

Boarding School Admissions: Finding the best UK education for your child



Boarding School Admissions

British boarding schools are known for their excellence – not only academically, but also when it comes to extracurricular activities such as sports, art and music. The best schools enable students to achieve their full potential and become well-rounded, forward-thinking, and resilient individuals.

But with over 450 schools in the UK, how do you decide which one is right for your child?

At Academic Families, our network of schools extends all across the country, and we make the admissions process easy for you.



Learn more about the UK admissions process



We are expert matchmakers

Understanding the needs and strengths of children may be straightforward for parents, but to match them to their best-suited course or boarding school is more challenging. When selecting a school, you need to understand more than exam requirements, activities and facilities.

Academic Families wants the best for our students – we treat them as if they are our own children, and we're excited to welcome you into our family!

We take time to understand each student's personality, strengths, weaknesses and objectives. We work hard to ensure each child can fully develop their interests and skills as well as learn new ones.

Our experienced admissions experts are able to answer any of your questions, so [contact us today](#) and we'll be happy to share valuable insight into the UK boarding school application and enrolment process.

Specialist support for admission to:

- Boarding school
- English language courses
- Exam prep courses
- Summer courses
- University



Expertise and support from day one through till graduation

We look forward to helping ensure your child is happy, safe and successful throughout their time in UK education.

As a UK-based international education agency in close contact with hundreds of schools throughout the UK, we are well placed to advise international parents such as yourself on suitable boarding schools for your child.

In addition to managing their enrolment, we continue providing support through our guardianship services, ensuring their safety, happiness, success and wellbeing whilst in UK education.



Learn more about British boarding schools by visiting our blog



Quality you can trust - British Council & AEGIS

Academic Families has over 10 years of experience looking after international students from over 40 countries.

We are recognised by the British Council, Boarding Schools' Association, AEGIS (Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students), English UK and Youth Mental Health England for our professionalism, expertise, and in-depth knowledge of the UK education system. We are also certified Safe Recruiters, so our team and host families are all recruited according to strict safeguarding guidelines.

We're a friendly team and have lived or travelled extensively outside the UK, so you can rely on our international outlook and experience. Many of our staff are also mothers who have sent their own children to study overseas. Meanwhile, our younger staff have studied and lived abroad, many have taught overseas and all enjoy a special connection with the children and teenagers we look after.



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My experience with Academic Families over the past 4 years has been exemplary. They have been consistent, professional and we have not had one negative experience. Communication is prompt and their support in ensuring my son arrives safely and departs to school has been excellent. Our primary contact has been Sophie and she has just been wonderful with my son and our family.

Timothy, father of Nathan, age 15 – from Canada – studying at Merchiston Castle School

Tap into our expertise

Our expertise in finding the best boarding school education for each student is world class. We help you choose between traditional UK boarding schools (for British and international students) and International Study Centres (for international students only).

Most of our students progress to a UK university, so we offer careers guidance, degree selection and application support for Undergraduates and Postgraduates, too.

The Academic Families network of quality boarding schools extend all across the UK and includes institutions in cities, towns and rural areas. Our team regularly visits our partner schools and are on a first-name basis with school staff.

Which school is best for your child?

We will help you find out!



**Fill in our
Application Form**



Finding a place where your child can thrive

We match schools to your child – we don't fit your child into a limited list of 'our' schools like other agents might do.

We're connected to over 450 British boarding schools, and because Academic Families also looks after children (as their guardian) when they are at school, we know schools inside and out.

We pride ourselves on giving unbiased advice that's tailored to you in order to ensure the best fit for your child. Put simply, we're match-making experts.



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“The ethos of Academic Families - that the school should meet the needs, strengths and values of the child and not the other way around - was aptly manifested by Roni throughout our application process. The children have secured places in their schools of preference, and all that remains is finalising the admission processes. The children look forward to joining their schools of choice, thanks to Roni's support. We are grateful and have already recommended Academic Families to some of our friends who require similar support. We will certainly recommend Academic Families to anyone who would require exemplary services in identifying schools in the UK.”

Julianne and Joseph, parents of Joshua and Josepha, age 17 – from Uganda – studying at Ellesmere College and Wells Cathedral School

We look forward to receiving your registration form and working together to support you from your initial interest in UK education until your child's last day at their British school.

