

CHOOSING BETWEEN STATE & PRIVATE SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

A Simple Guide for Expat Families



Moving to Switzerland?

This simple guide helps you navigate school options for your child.

Age & Language matter most

SWISS STATE SCHOOLS WHAT TO EXPECT

What to expect from Swiss State Schools

- Structured system
- Strong academics
- Designed mainly for local-language speakers

Under 9 years

- **Learns language naturally**
- Lower pressure
- Often smooth transition

9-11 years

- **Can work**
- Depends on child + support
- Case by case

12+ years

- **Language barrier increases**
- Academic load heavy
- Wellbeing often impacted

Rule of thumb: **UNDER 9** → Often works well **9-11** → Case by case

BETWEEN STATE & PRIVATE

Swiss State School

Under 9

- Child has local language exposure
- Long term stay
- Community integration

Private/International School

12+

- Child has no local language
- Short & long term stay
- Curriculum continuity (IB/British)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STATE SCHOOLS

- Language support type?
- Hours per week?
- In-class or pull-out support. Individual or group?
- Emotional support?

Key Takeaway

A key takeaway for families:

The best school is not defined by the system itself, but by how well it supports a child's **language development, emotional wellbeing and stage of learning** especially during a major life transition.

PRIVATE/INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Families often choose private or international schools because they offer:

- ✓ Teaching in English or bilingual formats
- ✓ Support for non-native speakers (EAL / language support)
- ✓ International curricula such as IB, British or American
- ✓ Smaller classes and more individual attention
- ✓ Strong pastoral care and wellbeing systems
- ✓ Consistent curriculum if relocating internationally

A popular choice for families planning short or medium-term stays, or seeking international pathways.

SWISS STATE SCHOOL

When to consider Swiss public school:

- ✓ Free of charge (publicly funded) Strong integration into local community
- ✓ Swiss national curriculum
- ✓ Good option for long-term residents
- ✓ Access to local pathways (apprenticeships, Swiss Maturité)

AT WHAT AGE IS EACH OPTION BEST CONSIDERED

Swiss Public (State) School

Ages 4–8 (Early Years & Primary)

- ✓ Younger children generally pick up a new language more easily
 - ✓ Easier integration into local system
 - ✓ Strong foundation in French/German/Italian

Especially suitable for families planning long-term settlement

Private / International School

Ages 3–18

- ✓ When academic language becomes more demanding
 - ✓ If child has little or no local language
- ✓ For continuity toward IB / British / American programmes
 - ✓ Good for short, medium or long-term stays
- ✓ Guidance for preschool and primary-age children (under 12), where early planning supports smoother transitions and better long-term fit.

Signs State School Is Working (or Not)

How to Tell if Your Child Is Settling Well. Split it into two soft sections.

POSITIVE SIGNS

- ✓ Eager to go to school
- ✓ Making Friends
- ✓ Language Progress
- ✓ Emotional balance at home

RED FLAGS

- ✓ Stomach aches or tears
- ✓ Withdrawal or anxiety
- ✓ Falling behind in class
- ✓ Low Confidence

When Families Start Considering Private or International Schools

Age & Language

10–12+ years and higher language demands

Learning Shift

More abstract subjects

Wellbeing

Confidence or motivation drops

Future Plans

A future move is likely

Curriculum Fit

Continuity matters

Temporary vs Long-Term Moves

Does the Length of Your Stay Matter? Yes, A Lot.

Long-term stay

Integration may be worth the initial challenge



Short-Term Stay

Continuity & wellbeing often matter more



Teenagers

Often struggle most with short term integration



The right choice is the one that supports your child now

If you would like personalised guidance for your child and family, feel free to get in touch.

Email: n.nicolet@edugap-solutions.com

Whats app : 0041 78 635 1131