

# Uplands School

Penang, Malaysia



*Born on Penang Hill in 1955, Malaysia's oldest international school now anchors IB rigor to a beachfront campus in Batu Ferringhi.*

## RANKING DIMENSIONS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Overall              | 64/100 |
| Academic outcomes    | 65/100 |
| University placement | 63/100 |
| Prestige & heritage  | 65/100 |
| Alumni network       | 64/100 |
| Facilities           | 66/100 |
| Transparency         | 54/100 |

## EDITOR'S VERDICT

Uplands has a backstory few international schools can match: it opened on Penang Hill in **\*\*1955\*\*** as a primary boarding school during the Malayan Emergency, and that origin still gives it more historical weight than the newer resort-city campuses that dominate the market in South-East Asia. Today it sits in Batu Ferringhi, teaches ages 3 to 18 in English, and runs a British-plus-IB route rather than forcing families into a single track too early. That matters. The mix of Primary and Secondary, IGCSE and IB Diploma gives Uplands more academic range than schools that trade on atmosphere and leave the senior years thin. Its accreditations — IB World School, CIS and COBIS — place it firmly in the established international-school camp, not the start-up tier.

What is special here is the combination of *\*institutional depth\** and a distinctly Penang setting. Uplands is not a glossy newcomer trying to manufacture heritage. It has real history, real continuity and a campus life shaped by that longevity. The school also still carries a boarding identity in its DNA; that tends to influence culture even when families use it as a day school, creating a community that is more *\*self-contained\** and more rooted in student life beyond lessons. The average annual day fee across the full age range is **\*\*MYR 49,285\*\***, which places Uplands in the premium segment of the Penang market without pushing into the price bracket of the most expensive schools in Singapore or Hong Kong. For parents who want an English-medium international education with recognised accreditation and a clear senior-school pathway, that is a *\*serious proposition\**.

Why shortlist it? Because Malaysia has no shortage of competent international schools, but far fewer with Uplands' combination of age, credibility and curricular breadth. A child can move from early years through to the IB Diploma in one institution, with the British structure feeding into internationally portable qualifications. That suits internationally mobile families, but it also suits settled Penang families who want a school with *\*earned gravitas\** rather than hype. The school's own language leans hard on warmth, care and community; the more persuasive point is that schools founded in **\*\*1955\*\*** and still standing at the top of their local market do not survive on sentiment alone.

The student who will thrive here is not chasing a hyper-pressurised exam factory or an ultra-urban campus culture. Uplands fits children who value a broad school life, families who want an established international community, and students aiming at a conventional British-to-IB academic progression. It will also appeal to boarders and to day pupils who benefit from a school with a *\*strong communal centre of gravity\**. Parents seeking radical specialism, aggressive elite-brand posturing or a bargain fee will look elsewhere. Parents seeking stability, recognised standards and a school with a long memory of how to educate international children in Penang should keep Uplands on the list.

#### STRENGTHS

- One of the oldest international schools in Malaysia, founded in 1955, giving it a long-established presence in Penang.
- Offers both the IB Diploma Programme and a British-style curriculum (IGCSE), giving families a choice of exit qualifications.
- Situated in Batu Ferringhi on Penang Island, with a campus setting away from the congestion of George Town.
- Provides boarding options alongside day places, useful for expat families with shifting postings or regional relocations.
- Small overall school size allows for lower pupil numbers per year group compared to larger international chains.

#### TRADE-OFFS

- Editorial ranking (1007) places it well outside the top tier of internationally benchmarked schools, reflecting limited global visibility.
- Smaller cohort sizes mean a narrower range of extracurricular, sporting and subject options than large multi-thousand-pupil international schools.
- Location in Batu Ferringhi is a distance from central George Town, which may mean a longer commute for families based in the city.
- Public data on recent inspection outcomes, exam results and university placement is limited, making outcomes harder to verify independently.

## ADMISSIONS

Uplands accepts day and boarding students across primary and secondary years, with entry typically based on a review of previous school reports, an assessment, and interview rather than a highly selective exam process. Places are generally available year-round subject to capacity, and mid-year entry is common given its expat client base. Families should contact admissions directly for current fee schedules and confirm boarding arrangements and visa/dependent-pass requirements early, as documentation from the Malaysian Ministry of Education is required for enrolment.

WTS RATING 

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