SINGAPORE’S PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Singapore currently has 83 international schools and kindergartens that teach in English. These have 5,667 full-time staff and 58,785 students, according to the International School Consultancy, which provides data on the international school market. Just under half of the schools are British in their approach. More international schools are planned for Singapore as it plans for a huge influx of new expats over the next 15 years.

Many international schools also cater to the needs of families who seek instruction in languages other than English. These include schools that teach using Dutch, German, French, Japanese and Korean. If you intend to return to your home country after Singapore, sending your child to these schools can help ensure continuity with your home language and national curriculum.

A list of schools with specific curriculum is outlined as follows:

**National curriculum schools**

Choosing national curriculum schools ensure minimum disruption when transferring between countries, and for older children, allow easy entry to university in their home country. Many parents look no further than this option when looking for a school in Singapore. Typically, these schools demonstrate strong cultural ties, with Asia to make the experience a unique one for children enrolled here.

- **Australian International School** offers both the IB and Australian National Curriculum. Students get to choose between the IB Diploma and the New South Wales Higher School Certificate (HSC) in high school.
- **Avondale Grammar School** is an independent grammar school which is registered with the New South Wales Board of Studies.
- **Dover Court International School** teaches a high quality programme based on the English National Curriculum and has been adapted for their international community of learners.
- **Dulwich College (Singapore)** offers the English National Curriculum which is adapted to meet the needs of the international community.
- **The German European School Singapore** provides education with both a German and an international IB curriculum with a European focus. The school has recently introduced daily Danish lessons in the Primary
Section.

- The Hollandse School Singapore offers a Dutch curriculum to primary students.
- The Lycée Français de Singapour offers a French education to expat children.
- Insworld Institute gives secondary students the chance to choose between the Pearson Edexcel GCSE, A-levels and BTEC Extended Level 3 Diploma in Business.
- International Community School offers the American Curriculum with a holistic international overview strongly rooted in Christian faith.
- The Japanese School Singapore is present with three campuses in Singapore and offers a Japanese Certificate of Graduation.
- NPS International and Global Indian International School offer the Indian CBSE education from K-Grade 12, with the option of the international IGCSE followed by the IB Diploma.
- The Singapore American School offers a rigorous American-based curriculum with an international perspective.
- Stamford American International School offers both a credit-based American high school diploma and the IB diploma.
- The Swiss School in Singapore is a primary school offering education according to Swiss standards.
- Tanglin Trust School offers the English National Curriculum with a global focus. Students in their final two years of high school have the option of choosing either the A-level pathway or the IB Diploma.

International Curriculum and International Baccalaureate schools

The number of international schools has increased over the years due to increased demand from expatriates. They exhibit a diverse mix of cultures with all students having equal footing and no dominant nationality, and celebrate annual global celebration days. For expats on the move typically every couple of years, the mix of international curriculums allows children to transfer and continue their education easily. They offer a mix of the International Baccalaureate, the International Primary Curriculum and the UK National Curriculum (IGCSE – International General Certificate in Secondary Education).

- Canadian International School – IB Primary Years/ Middle Years/ IB Diploma.
- Chatsworth International School – IB Primary Years; IGCSE; IB Diploma; Chatsworth High School Diploma.
- GEMS World Academy – IB Primary Years/ Middle Years/ IB Diploma.
- Hillside World Academy – offers a bilingual Primary Years / Middle Years/ IB Diploma.
- ISS International School – IB Primary Years/ Middle Years/ IB Diploma.
- Nexus International School Singapore – IB Primary Years / IGCSE/ IB Diploma.
- One World International School – IB primary years; IGCSE (from grade six).
- Overseas Family School – IB Primary Years/ Middle Years IGCSE/ IB Diploma.
- Tanglin Trust School – offers the IB Diploma in the final two years of high school.
- United World College of South East Asia – offers a unique UWCSEA curriculum K1-Grade 8, leading to the IGCSE and IB Diploma.
Hybrid curriculum schools
These schools offer a dual curriculum approach, combining a home country curriculum with one or more international curriculums. They are typically culturally diverse, have qualified teachers to deliver both programmes, and are an excellent choice for a family unsure about which academic path to choose at a young age.

