



WELLINGTON
COLLEGE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
BANGKOK

A FAMILY GUIDE

What should I look for when choosing an international school in Bangkok?

A practical guide to comparing schools, asking the right questions, and finding the right fit for your child and family.

Choosing the right school

Choosing an international school in Bangkok is a big decision. There are a lot of schools, a lot of different curricula, and, at first, a lot of very similar-looking websites. For most families, the answer is not simply finding the school with the best facilities, the highest examination results, or the longest list of activities. Those things matter, but choosing a school is really about finding the right fit for your child and your family.

This guide sets out some of the things worth considering when you start comparing international schools in Bangkok. It is designed to help you narrow the field, make better use of school visits, and ask questions that reveal what day-to-day life at a school is really like.

Start with fit, not with a league table.

Contents

- 01 Where do I start?
- 02 The curriculum
- 03 Academic outcomes and a balanced approach
- 04 Education beyond the classroom
- 05 Pastoral care, wellbeing, and values
- 06 Visit the school while it is operating
- 07 Be realistic about the journey
- 08 Understand the full cost
- 09 Look at the school community
- 10 Ask what happens after graduation
- 11 Experience, accreditation, and networks
- 12 Think about where your child is going
- 13 Trust your judgement about the fit
- 14 A school visit checklist
- 15 Choosing Wellington College Bangkok

Where do I start?

Start with your 'musts' and 'must nots'. Bangkok has upwards of 100 international schools of various guises, and you will not want or need to see them all. A short list of non-negotiables can quickly remove schools that simply cannot work for your family.

1. Must have strong academic results
2. Must not be more than X minutes' commute from home
3. Must have extensive sports facilities
4. Must not be an IB school
5. Must have an all-through, 2-18 provision
6. Must not cost more than THB X per year for tuition

A school's website is a useful starting point. You should be able to find information about curriculum, location, academic results, fees, ethos and values, and facilities. Some schools, including Wellington, also provide an online virtual tour, which is particularly useful if you are not yet able to visit in person.

Friends, family, and colleagues with children already at a school can also offer useful, unfiltered insight. But every family has different priorities, and every child is different. The best way to explore a school properly is still to visit it yourself.

TOP TIP

Before you browse schools, write down five things that matter most and three things that would rule a school out. Use that list to create your first shortlist.

The curriculum

The curriculum is one of the first things to understand. Bangkok has schools offering British, American, International Baccalaureate, Australian, Singaporean, and other international curricula. There are also schools that combine international and Thai approaches.

If you already have an idea of where your child may eventually go to university, that can help narrow the choice, although school curricula are increasingly portable. A British secondary education does not prevent entry to US universities, for example, just as an American education does not prevent students from applying to universities in the UK.

For families considering a British education, the National Curriculum for England provides a clear pathway through IGCSE and A Levels. At Wellington College Bangkok, the curriculum is based on the National Curriculum for England and adapted to the Thai and Asian context, with education from Early Years through to Sixth Form.

If you are likely to move countries again, ask how straightforward a future transition would be. Moving between UK and US curriculum schools can require some adjustment, but it is common, and experienced international-school teams should be able to support it.

TOP TIP

Ask what a typical lesson or day would look like for your child. It can tell you much more about the learning experience than a curriculum name on a website.

03

Academic outcomes and a balanced approach

Academic results matter. They provide useful evidence about how students are performing and the opportunities available to them, but they are only part of the picture. Look at how results have developed over several years rather than focusing on one particularly strong year. Ask what subjects students take, what happens after they leave school, and which universities students progress to.

At the same time, your child is more than a set of examination grades. Some parents will say, 'I just want my child to be happy and safe in school.' Others will say, 'I want great academic results to help my child get into a great university.' Both can, and should, be true.

A strong school should combine ambition with happiness, confidence, and a genuine readiness for life beyond school.

Education beyond the classroom

What happens outside lessons matters. Sport, music, performing arts, outdoor learning, clubs, trips, and leadership opportunities can all play an important part in a child's development. Not every school can offer vast facilities or large open spaces, but a strong international school should still provide meaningful opportunities beyond the traditional curriculum.

Schools use different names for these programmes, including Enrichment, After School Activities, and Extra-Curricular Activities. The important question is not simply, 'How many activities do you offer?' Ask whether your child will genuinely be able to get involved.

