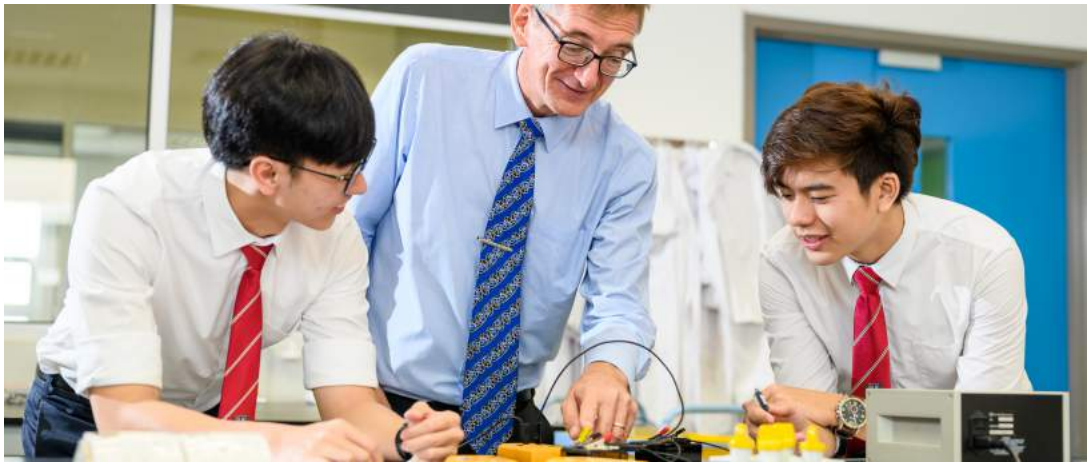
Prince of Wales Island International School

Living in Penang and working at POWIIS

Notes for applicants, 2019/2020



The school

The school was created within the MTT Group of companies under a new division called the MTT Learning Academy. The group remains in family ownership, having been founded in 1963 by the current Executive Chairman's father. The family have a passionate interest in education; the Chairman's children were educated in the UK, and hence the ambition to provide a school for local children in Malaysia that mirrored the ethos and methods of the UK schools. The family retain a close and supportive interest in the success of the school, and continue to invest strongly in it. In contrast to many Malaysian schools which are part of large educational groups, POWIIS is truly independent. Both MTT and the school promote a sense of 'family', and value long term relationships.

POWIIS is building strongly towards a capacity of 800, with a current roll of 500. We have excellent boarding accommodation, and a current boarding role of approximately 100 in two halls. The majority of our day students are from the island, with boarders coming from across South East Asia and beyond. The school has wide range of nationalities and is truly multi-cultural. We stress the importance of the holistic development of our students, with an ambitious and diverse co-curricular programme exceptional in the region, and which includes the performing arts for which the school is well known.

An interest of many of our staff, our magnificent auditorium is a venue for internal and external productions and concerts. The school's Steinway concert grand piano is only one example of the superb equipment the remarkable venue enjoys. Assemblies are held once a week at which academic, sporting and cultural achievements are celebrated.







The school is an English medium international school, modelled on the traditional boarding schools of the UK. The pastoral structures are organised under six houses, and all students are in small mixed age tutor groups. The curriculum is based on the English system, and examinations are IGCSEs and AS/A2. Entry to the school is by test and interview, but covers a wide range of abilities; examination results are impressive.

The staff is predominantly European who share, with high quality Malaysian colleagues, outstanding facilities and resources. There is a deliberate focus on staff development, with low staff turnover.

Applicants are encouraged to explore the school's website: www.powiis.edu.my

The area, and living in Penang

Penang is both an island, and a state extending onto the mainland. Pulau Pinang (Penang Island) is connected to the mainland by two impressive road bridges, and also ferry services. The island is growing, with impressive off-shore reclamation schemes including a new RM25Bn island to the north. Pulau Pinang has an international airport with regular short services connecting to the major hubs of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and onwards to global destinations, and also a network of services to destinations across south east Asia.

The school is situated outside rural Balik Pulau, in the growing garden township of Botanica CT. The highly developed northern and eastern sides of Pulau Pinang are within easy reach, and many students and staff travel to the school from them each day. Others come from all over the island, and indeed some from the mainland. We run a full schedule of buses, with a second phase in the evenings for students staying late for school commitments.

The centre of the island is often described as 'old Malaysia' a charming rustic mix of jungle, plantations and traditional villages, fast disappearing in some areas with new up-market residential developments. Picturesque fishing villages line the coast which also features attractive sandy beaches.

The island's main town is Georgetown; this UNESCO World Heritage site draws visitors from all over the world to its multicultural atmosphere and architecture. Temples, markets, artists' studios, and traditional craft workshops mix with bustling commercial enterprises - not to mention innumerable cafes, wine bars and restaurants of all types. Penang is known as the street food centre of southeast Asia. From expensive fine dining in glorious historic surroundings, to simple hawker stalls at the roadside, Penang has it all. A full meal can cost anything between MR3 (60p) and typical London prices, if that is your choice.

Many enjoy resort style living in the numerous stylish developments on the northern shores - again from simple traditional homes to exclusive high rise condominiums, Penang offers something for every taste - and budget!

Staff working at POWIIS enjoy the relaxed ambience of tropical life, the relatively inexpensive lifestyle, and easy access to some of the most exciting locations in the world. Many take regular trips to the UK, and enjoy the wonderful contrasts Malaysia provides.



Salaries, benefits, cost of living - and lifestyle

Salaries in Malaysia are lower than, for example, the Middle East - but the cost of living is lower also. Depending on their off-shore commitments, most staff find that when living in Penang they are able to travel widely and enjoy what this colourful region has to offer. Most are able to save as well. Rental and domestic bills astonish incoming staff members, and the leasing or purchase of locally made cars is very manageable, with low fuel and running costs. European cars have heavy import duties and are expensive, but the roads are nevertheless full of them!

Our salaries and benefits will be described to shortlisted candidates. One of the greatest benefits relates to the Malaysian Pension fund known as EPF. The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) is a fantastic savings plan to which teachers contribute 11% of their monthly salary. Employers are required to contribute an additional 13% to this monthly, meaning teachers are saving nearly 25% of their annual gross salary a year. With an annual interest rate of 3%-6%, it provides a very useful end of contract lump sum.

Good teachers everywhere work hard. In international schools, contracts are typically short (two or three years) but staff stability is highly valued by parents. We work very hard to create a life/work balance for our staff, and many report being able to enjoy their chosen profession in an area conducive to a healthy and balanced lifestyle. All value the outstanding private health care provided, and, of course, the weather….

