

BOARDING MAKES SENSE

Article by Dr. Tim Jefferis, Second Master, Harrow International School Bangkok



But the real reason for the dominance of boarding schools in the 'best school in the world' category is that boarding offers so much more than super-charged academic help. Boarders enjoy a far richer diet of extra-curricular activities than is possible for most day children. Here at Harrow Bangkok boarders have full and free access to our after school academies programme, and are encouraged to throw themselves into the lively and varied programme of weekend and evening activities. Many have become outstanding in their chosen area of expertise as a result. Boarding fosters a culture in which young people develop themselves. For this reason, boarders typically cope effortlessly with university life when they leave.

If you run a Google search for 'best school in the world', as I just have, you'll return some interesting results. Much as it pains the Old Harrovian in me to admit, Eton will likely be at the top of the list. Harrow UK will be a close second, followed by a coterie of schools from around the world, plenty in the UK; plenty outside it too.



So why the dominance of boarding in the upper echelons of schools worldwide? For me, having been involved in boarding all my working life, I think an important reason is summed up rather nicely by Tony Little, the former Head Master of Eton:

"IF YOU AGREE THAT A SCHOOL'S MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE IS INDEED ITS TEACHERS, YOU WILL WANT YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE AS MUCH CONTACT WITH THEM AS POSSIBLE."

As anyone who has ever met a boarding alumnus knows, boarders have about them an air of modest assurance that stays with them throughout their adult life. Living in close proximity with others, boarders learn to mix, to be tolerant of each other, to appreciate and nurture the strengths of those who are different. At Harrow Bangkok the eclectic mix of nationalities within the boarding community fosters a creative, supportive and distinctly modern, outward-looking atmosphere. I can think of few better ways of equipping youngsters for the travails of the modern world...

What, you might wonder, unites these august institutions? Examination results? No. These schools are good, but there are several which do not feature at the top of the domestic rankings, let alone the international ones. Fee levels? To be sure, a lot of the schools are expensive, but only a few extortionately so. Look a little bit more closely, though, and you will notice something, much as I did. Each of the ten schools appearing at the top of the search results is a boarding school, and sells itself unashamedly as such.

Children in boarding get far more access to subject experts than even the most lavish and indulgent programme of external tutoring could provide. Here at Harrow Bangkok, for example, every evening the boarding houses are visited by a dedicated team of academic staff whose job it is to help, to guide and to enthuse. Boarders enjoy the focussed attention of adults, particularly in the boarding houses, for almost double the amount of time that any day pupil can hope for.