- **Australian International School** offers both the IB and Australian National Curriculum. Students get to choose between the IB Diploma and the New South Wales Higher School Certificate (HSC) in high school.
- The **German European School Singapore** provides education with both a German and an international IB curriculum with a European focus.
- **NPS International and Global Indian International School** offer the Indian CBSE education from K-Grade 12, with the option of the international IGCSE followed by the IB Diploma.

- **Stamford American International School** offers both a credit-based American high school diploma and the IB diploma.
- **Tanglin Trust School** offers the English National Curriculum with a global focus. Students in their final two years of high school have the option of choosing either the A-level pathway or the IB Diploma.

**Local International Schools**
- Anglo Chinese (Independent)
- Anglo Chinese (International)
- Hwa Chong International
- St. Joseph’s Institution International School

**DID YOU KNOW?**
- There are currently over 80 international schools in Singapore, catering for almost 60,000 students.
- The Singaporean government coordinates the availability of international school places in line with demand.
- International students in local schools constitute 4% and Permanent Residents constitute 9%.
- Singaporean student enrolments constitute approximately four percent of the total international school population.
- The number of foreigners in Singapore on Employment Pass is about 181,000 – meaning that they earn a minimum of SGD3,300 per month to qualify for this status. This is the monthly fees of a top international school.
- Singapore’s local education system is meritocratic in its focus on identifying and developing the very best talent and, equally important, directing it towards public service.
- According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Singapore’s local curriculum is home to the “world’s best education system” in a study published in May 2015.
- In local bookstores, a little more than half the floor space is dedicated to assessment manuals, consisting of practice questions based on the school curriculum from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- Private tuition to keep ahead of the class is very common and it is a 1.1 billion Singapore dollar industry. 8 out of 10 students take private tuition in Singapore in academic subjects.
GLOBAL SINGAPOREANS

A little over 1000 local students are enrolled in more than 30 international schools in Singapore, according to the Ministry of Education (MoE). Those who opted for international schools cited a curriculum that allows students more room for creative expression and one that goes beyond academics. Class size is also a draw. In international schools, the class sizes range from 15 to 25 students per class, compared to 40 in local schools.

On the other hand, international schools are not options to every Singaporean. It is common knowledge that the MoE would like Singaporeans to attend national schools to learn a common set of core values, knowledge and skills, which helps build a common identity and spirit and foster social cohesion. A Singaporean child may apply to one of the foreign international schools if he or she has been in education abroad or if one parent is of another nationality. There are also exceptions like in the case of children with specific learning difficulties when the ministry allows local students to enrol in international schools. If a child suffers from a medical condition that requires special attention that is not available in local schools then an exception under this circumstance could be granted. To enrol, parents have to seek the MoE’s permission and approval is given only for exceptional reasons. Returning Singaporeans who have been studying overseas for a substantial period of time and who wish to continue their studies in the overseas school curriculum and local families that are likely to relocate overseas usually obtain the MoE approval. In addition, for parents who are planning to go overseas for work but prefer their children to attend Singapore secondary schools, junior colleges can apply for the Boarding Award Scheme (BAS).

The BAS provides these young ones the benefits of a Singapore education, while living in hostels in Singapore whilst their parents are working or living overseas. MoE will help to place applicants into school-based hostels and pay for 50% or 100% of the hostel fees.

Singaporean students make up about 5 per cent of the enrolment in international schools in Singapore. This does not include those in the international arm of three local schools - Hwa Chong International, St Joseph’s Institution International and Anglo-Chinese School (International) which come under the local umbrella and do not need approval.
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE: HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

By Vandana Rao, Client Services Manager (ITS Education Asia)

Many families today are used to the culture of moving countries, jobs and schools. Many others are not, thus, the experience can be quite daunting. While Singapore is relatively an easy place to live for expatriates, given the language of communication is mostly English, the transition can be challenging when relocating with children. The first worry on a parent’s mind is of course schooling and which one is the ‘right fit’ for their child.