- Can a child who has never played a particular sport join and learn?
- Can a student begin an instrument from scratch?
- Can older students take on meaningful leadership roles?
- Are there opportunities to perform, compete, create, and try something completely new?
- How easy is it to secure a place in popular activities?

TOP TIP

A large activities list is only useful if children can actually participate in it.

Pastoral care, wellbeing, and values

Pastoral care can be difficult to judge from a website, but it should be a non-negotiable part of your research. A school's approach may include online safety education, counselling, student voice, safeguarding systems, anti-bullying policies, tutor or house structures, and additional academic or emotional support.

Ask how the school looks after children when things are going well, but also when they are not. Who does your child go to if they are worried? How do teachers communicate with parents? How does the school identify children who may need additional support? What happens when a child is struggling socially, emotionally, or academically?

It is also worth exploring the school's values. Words such as Courage, Kindness, Excellence, Curiosity, Respect, and Integrity appear frequently across international schools. Similar words do not necessarily mean schools operate in the same way. The more useful question is how those values are made real.

TOP TIP

If a school says one of its values is 'Curiosity', ask for examples of how children encounter and develop curiosity in everyday school life.

Visit the school while it is operating

A school tour is one of the most useful things you can arrange. Try not to judge a school entirely from an open day or a polished presentation. If possible, visit during a normal school day and observe the students. Do they seem engaged? Are they comfortable speaking to teachers, or to you, as visitors? Do younger children appear happy and settled? Is there a sense of calm between lessons?

Listen to how people talk to each other. The way a receptionist welcomes you, the way a teacher speaks to a student, and the way students interact with one another can tell you a surprising amount about a school.

Go into the visit with one question in mind: “What would a perfect school look like for my child?”

Explain that to the staff you meet. A good admissions team should use what you tell them to customise the visit and help you understand where the school can, or cannot, meet your needs and expectations.

TOP TIP

Ask to see the less obvious parts of the school. Libraries, classrooms, playgrounds, dining areas, and corridors can tell you more about everyday school life than the most impressive facility on campus.

Be realistic about the journey

This matters particularly in Bangkok. A school can look close on a map and still involve a significant journey at the beginning and end of every school day. Traffic can make the difference between a manageable commute and a very long one.

Think about where you live now, but also where you expect to live. Ask about school bus routes, journey times, and pick-up points. If you are relocating to Bangkok, consider the school and your home together rather than choosing one first and trying to make the other work afterwards.

Do not judge journey time solely by distance. In some parts of central Bangkok, a 2 km journey can take as long as a much longer journey elsewhere. For a broad first search, the city's international-school market can be thought of in the following clusters:

Central Sukhumvit	Asoke, Phrom Phong, Thonglor, Ekkamai, Phra Khanong
Sathorn / Silom / Riverside	Sathorn, Silom, Yen Akat, Charoen Krung, Rama III
Bang Na / Eastern Sukhumvit	Bang Na, Bearing, Lasalle, Udom Suk, Bangna-Trad
East Bangkok / Krungthep Kreetha	Krungthep Kreetha, Hua Mak, Saphan Sung, Ramkhamhaeng, Min Buri
Rama IX / Ratchada	Rama IX, Huai Khwang, Ratchadaphisek, Pracha Uthit
North Bangkok / Nichada	Don Mueang, Lak Si, Pak Kret, Nichada Thani, Chaeng Watthana
West Bangkok / Thonburi	Thonburi, Ratchaphruek, Phasi Charoen, Bang Khae, Rama II

TOP TIP

Test the journey at the time your child would actually travel, not on a quiet weekend afternoon.

Understand the full cost

Tuition fees are important, but they are not always the whole cost of attending an international school. Ask about application, registration or enrolment fees, deposits, capital or development fees, lunches, transport, uniforms, trips, and optional activities. Some costs may be one-off, while others recur annually.

Ask the school for a complete fee schedule and work out what you are likely to spend over a typical year. It is also worth understanding what sits behind the fee. School income can support teacher recruitment and retention, pastoral care and counselling, specialist resources, technology, activities, and continued investment in the campus.

The most expensive school is not necessarily the best school for your child, and the cheapest is not necessarily the best value.

09

Look at the school community

Your child will spend a large part of their life at school, so the community matters. Consider the pupil cohort, the size of the school, and the size of individual year groups. Think about whether your child would thrive in a large, busy environment or prefer something smaller. Look at the physical environment too. Is there enough space to move freely? Are arrival and departure arrangements safe and well managed?

