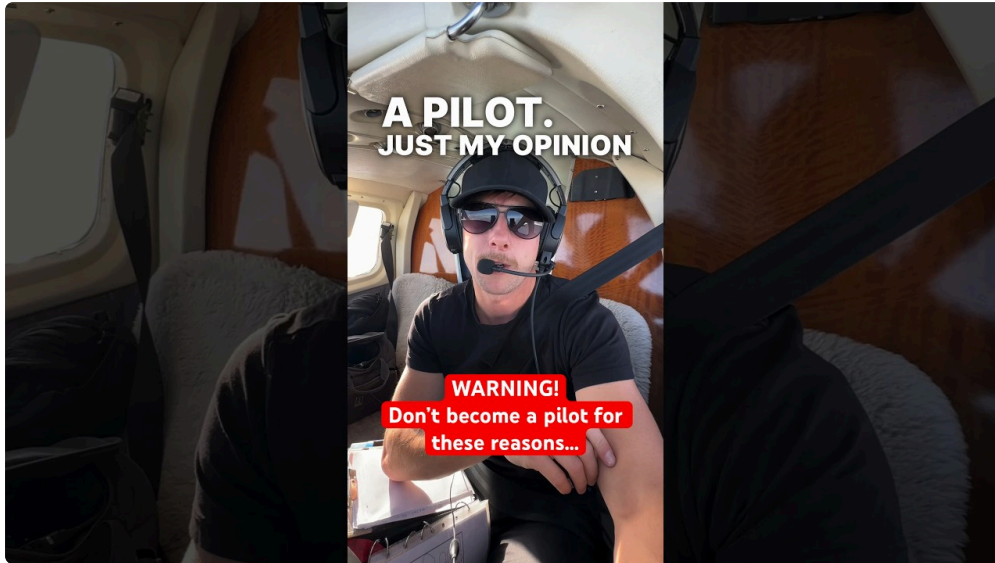


What Parents Want to Know About AELO Swiss Academy: Answering Your Top Questions

Almost every conversation I have with a prospective family starts the same way. The parent has done the research, bookmarked the website, compared Switzerland against two or three other countries, and arrived at our call with a neat list of questions. Then, about ten minutes in, the real question surfaces. The one they typed into a search bar at midnight. Will my child be okay there? Not just academically okay. Okay in the way that matters when your teenager is 900 kilometers from home and you cannot see their face when they say "I'm fine" over a crackly video call.



This article is an attempt to answer both layers: the practical questions you will ask our admissions team, and the quieter ones underneath. I will be honest where details change from year to year, honest about trade-offs, and honest about the things no school can promise. You deserve nothing less when you are making a decision this size.

What kind of school is AELO Swiss Academy?

AELO Swiss Academy belongs to a category of school Switzerland does particularly well: the small, internationally minded academy where teaching is in English, classes are deliberately kept small, and the student body draws families from many different countries. This model is different from the enormous boarding schools of the Anglo-American tradition, and the difference is worth understanding before anything else.

In a school of a few hundred students rather than a few thousand, nobody disappears. Teachers know which student struggled with fractions on Tuesday and which one has a piano recital on Thursday. For some teenagers, that visibility is exactly what they need. For a rare few who crave the anonymity and sheer range of a big school, it can feel exposing at first. I have watched both reactions, sometimes within the same family, and I always tell parents to think honestly about which kind of environment their particular child thrives in.

Swiss academies also carry a bilingual cultural inheritance. Even when lessons are in English, daily life rubs up against German, French, or Italian depending on the region, and most schools build local language instruction into the program. Your child will not become fluent by osmosis, but they will grow up, for a few years at least, in a country where switching languages is treated as ordinary rather than remarkable. That shaping effect lasts.

What does a normal day actually look like?

Ask any school this question and listen carefully to the answer. A brochure can promise anything; a sample timetable cannot lie.

