

183 The Chinese Government enforces lottery selection on private schools to prevent 'creaming'

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Article reads:

# International schools in China will soon use lottery system to select students



By [Study International Staff](#) | October 11, 2019

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SOCIAL BUZZ

Amidst an explosion of British-based private and international schools in China, the government is clamping down on their selection processes.

Accusing schools of “creaming off” the best of students, Chinese education providers will soon be required to pick students for admission based on a lottery system.

Zheng Fuzhi, China’s Deputy Education Minister, announced the new guidelines as part of China’s plans to improve the quality of public education.

According to [SixthOne](#), “Both public and private schools in the compulsory education system should start their enrollment processes at the same time, and private schools should select students through a random computerized system if applications exceed quotas.”

Richard Gaskell, Director of International Education Analysts at ISC Research, reportedly [said](#) at the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference of leading fee-paying schools in the UK that “There is a backlash against the rapid increase in private schools in

China, particularly from the big public schools where it's perceived that they have been simply creaming off the best kids."

He also advised that international schools should put their expansion plans on hold until the full effect of the changes next spring can be seen.

However, Gaskell said that international schools should not be deterred from opening up new branches in China as there is still a huge demand.

He said, "There is a deep desire amongst the wealthy, middle class and young Chinese parents for a Western style of education."

## British-based private schools in China are booming



[Ed West](#)@edwest

British private schools now teach 10,500 pupils at 47 campuses in China  
<https://twitter.com/MerrynSW/status/1179384151998382081> ...

**Merryn Somerset Webb**@MerrynSW

All part of the new #protectionism

# China cracks down on British schools 'poaching best pupils'

Rosemary Bennett Education Editor

The Chinese government is cracking down on British private schools setting up there, complaining that they are creaming off the brightest pupils.

Independent schools have been advised to "stop, wait and see" before they proceed with plans to open in China or expand their presence there until new draconian rules on admissions bed in.

From next year all schools teaching Chinese children aged 7 to 15 will have to use a lottery to determine which applicants win a place. It means that schools will no longer be able to select the pupils they believe will best fit in with their style and pace of teaching.

The admissions lottery will also mean that there will no longer be demand for junior school places because there is no guarantee of a place in secondary school.

The admissions rules come a year after the government introduced rules requiring the Chinese national curriculum to be taught alongside an English national curriculum and GCSEs. British schools just about managed this,

hiring dozens more local teachers to take the lessons.

The warning was delivered to head teachers at the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference of top independent schools by ISC Research, a leading market analyst in the global education market.

"There is a backlash against the rapid increase in private schools in China, particularly from the big public schools where it's perceived that they have been simply creaming the best kids," Richard Gaskell, director of the company, said.

"For those who are considering this I would say stop, wait and see. We will see the full effect of these admissions in April and May and then we can see how to deal with it."

British independent schools have been piling into the Chinese education market in recent years. There are now 47 campuses in mainland China educating 10,500 pupils run, among others, by Harrow, Wellington and Dulwich College. Dozens more are planned.

Chinese campuses are a lucrative source of funds and there is vast potential for growth given the insatiable appetite

for a British education among China's fast-growing middle class. Because they teach A levels or the International Baccalaureate, British schools are considered a far better bet for getting into a world-class British or US university than a Chinese national school.

The Chinese authorities' move comes as independent schools are being threatened with tax rises at home. Labour has said it would levy VAT on school fees and end business rate exemptions for independent schools if it won the next election.

Mr Gaskell believes that there would be a role for British independent schools in China given the demand, but there would be "extraordinary scrutiny". However, he said, there was a balancing act for the authorities who do not want to isolate the ambitious class "but the agenda is driven by equality".

The crackdown could end a golden age in which Chinese investors bought out struggling UK boarding prep schools and Chinese students comprise the biggest group of overseas undergraduates in British universities.

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In recent years, the international schools market has seen exponential growth, particularly from British-based schools.

This happened after regulations in the country were relaxed and Chinese children were allowed to enrol in foreign-owned schools.