Get started with our easy 7 step process



1. Register

[Complete our online registration form here.](#)



2. Getting to know you

Our Admissions Specialist will schedule a video call with you and your child to review your details, as well as discuss the school selection and application process.



3. Matching you to the right boarding schools

We carefully select 3 to 5 of the best matched schools that fit your requirements. Together, we will discuss them and revise our suggestions if needed.



4. Boarding school applications

After we receive your payment for each school's registration fees and our administration fee, we will take care of registration forms and next steps.



5. Interview preparation and school assessment

We provide you with tips and interview practice sessions as your child prepares for each school assessment and video interview.



6. Offers and acceptance

Congratulations! Together, we'll help you review offers and confirm your preferred boarding school. Academic Families will inform each school of your decision. You will then secure your child's place by paying the deposit to your chosen boarding school.



7. Child student visa and guardianship

We will explain about UK visa and guardianship requirements and how we can support you with both before you start the visa application process.

Professional & personalised support

“ Academic Families understood our needs. Time was not on our side, but I was amazed at how quickly they were able to match my daughter with schools based on subjects she likes and wants to pursue. Throughout the process, we got real-time support. The service was professional and personalised. Academic Families gave us peace of mind and they handled most of the things that I would have had to do. That help was priceless.”

Pauline, mother of Iman, age 16 – from Kenya – studying at Harrogate Ladies' College





Admissions FAQs – Boarding Schools

When should we start looking for a school?

Ideally 18 months before attending, but we also have success with late applications to many schools.

Due to their stellar reputation, boarding school places continue to fill up quickly, making admissions more and more competitive. Many parents like you are keen to get their children enrolled before it's too late.

Let our team guide you and speed up the application process. Speak with one of our experts now to maximise your child's chances of getting accepted into their chosen school.



Book a free, virtual consultation today!



How much are boarding school fees?

You should budget on boarding school fees from £35,000 per year for academic and full boarding costs. You should also budget an additional £2,000 per term for guardianship, supplies, activities and pocket money. Flights home need to be considered too.

How can we choose the best course or school?

It's challenging to understand the merits of all schools, especially as each school adds value in different ways and there aren't any comprehensive rankings for UK boarding schools.

If your child has specific requirements then a good place to start is with schools offering matching specialisms.

Our advice is always to decide on what your child wants to do beyond academics and then we can suggest great options to pursue their dreams.

Can we visit schools before applying?

Yes, we can help you select and visit schools in person and make all the arrangements for you.

We also understand that not everyone can come to the UK before choosing a school and that's why we personally visit the schools we work with on a regular basis. Our detailed knowledge and wisdom are shared with you during your admissions consultation.

How do we apply to boarding school?

Our advisers will apply to each school on your behalf, presenting your child in the best light and to meet each school's specific application preferences.

Does my child have to have an excellent academic record?

No, each school has different criteria and we match your child with schools where they can achieve their full potential.

How fluent in English does my child need to be?

Each school has different criteria and there are many short courses to boost English skills prior to enrolment, as well as extra tutoring during the school year.

My child has an interest or skill – can they develop it?

Of course - there are many sport, music and drama specialist schools with different levels of academics. We can advise on both boarding school and summer short courses.

What if my child needs extra learning support?

Many schools cater for a variety of Special Education Needs so we are able to find the best match for each child where they can be fully supported to achieve their greatest success.

Is there an ideal age to start at boarding school?

It depends on your child. However, many students join from 9 to 13 years old, depending on their maturity. Other popular entry points are at the beginning of the 2 year GCSEs, 1 year GCSEs or 2 year A Level / IB courses in Year 10, 11 or 12 respectively.

Do we need to have a relative or friend nearby to help?

Not at all – the Academic Families guardianship team is your local network of support – we're here because you can't be.

Can an international student work while at boarding school?

The UK Child Student visa allows over 16 year olds to work for up to 10 hours per week during term time, but few schools allow boarders to work unless it's during the holidays when over 16 year olds can work full time.



**View more FAQs
here**





Short Courses in the UK

We can support you with all kinds of admissions options – from short stays through to university.

From one week to six months, Academic Families can help secure a place for your child to experience a taste of UK education at a price that fits your budget.



