

UK high school

Studying in a UK high school gives students the chance not only to improve their language skills and become culturally assimilated, but, if they wish, to prepare for exams and academic life in the host country.

Studying in an English-speaking environment is undoubtedly the best way to enhance English language skills. Therefore, by studying in a mainstream school environment in the UK, language acquisition is virtually assured, while the experience of a well-respected education system is also much valued by many parents worldwide.

Many of the students enrolling at UK high schools follow a combination of English language modules and mainstream education classes while they adjust to their new school environment. Many enrol at their school to take examinations, such as GCSEs at age 16 and then either A-levels or the International Baccalaureate (IB) at age 18.

Maryam Kisray at St Mary's Hall school in Brighton affirms, "We always combine ESL [tuition] and integration in mainstream subjects," explaining that most of their international students choose to take academic exams, typically spending four years studying for GCSEs and A-levels. Students want "to learn the language, [access] the prestige of British education and to have an international input in their education," she says.

John Leighton at Concord College in Shrewsbury adds another reason for the interest in studying in the UK. "Many want to improve their English and learn other subjects for entry to a British university," he explains. "They believe total immersion in a boarding school gives them the best chance to do this."

Students do not always take academic qualifications. At St Clare's in Oxford, for example, the English 16+ course can be studied from one term to one year in duration and Ed Peters at the school explains, "This is an academic experience consisting of English language plus academic subjects."

At Riddlesworth Hall Preparatory School in Diss, Norfolk, Academic Manager Sue Dickson adds, "Girls who spend more than one term here usually take one of the Cambridge exams such as KET, PET and First Certificate."

In terms of where students come from, many schools relate that a wide range of countries are represented among their international alumni. "We are committed to enrolling students from as broad a range of nationalities as possible," says Peters. "Our current pre-IB students come from Argentina, Poland, Brazil, Switzerland, Denmark, Spain, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Lithuania as well as Korea, China, Germany and Russia."

Agents are a source of enrolments for many schools, who stress that they like their agent partners to have visited their school before referring clients. Peters says, "Our policy is to welcome agents on campus in Oxford, to run an annual weekend fam trip and to supply relevant and useful information in print and via an online resource." Susan Harris at Taunton School adds, "Agents are encouraged to visit the school. We build good relationships over many years."

Some of the schools listed also offer summer programmes, whereby students can brush up on English skills, often with an academic focus. Dickson says, "The length of time girls spend here varies from two weeks to two terms and one or two school years." She underlines the real-life benefit that in-situ study in the UK has for students – in her case, girls only. "All girls who come here are successful," she says. "There is always a great improvement in fluency, pronunciation and intonation, vocabulary and cultural knowledge, even after a very short period of time."

In order to adequately assess students before they enrol in a mainstream school environment, various methods are used. Dickson says that for very short-term students, no assessment is undertaken. Otherwise, a student visits the school and/or school reports are used. Leighton agrees this is standard practice. He looks at "school reports, online tests in English and maths, and interviews where possible." Harris adds, "Parents and agents are able to give us information on the student's character and temperament so we can make sure they will be happy once they arrive."

Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of institution	Min. length stay	Sep. ESL tuition?	Min. stud. age	Max. stud. age	Max. stay	Min. requirements
Bath	Kingswood School	1 yr	yes	7	17	10 yrs	et
Brighton	St Mary's Hall	6 wks	yes	8	19	10 yrs	v
Eastbourne	Moira House Girls School	12 wks	yes	9	19	10 yrs	exam/v
London	Davies Laing & Dick Tut. Coll.	1 yr	yes	16	25	3 yrs	gsr/ielts5.5
London	Ealing Independent College	1 yr	yes	16	20	3 yrs	v
London	St Dunstan's College	2 yrs	no	11	17	none	gsr
Maidstone	Sutton Valence School	24 wks	yes	11	17	7 yrs	ie
Norfolk	Riddlesworth Hall Prep School	2 wks	yes	8	14	2 yrs	be
Oxford	St Clare's	12 wks	yes	15	18	1 yr	int
Oxford	Kingham Hill School	12 wks	yes	11	18	7 yrs	exam
Shrewsbury	Concord College	12 wks	yes	12	20	5 yrs	et/gsr
Street	Millfield School	2 wks	yes	7	16	v	none
Surrey	Tasis - American Sch. in Eng.	1 yr	yes	14	17	4 yrs	gsr/be
Taunton	Taunton School	12 wks	yes	7	17	none	gsr/be

et English test gsr good school report int interview be basic English ie intermediate English v varies
NB: one term assumed to be 12 weeks duration