture the distinctiveness of the sector. UK schools are academically rigorous but HK-based parents can certainly find comparably academic schools closer to home. Similarly, the schools' reputations are not set in stone and we feel it is unwise to determine a child's education based on historical reputation alone.

Having spent considerable time in both Hong Kong and the UK, we feel that the strongest case for a British education is the unique importance it places on an all-round education. No other school system so successfully pairs academic rigour with committed and genuinely diverse extracurricular programmes.

Are boarding schools only for "Old Boys"?

Few new visitors to UK boarding schools can help but be impressed by how contemporary and unstuffy these schools now are. They have vastly diversified from the stereotype of cold showers, reciting Greek and Latin, and addressing everyone by their surname.

Demographically, too, the sector, is a broad church – much broader than it used to be – and the most striking mark of change is the abolition of the system



whereby children were favoured who had been registered at birth. There are, of course, still schools that cherish their tradition, but they are also forward thinking; Eton boys still wear their 'penguin suits' and Harrow their hats, but they also have a comedy club and Hindu Society.

Other ancient schools have charged forward to move with the times: Sevenoaks only teaches the IB course; Wellington has happiness lessons; and Wycombe Abbey has a flying scholarship.

Are prep schools a requirement?

For an international applicant, the benefit of attending 'prep' school prior to senior school is more social than academic. Prep school is excellent preparation for senior school as the environment and structure are similar with the added advantage of a smaller, cosier setting. It therefore serves to ease the shock that can otherwise unsettle new arrivals.

The opportunity to make more friends within a wider circle is also valuable as the prep school year group will go on to a variety of British public schools. Academically speaking, some of the more



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However, for those coming from abroad, exceptions are often made in regard to what subjects they will be examined in. At 13+ for example, UK prep school children will sit a full complement of 10 subjects (the fearsome "Common Entrance"), while

international children often sit papers only in Maths, English and Science. The benefit of this obviously is that there are fewer tests to prepare for; the downside is that there is a smaller margin for error, as those few subjects examined will need very strong scores.

Many schools, such as Charterhouse, have now instigated an early screening process for applicants who are not at "reputable international schools" (that is, those who have not sent many students to the UK before). The academic expectations though are the same; no matter where a child comes from, the school needs to make sure that prospective students will be able to keep up with the pace of work.

How to apply from Hong Kong?

The greatest thing that catches parents out is timing: those applying from Asia often have different time frames to those applying within the UK. Registration deadlines, for example, can close sooner for non-UK based applicants so we would advise doing some research on this.



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ARCH & Keystone Education is a joint venture between ARCH Education (based in Hong Kong) and Keystone Tutors (in London). ARCH and Keystone provide tutoring and advice to Hong Kong families hoping to enter top UK boarding schools. Their tutoring is undertaken on a tailor made online learning platform, www.bridgepointtutors.com. If you have any questions please contact Mandy Tsoi info@bridgepointtutors.com

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