A typical weekday at a Swiss academy runs longer than what many families expect. Lessons usually fill the morning and early afternoon, followed by sport, music, supervised study, and activities before dinner. Weekends at boarding schools in this region usually include structured excursions: hiking in autumn, skiing or snowboarding in winter, city [aviation weather](#) visits, cultural trips. Switzerland's geography does half the work here. When mountains and lakes are within an hour of campus, outdoor education stops being an enrichment line item and becomes simply how the week is organized.

If your child would be boarding, ask us for the boarding house routine specifically, not just the academic one. When is wake-up? When is lights-out? When can students leave campus, and with what permission? What happens on Sunday afternoon, which is historically the hardest stretch of the boarding week? A school that answers these questions readily is a school that has thought about them. One that deflects them is telling you something too.

Which curriculum will my child follow?

AELO Swiss Academy teaches primarily in English and follows an international program pathway, which matters for two very practical reasons.

First, international curricula are designed for students who may move countries or apply to universities in more than one system. Your child is not locked into a single national exit exam. Second, internationally recognized secondary qualifications, including diploma programs common across Swiss international schools such as the International Baccalaureate, are understood by admissions offices from Toronto to Tokyo. When the time comes, university counselors can map your child's results onto the specific requirements of the countries where they intend to apply.

My advice is to raise curriculum early and specifically. Tell us your child's current age, their current school system, and the countries where they might realistically apply to university. Those three facts change the advice considerably. A twelve-year-old entering middle school has time to grow into a demanding diploma program. A fifteen-year-old with two years of secondary school left needs a much more careful plan, and sometimes a bridge year, to enter the right diploma route without losing momentum. We would rather have that conversation at the enquiry stage than after enrollment.

My child is not a native English speaker. Will they cope?

This is one of the most common worries, and one of the ones I can answer with the most confidence, because the pattern is remarkably consistent.

Students with solid academic grounding in their home language almost always reach comfortable social English within one to two terms of full immersion. Academic English, the kind needed to write a strong history essay or sit a mathematics exam with wordy problems, takes longer, generally two to three years to fully consolidate. Schools that support this properly provide structured English language support alongside mainstream classes rather than pulling students out of subjects they could otherwise access.

Here is the part parents sometimes miss. A child who is strong in mathematics in Turkish, Mandarin, or Portuguese is still strong in mathematics. The language arrives; the ability was always there. I have seen students

arrive in September barely speaking in class and by spring presenting projects in front of visiting families. It happens with such regularity that the few students who struggle are almost always struggling for reasons other than language, and that is exactly why small schools with attentive staff catch it early.

What happens when homesickness hits at midnight?

It will. I want to be straight with you about that, because pretending otherwise does families a disservice.

Homesickness in the first term is normal, and it tends to peak in the first four to six weeks, then again around the first long break. What matters is the scaffolding around it. Ask about house parents or residential staff, their training, and how many students each adult is responsible for. Ask about the communication policy: when can your child call you, and are there quiet hours that protect sleep? Ask what happens if a student is visibly struggling, who notices, and how quickly the school contacts parents rather than waiting for the next scheduled call.

A story I come back to often involves a boy from São Paulo whose mother called me in October, certain he was miserable because his weekly calls were short and flat. When we checked in with his house parent, the picture was different: he had joined the football group, was eating well, and had simply run out of things to report because his days were full. Some children go quiet precisely when they are settling in. Others go quiet when something is wrong. The only way to tell the difference is a school where adults actually know your child, and where you, as a parent, are kept in the loop without having to interrogate a teenager across a time zone.

What does the fee cover, and what does it not?

Swiss private education is expensive. I will not soften that. Boarding at a Swiss academy generally runs somewhere in the range of CHF 70,000 to well over CHF 100,000 per year once all costs are counted, and day places cost proportionally less. Exact figures change annually, so please confirm the current fee schedule with our admissions team before building your budget.