Language Lessons



Exam Prep



Pre-Sessional Courses



Summer Programmes



See our short course options



English Language and Special Interest Courses

UK short courses can be a wonderful way to improve English, as well as providing a fun and enjoyable holiday experience. Cultural, sport and art interests can be developed as well as English language – there's a huge choice to suit everyone.

We can offer residential English Language courses in boarding schools, courses at specialist language schools and 1:1 intensive tutor homestays.

The choice is yours!

Short Boarding School Experiences

Some children only want to stay at a boarding school for a short time – either as a new experience or a 'taster' before fully enrolling.

We recommend summer holiday boarding school taster courses which last from 2 weeks to 2 months. There are also some boarding schools that will accept international students for only one term or one year.

FAQ - Short Courses

How much do language and short courses cost?

They vary from £300 to £2,000 per week depending on the programme.

How can we choose the best course?

Let us know which skills your child would like to develop and we will find the best course and location for them.

How long can people study English before applying for a degree course, and can students work while learning?

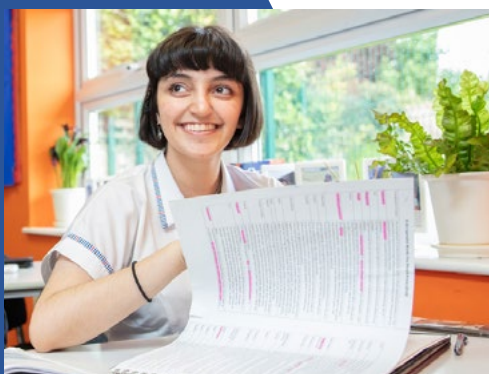
Students under 18 years old can study for up to 6 months on a short-term visa. Over 18s can enrol on a university pathway course for up to 11 months before enrolling in higher education. No one can work on a short-

term visa, but young adults can work for 10-20 hours per week on a part time basis depending on their enrolment status.

Can you arrange holiday trips in the UK or abroad?

When schools are closed at half term breaks, we also run a series of escorted holiday trips which international students can join.

Please note: these trips are offered exclusively for families who also have appointed Academic Families as their child's UK guardian to ensure their safety and wellbeing during their time in the UK. [See page 13](#) to learn more about our guardianship services.



Beyond Boarding Schools – UK University Admissions

**Our specialist advisers assist students to select and apply
for their university course at all levels -**

Foundation, Undergraduate, Pre-Master's & Postgraduate

We guide you through a wide choice of universities from small, rural campuses to large city universities and help you select from the hundreds of courses that might suit you. Once you have confirmed your choice of university and degree, we continue to support you with your applications, accommodation, visa and guardianship – whatever you need.

With our support, our students transition to university as easily as possible.



FAQs - University

How much does a UK Undergraduate degree cost?

Undergraduate fees range from £9,000 for UK residents up to £15,000 for international students, and up to £40,000+ for a top undergraduate medical degree. Living costs vary by location.

How much does a Postgraduate degree cost?

Master's degrees vary from £12,000 to £20,000 and are usually 1 year. This is shorter than in other countries, so living costs are reduced.

How long are university courses?

Foundation courses last between 1 and 3 terms. Students can then progress into Year 1 or 2 of an Undergraduate course. Bachelor degrees typically take 4 years in Scotland and 3 years in England/Wales while Postgraduate courses can last 1-3 years.

What's the difference between Bachelor degrees at universities in Scotland and England/Wales?

Scottish universities offer a flexible 4 year degree enabling students to add breadth and depth to their studies and more time to develop other skills and experiences, including study abroad, which are attractive to employers. Application is to the faculty whereas universities in England and Wales require students to confirm their graduating major before they even start. Some Scottish universities offer a 4 year MA instead of BA.

How do you choose the best Foundation or Pre-Master's course?

Once you have decided on the subject, style of learning and location, we can help narrow down your choice of courses and universities.

How do you apply for a university course?

Our advisers will manage your application through UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

Can international students work while they study?

On a student visa, you can work for up to 20 hours a week during term and full time during the holidays.

Can international students work after graduation?

Most student visas allow you to stay for 4 months after your course finishes and most courses allow you to apply for a 2 year Post Study visa.





