Boarding School Campus Visit Checklist

For every family considering a U.S. boarding school

A Parent's Guide by Global Education & Sports Partners (GESP)

A boarding school can look like a perfect fit during a campus tour. But what happens after the tour ends?

Will your child get into the classes they want? Who will notice if they're struggling? What happens when the dormitories close for school breaks?

Use this checklist to look beyond first impressions and evaluate what matters most for your child.

How to use this guide: Start with your family's priorities. You don't need to ask every question during one visit. Focus on what matters most, take notes, and follow up on anything that remains unclear.

Before Your Visit

School: _____

Visit date: _____

Student's current grade: _____

Intended enrollment year: _____

What Matters Most to Your Family?

Choose your three highest priorities.

[ ] Academic opportunities and challenge
[ ] Academic or English-language support
[ ] Athletics and extracurricular activities
[ ] Student well-being and belonging
[ ] Residential life
[ ] College preparation
[ ] Affordability
[ ] Location and travel
[ ] Other: _____

Our top three priorities:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Our biggest question or concern:

_____

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1. Academics and Learning Support

- What specialized courses or electives are available in my child's areas of interest, and are there prerequisites or enrollment limits?
- How are students placed into academic levels, and can they move between levels?
- What happens when a student struggles academically or needs additional challenges?
- What English-language support is available, and can students receive it while taking regular academic classes?

Notes: _____

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2. Student Life and Belonging

- What does a typical weekday look like after classes end?
- What do boarding students actually do on weekends, and how many stay on campus?
- How are new students helped to make friends and become involved?
- How does the school help new students adjust to boarding life, and what happens when a student feels homesick, lonely, or excluded?

Notes: _____

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3. Dormitories and Residential Supervision

- How are roommates matched, and can students request a different roommate if problems arise?
- Who supervises the dormitories, including evenings and weekends?
- What are the rules for curfews, study hours, visitors, and personal responsibilities?

Notes: _____

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4. School Breaks and Travel

- Which school breaks require students to leave campus?
- What options are available for students who cannot travel home?
- Does the school help arrange alternative accommodations, and are there additional costs?
- How far is the school from the nearest major airport or train station, and does the school arrange transportation for arrivals, departures, and breaks?

Notes: _____

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5. Health, Safety, and Advisory Support

- Is every student assigned a faculty advisor, how many students does each advisor support, and how often do they meet?
- What medical and counseling services are available, including evenings and weekends?
- How do teachers, advisors, coaches, and dorm parents share concerns?
- Who will know my child best, and how will that person recognize when something is not going well?

Notes: _____

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6. Extracurricular Opportunities

- What opportunities exist in music, theater, art, robotics, debate, sports, or other interests?
- Can students participate without previous experience, and are auditions, prerequisites, or other restrictions involved?

Notes: _____

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7. College Counseling

- When does individualized college counseling begin, and how many students does each counselor support?
- How does the school help students build realistic college lists based on academic goals, interests, and family budget?
- What support is provided for applications, essays, recommendations, and interviews?

Notes: _____

8. Total Costs and Financial Considerations

- What is the estimated total annual cost, including tuition, boarding, and required fees?
- What additional expenses should families expect?
- Is financial assistance available, what are the eligibility requirements, and what conditions apply to renewal?

Notes: _____

9. Overall Student Fit

- Based on what you've learned about my child, are there any reasons this school might not be the right fit?
- Could my child imagine themselves living here, and what would they still like to know?

Notes: _____

After the Visit: Your Child's Perspective

Before sharing all your own impressions, give your child an opportunity to describe theirs.

- Could you imagine yourself living here? Why or why not?
- What made you feel comfortable or excited?
- Was there anything that concerned you?
- Did you feel you could be yourself here?

Some students need time to process their experience. Consider revisiting these questions later rather than expecting immediate answers.

Family Evaluation

How well does the school meet our priorities?

Priority 1: _____ [ ] Strong fit [ ] Possible fit [ ] Concern [ ] Still unknown
Priority 2: _____ [ ] Strong fit [ ] Possible fit [ ] Concern [ ] Still unknown
Priority 3: _____ [ ] Strong fit [ ] Possible fit [ ] Concern [ ] Still unknown

Potential dealbreakers: _____

What still needs to be confirmed?

- Observed: We saw this ourselves.
- Confirmed: The school provided a clear answer.
- Unconfirmed: We still need more information.

Our three most important unanswered questions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Person to contact: _____

Our overall impression: [ ] Strong potential fit [ ] Promising, more information needed [ ] Significant concerns [ ] Not the right fit

Our child's impression: _____

Our next step: _____

A Final Thought

No school will meet every preference. Return to your family's priorities, review any concerns, and confirm the answers that matter most.

The right school is the one whose academic program, community, support, and opportunities make sense for your child, not simply the one that made the strongest impression during your visit.

Global Education & Sports Partners (GESP)

GESP helps domestic and international families explore U.S. boarding school options based on each student's academic needs, athletic interests, personal goals, and family budget.

Take the GESP Boarding School Assessment at gespeducation.com/assessment.

www.gespeducation.com