Look at the relationship between parents and the school. Are parents welcomed? How are they kept informed? Are there opportunities to become involved in school life? For families moving to Bangkok from another country, this can be particularly important. An international school can become much more than the place your child attends each day. It can become part of your family's wider community.

10

Ask what happens after graduation

If your child is older, university guidance should be an important part of your research, especially if you already have ideas about programmes or destinations. Ask how the school supports university choices, applications, and admissions.

Look at where recent graduates have gone, but do not focus only on a handful of famous university names. A strong university guidance programme should help each student identify the right options for them, whether that means a highly competitive university, a specialist conservatoire, an art school, a university in their home country, or a completely different route. The breadth of destinations can tell you a great deal about the support students receive.

11

Experience, accreditation, and networks

It is sensible to look at how long a school has been operating, who owns or oversees it, and which organisations recognise or accredit it. Accreditation and inspection can provide an additional layer of assurance because they involve external scrutiny of areas such as teaching, safeguarding, and school leadership.

It is also worth understanding the experience behind the school. A school that is part of an established education group may be able to draw on wider professional development, curriculum expertise, and connections with other schools. Those connections can create opportunities such as exchanges, summer programmes, easier transfers, shared competitions, online collaboration, and staff expertise across a wider network.

Independent schools can, of course, create excellent opportunities of their own. The important point is to understand the experience, governance, and external scrutiny behind the school you are considering.

12

Think about where your child is going

This is easy to overlook. Your child might be three years old when you are choosing a school, so naturally you are thinking about Early Years rather than university, about being happy and safe rather than the Senior School Maths curriculum, and about learning to balance rather than becoming a competitive athlete.

But it is worth considering what the school can offer as your child gets older. Your current plan may involve only a two-year work placement, but plans change. Does the school have a clear pathway through secondary school? How are transitions managed between Early Years, Primary or Junior School, and Secondary or Senior School? Does it offer the subjects your child may eventually want to study? What happens at Sixth Form? How does the school prepare students for university and life beyond school?

A through-school education can provide continuity as children grow and their needs change.

13

Trust your judgement about the fit

There is no single 'best international school in Bangkok' for every child. A school that is perfect for one family may not be right for another. Children have different personalities, interests, learning styles, and ambitions.

Once you have looked at curriculum, results, fees, facilities, location, and university pathways, think about the less measurable things. Could you see your child being happy there? Would they be known by their teachers? Would they have opportunities to discover things they are good at? Would you feel comfortable speaking to the school if you had a concern? And, perhaps most importantly, does the school share the things you value in your child's education?

A simple checklist for your school visit

Before making your decision, write down your priorities, and do not be afraid to check them off during your visit. Ask yourself:

- ☐ Is the curriculum right for my child's future plans?
- ☐ Does the school have strong academic outcomes?
- ☐ How does it support children who need additional help or challenge?
- ☐ What does pastoral care look like?
- ☐ What opportunities are there outside the classroom?
- ☐ How long will the daily journey take?
- ☐ What will the total annual cost be?
- ☐ How does the school communicate with parents?
- ☐ What are the university destinations of recent graduates?
- ☐ Is there a clear pathway through the school as my child gets older?
- ☐ Does the school feel like somewhere my child could be happy?

The last question is often the one that stays with parents after a school visit. Choosing an international school in Bangkok is a significant decision, but it does not need to be complicated. Start with what matters most to your family, visit the schools you are considering, and ask plenty of questions. You will usually learn more from an hour watching a school in action than from reading another twenty school websites.

The right school is ultimately the one where your child can thrive, be ambitious, and feel a true sense of happiness and belonging.

Choosing Wellington College Bangkok

At Wellington College Bangkok, we welcome families to visit the College and experience school life for themselves. Our school provides a British education for children aged 2 to 18, from Early Years through to Sixth Form, on a 28-acre campus in Krungthep Kreetha.

Our approach combines academic ambition with a broad and holistic education that includes sport, music, performing arts, activities, leadership, and opportunities to develop the qualities that will help students beyond school.

If you are comparing international schools in Bangkok, we would be pleased to show you around, introduce you to our teachers and students, and answer your questions about life at Wellington.



Arrange a visit

admissions@wellingtoncollege.ac.th
+66 (0) 2087 8888
wellingtoncollege.ac.th