Gold Standard Guardianship Provider

International students are required to have an appointed guardian. By using Academic Families as your child's guardian, you can be sure that they will be fully supported by our team. We offer the same level of support that we would expect for our own families. For over 10 years, parents from more than 40 countries have relied on us to ensure that their children are safe, happy and successful whilst they're far away from home.

Using the same professional agency for admissions and guardianship is not only convenient.

Admission to a UK school is just the beginning! We organise all the logistics an international student needs when travelling to and from school, and in addition, we support your child's academic and personal development by keeping in touch with school staff to ensure they are happily doing their best.

Since we already know you and your family, it's a comfortable relationship and smooth transition for your child to continue under the care of Academic Families once enrolled at school.

You can rely on us for 24/7 support!

Making the best match for your child

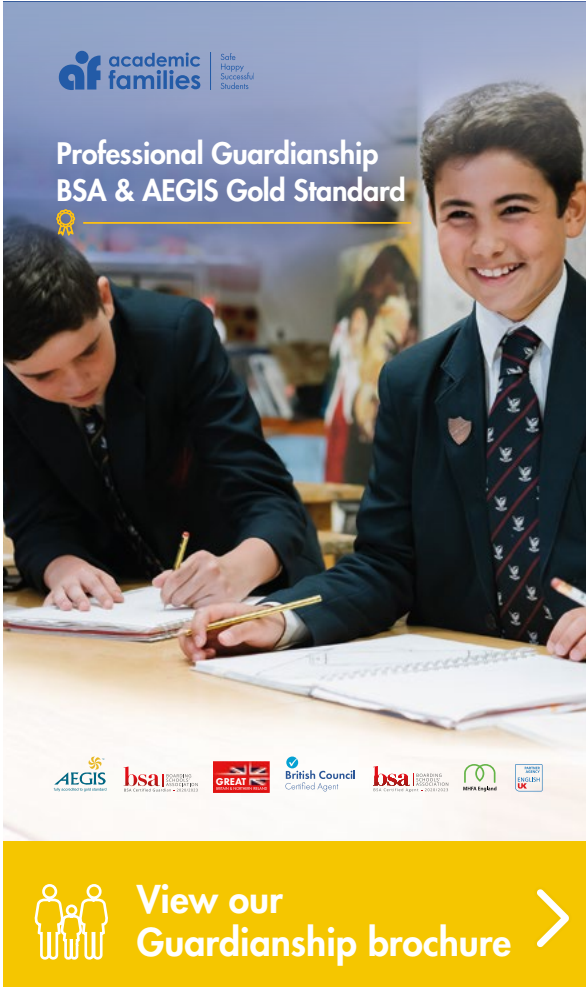
Some families choose a school close to friends or family in the hope they will provide guardian care and hosting when their child has short breaks from school. However, the closest school to your contacts in the UK may not be the best match for your child. This is why it's essential to have an expert like Academic Families to help you choose the best school without worrying about who you know nearby.

We then provide guardianship care as well as a local host family. We can also make all the arrangements for visits to friends or family if you prefer. Our UK-wide network is your support network.

Transportation, long weekends and school breaks

UK boarding education gives international students an understanding of British culture, but total immersion with a UK family during weekends and holidays from school ensures they fully live the culture. To ensure student safety, we manage UK transfers and offer only carefully selected and vetted drivers. Our host families are also vetted, regularly visited and trained in safeguarding to ensure the highest safeguarding standards. We even take students on escorted holiday trips during their half term holidays!

We act as a link between parents and the school, representing you on your behalf at school events, reporting back after teacher meetings, and assisting with shopping or any emergencies.



academic families Safe. Happy. Successful. Students.

**Professional Guardianship
BSA & AEGIS Gold Standard**

AEGIS **bsa** **GREAT** **British Council** **bsa** **WISC** **UK**

View our Guardianship brochure

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“Academic Families is a highly professional guardianship organisation. Their very knowledgeable and experienced staff share the strong vision to always put each child first and to provide a service they ‘would want for their own family’. Academic Families takes its safeguarding and child protection responsibilities very seriously and has forged strong working relationships with the schools it works with.”

Sarah Williamson, AEGIS Lead Inspector

Our Team

The Academic Families team professionally ensures your child's safety and enjoyment. We are recognised by the Boarding Schools' Association, British Council, Education is GREAT, AEGIS, English UK and Youth Mental Health England for our professionalism and expertise.