Every parent is looking for a school that will fulfil their child’s needs both emotionally and academically and allow them to be recognized for their talents / skills and as well as this provide them with the exposure to new subjects. There is no doubt a lot to consider, as the type of school you choose can impact your child’s emotional, mental and social development. Here are some valuable tips which will help you navigate the system:

• Research Singapore schools online and make a shortlist of the ones that appeal to you. Write to the schools and explain your situation. Make enquiries about spaces, the true reality of the waiting lists, the suitability of the school based on your child’s learning traits and personality and gauge from the response if you think it is the right school for your child.

• Application timelines are critical. Ensure you submit your applications well in time for the next academic year. Some international schools in Singapore have priorities for certain types of passports, some strictly follow the date of application while others offer portions of their seats for the next academic year in stages or ‘waves’ while others do so based on withdrawals of existing students. Keep this in mind when applying.

  • Visit the schools on your shortlist and even those that might not be your preferred choice but have spaces – if you have time. A school tour is the only way you can possibly understand the true value of a school and discover first hand if it is everything you have read about. Most international schools offer individual school tours, while others only do group tours. Look closely at the engagement between teachers and students in the class, the activities the classroom is involved in, the smiles and interaction you get from the students. Examine the layout of the classes, the structure in the classroom, kids art or writing displayed. Many times, this is the deciding factor in choosing a suitable school from a not-so-suitable one.

  • Learn about things beyond classrooms and textbooks. Extra-curricular activities that may excite your child, language choices offered, a multi-cultural environment where they do not feel intimidated, the ethos of the school, etc. This will play a role in your child’s happy transition.

• Shortlist three schools that you think really fit your needs and if they have long waitlists, visit another two that have a
Ensure your child is placed in the grade appropriate to their learning as cut-off dates vary between schools. Most international schools in Singapore follow the 1st September cut-off date.

- Enquire with colleagues and friends of friends for their personal experience. Query them carefully, as what works for one family does not necessarily work for another. Upon having a conversation with them, tick off points that they bring up that works for them but not for you. Query with an unbiased source about the school that would work best for your child – especially when you are on the fence with your decision.

Other key considerations:

1. **How long will you stay in Singapore?**
   The length of your stay is a major factor to consider for the choice of school for your child.
   
   If you are on a short term assignment and looking to stay in Singapore for less than three years, considering an international that mirrors the education system back in your home country would be ideal. This will help your child to easily integrate back into your home country’s school system when the time comes to go back home and be ready for any major external exams.

2. **Do you want to expose your child to a different culture?**
   Putting your child in a local school can make going to school an academically challenging experience, but it can also be very rewarding in helping them shape a stronger personality and making them more adaptive to change later on in life. Singapore offers an excellent second language programme, and it can become a significant advantage for your child’s future to be able to learn a second/third language. However, Singapore’s school system has high academic standards and a stringent testing system, a competitive environment and a relatively lower emphasis on arts and humanities.

3. **What is your budget?**
   The cost of tuition can definitely be a huge concern when choosing a school. International school fees for primary and secondary school can range from SG$25,000- SG$45,000 per year, compared to around SG$10,000 for non-ASEAN students in local schools.
   
   So there is no doubt that the cost of sending your child to a private school will be a key factor if school fees are not part of an expat package.

4. **What facilities are important?**
   While most international schools in Singapore have great facilities, you might want to look for schools with specific infrastructure to cater to your child’s interests. For instance, if your child has been dancing competitively in your home country, you may want your child to continue doing this in Singapore. If your child loves swimming and is very sports-oriented, you might want your child to have access to a very extensive sports programme or if your child is talented in the Arts, you may want a school which focuses strongly on performing arts and music.

5. **What type of school life do you want for your child?**
   Do you want your child to be in a big school with students from all over the world or would you prefer one that provides a more intimate and familiar environment? Some schools also offer more emphasis on a counselling or support system for children, providing a close-knit community and outlet for new students.