The headline fee at most schools in this category covers tuition, boarding or day provision, meals, basic activities, and supervision. What catches families out are the items billed separately, which typically include:

- External examination and qualification fees
- Ski trips, expeditions, and optional excursions
- Sports kit, equipment, and personal insurance upgrades
- Private music or individual language lessons
- Guardianship and travel-arrangement services some families use

None of these are hidden in the sense of being secret; they are simply variable. A student who skis every winter weekend and takes violin lessons will cost meaningfully more than one who does not. Ask us for a realistic all-in estimate based on your child's actual interests, and we will build one with you rather than letting you discover the extras in January.

How safe is Switzerland, really?

Switzerland consistently ranks among the safest countries in the world, with low violent crime rates and a culture of order that extends to transport, public spaces, and school administration. For parents from large cities, the adjustment can be almost disorienting: students walk to the station, take trains between towns, and are trusted with a degree of independence that would be unthinkable elsewhere.

The practical items to sort out are medical. Switzerland requires health insurance, and international students generally need a policy valid in the country, arranged before arrival or through the school's recommended provider. Medical care is excellent, widely available, and expensive without coverage, so this is not a line to leave for week two. Ask us for the current insurance guidance during the admissions process, since requirements and providers do shift.



How does admissions actually work?

The process at a school like ours is usually less about gatekeeping than about fit. Expect an enquiry conversation, an application with recent school reports, an entrance assessment in English and mathematics appropriate to your child's age, a conversation with the student, and references from the current school. Depending on the year group, you may be offered a visit or a trial day, and I strongly recommend taking it if geography allows.

Two pieces of advice from experience. First, apply earlier than feels necessary for popular entry points, because places in small classes genuinely fill. Second, share the full picture of your child, including the difficult bits. A school that only hears the polished version cannot plan support properly, and support planned in advance is support that works. We are never surprised by a child who found last year hard. We are only hampered by finding out in November what we could have known in March.

Will my child get into a good university?

No responsible person will promise specific outcomes, and you should be wary of any school that does. What you can and should ask for is evidence: where students have gone over the past three years, which diploma routes they followed, and what the counseling ratio looks like. In a small academy, university guidance is personal by necessity, and that intimacy is one of the real advantages of this model. The student applying to medicine in the Netherlands gets different advice from the one aiming at a UK conservatoire, and a counselor with a small caseload has the hours to give both.

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How do I know if this is right for my child?

Be honest about fit rather than flattered by prestige. Small, structured, internationally diverse schools like AELO Swiss Academy suit students who are curious, who benefit from being known well by adults, and who will say yes to a hike even in the rain. They are harder for students who need a large pond of identical peers to feel confident, or who genuinely dread cold winters. Both of those children are perfectly made; they are just made for different schools.

If you visit, and I hope you will, come with questions that reveal how the school thinks rather than how it markets. Five that reliably open useful conversations:

- Can we see the boarding house on a normal weekday, unannounced areas included?
- Which student here would you describe as the hardest to teach, and how do you handle that?
- What did last year's graduating class do, and what did the school learn from the students who struggled?
- How do you decide when to contact parents about a concern?
- What do students complain about most?

A confident school answers the last one without flinching. Every school has friction points. Ours are the ones you would expect of a small community: everyone knows everyone's business, and the winter can feel long. The families who thrive here are the ones who hear that and think, we can work with that.

A last word for the parent reading this at 1 a.m.

You are not being overprotective. You are doing the job. The questions you keep circling, about safety, happiness, whether your child will come home more capable or just more distant, are the right ones, and no school should treat them as obstacles to enrollment.

Here is what I can offer from the other side of many Septembers. The children who arrive anxious and phone home tearfully in week one are, with startling frequency, the ones who by December are negotiating with their parents to stay through the holidays for the ski trip. Growth happens in the gap between what your child can do and what they believe they can do, and a good school's entire purpose is to widen that gap safely, one supervised risk at a time.

Ask us everything. Ask the awkward questions, the ones about money and failure and homesickness. The families who end up happiest here are the ones who asked the most before they came, not the fewest.