The key people you will probably meet include:



Lorna Clayton - Founder & Managing Director

Lorna founded Academic Families in 2012 following her 13 year overseas career in Australia, South America and East Africa. She founded a Kenyan education charity, Assist a Child To School (ACTS) in 1998 funding and placing needy students in education.

With 20+ years' experience in business and as an expat mother, Lorna leads the Academic Families team to deliver our premier personal and professional service.

As a British Council trained agent, Lorna's knowledge and expertise ensures that our students receive the best possible advice and support leading to their educational success.



Roni Jennings - Head of Admissions, Child Protection Officer

Roni heads our Admissions and Guardianship teams and is our designated Child Protection Officer.

She has taught overseas for 20+ years in British curriculum international schools, including as Deputy Head in Kenya. Her insight into the challenges moving cultures, curriculum and learning styles enables her team to ensure students are well prepared. Roni's British Council training, experience and expertise placing students in closely matched schools ensures their happiness and success and her child-centred focus ensures their safety and wellbeing.



Louise Brunton - Business Development Manager

Louise has lived extensively throughout SE Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean. Working for international travel and relocation companies has developed Louise's cultural intelligence ensuring her excellent international understanding and relationships.

Coming to the UK for her own boarding education and selecting the best boarding schools for her own 3rd culture children has given Louise a wealth of personal and professional experience. She is a great support for parents – understanding their dilemma of choosing the right education for each child. Louise is responsible for introducing our services to families from around the world, ensuring we provide the support they need.



Sophie Clayton - Guardianship Manager

Sophie has lived in Kenya, Australia and the UK. At school, she swam competitively at national level then taught and coached swimming for 7 years at top schools, clubs and Loughborough University. Her natural teaching skills and easy rapport with our students ensure their education goes beyond the classroom as they develop their independence safely and happily.

Sophie manages our Guardianship support and is responsible for our students' UK arrangements and safety. Her UK-wide team of Guardianship Care Managers provide local support. Sophie's British Council training ensures her comprehensive knowledge of the UK education system and visa regulations ensuring our families are professionally supported at all times.



Lisa Guo - Admissions Counsellor, Chinese Language Support

After a business career in China, Lisa came from Beijing to the UK in 2001. Now married with a school age son, Lisa's first hand knowledge of both education systems enables her to help our Chinese families understand everything they need to know about UK education and culture.

Lisa also ensures our schools understand some of the cultural background our students come from so everyone can learn together!



Debbie Spens - International Admissions & Career Counsellor

Debbie's 30 year career within boarding education, including as wife of the Head of a prestigious boarding school for 19 years, has given her great experience of the issues facing our international students as they adapt to, and benefit from, their boarding education.

Debbie's career includes Special Educational Needs teaching, and as a Mental Health trainer, Debbie has trained the Academic Families team to ensure we understand how to best support the wellbeing and mental health of our students. Debbie also has a post graduate diploma in Careers Guidance enabling her to support our students choices.

Language Supporters

Our UK-wide network also includes Language Supporters who understand the challenges families and students can face when moving to a new country, culture and language. Their personal experiences and multilingual skills help them translate more than words to support our families.

Guardianship Care Managers

Our team of Guardianship Care Managers have many years' experience living overseas and educating their own children in the UK. They provide UK-wide local support.

[See our website for individual profiles.](#)

University Counsellors

Our team of University Counsellors support our student applications to universities in the UK and globally.

UK Boarding School Admissions

Academic Families will help you find the best match for your child.

Let's get to know each other

When you register, we'll share our informative Parent and Student Handbooks as well as access to our Portal. We've so much information to share but we know it's easier for you to just ask when you need to know something. Don't worry - we'll keep you right - it's what we do.

Step 1: Fill in our Quick Form and we'll share our informative Parent and Student Handbooks as well as access to our Parent Portal.

Fill in our Quick Form today >

Step 2: We'll schedule a video chat so we can meet you and your child, and start our preparations for their arrival.

See you soon!

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Keep up the good work Academic Families! We felt nervous at first but Roni was very patient and understood this life altering move. Everything was very well organised and we felt confident with our decision in the end.

Joan, mother of Savannah, age 16 – from Kenya – studying at Oakham School