More and more parents from the rising middle-class in China intend to send their children overseas for higher education; therefore, they want their kids to receive a Western education.

Before that, international schools were only attended by expats and children of foreigners in the country. Seeing a huge potential new market, several British-owned private and international schools began to crop up.

It was [reported](#) early this year that there will be approximately 46 British-based schools in China by the end of 2019, more than double that of two years ago.

According to *Forbes*, “Some of the most prestigious private schools have sought to capitalise on their brand by opening branches in China in recent years.

“Wellington College has five schools in China – two each in Shanghai and Hangzhou and one in Tianjin – while Dulwich College has four – two in Shanghai and one each Beijing and Suzhou.

“A record 14 British international schools have opened or are due to open in China this year, including outposts of the King’s School, Canterbury, and Shrewsbury School, which counts Charles Darwin among its alumni.”

## Not all are in favour of the new lottery system



[Sixth Tone](#)

✓ [@SixthTone](#)

A new education reform in China requires all private schools to adopt a lottery system for student admissions, much to the dismay of many parents. <http://ow.ly/M0GV50uXmKf>



[Lottery-Based Private School Admission Worries Chinese Parents](#)

[New guidelines require all private academic institutions to select students through a computerized lottery system if the number of applicants exceeds a school's quota.](#)  
[sixthtone.com](#)

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Parents in China aren't happy about these new guidelines, and are concerned that their children will not get a place due to the high number of applications to these types of schools.

Cheng Lina, a parent who planned to enrol her 5-year-old at a private primary school next year, [said](#), "A lottery system means that, no matter how well you prepare your child, their enrollment will be based simply on luck — that's not a very fair practice. With the policy change, we're now frozen in place."

However, some parents are in favour, believing it would put less pressure on their children to gain acceptance to these schools.

According to *SixthOne*, "Qin Yue, another Shanghai mother, said the new policy would free parents from spending on costly and often crammed prep institutes that prepare children for interviews and tests at private schools. She says the techniques employed by such institutes can be harsh."

Qin Yue said that previously, she wouldn't have considered putting her daughter in these types of prep schools but she couldn't avoid it as it was the norm.

Education policy expert Xiong Bingqi told *SixthOne* that the new lottery system is not a rational approach, and that it infringes on families' rights to choose an educational system for their kids.

He also said that it might lead to imbalances in the system, such as parents offering bribes under-the-table to get their children into these schools.

"From the perspective of the compulsory education law, which emphasizes that admission shouldn't be based on tests, this policy holds up.

"But realistically, families should be able to choose a school, and private schools should also have the right to make their own choices. A fundamental solution is to advance the balance of educational resources."

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“A lottery system means that, no matter how well you prepare your child, their enrollment will be based simply on luck — that’s not a very fair practice,” Cheng Lina, a Shanghai native planning to enroll her 5-year-old at a private primary school next year, told Sixth Tone. “With the policy change, we’re now frozen in place.”

Many Chinese parents believe private schools to be more selective than public schools, creating a more competitive environment for children and increasing their chances of getting into more prestigious educational institutions beyond middle school. For many, private schools have even become an [alternative](#) to some of the best public academic institutions. **(Public schools in China only admit students with household registrations belonging to that residential neighborhood.)**

Education policy expert Xiong Bingqi believes a lottery system isn’t a rational approach, and that the practice might compromise families’ rights in choosing their preferred teaching style for their children. He said the change in the enrollment practice “could lead to other imbalances and even result in trading under the table,” referring to bribes, special favors, or other surreptitious solutions.

“From the perspective of the compulsory education law, which emphasizes that admission shouldn’t be based on tests, this policy holds up,” Xiong told Sixth Tone. “But realistically, families should be able to choose a school, and private schools should also have the right to make their own choices. A fundamental solution is to advance the balance of educational resources.”

However, Qin Yue, another Shanghai mother, said the new policy would free parents from spending on costly and often crammed prep institutes that prepare children for interviews and tests at private schools. She says the techniques employed by such institutes can be harsh.