

Nanjing Foreign Language School

Nanjing, China



Founded in 1963 on Premier Zhou Enlai's initiative, five foreign languages underpin a steady pipeline into China's diplomatic corps.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	68/100
Academic outcomes	78/100
University placement	80/100
Prestige & heritage	82/100
Alumni network	12/100
Facilities	70/100
Transparency	55/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Nanjing Foreign Language School occupies a distinct niche in China’s state sector: a public secondary school with a long foreign-language mandate and a serious reputation for linguistic training. Founded in ****1963**** on Zhou Enlai’s initiative, it was built with a national purpose, not as a lifestyle brand for expatriate families. That origin still matters. This is a school for students who want academic stretch inside the Chinese National curriculum, with Mandarin and English as languages of instruction and a culture shaped by disciplined language study. In a market crowded with private international schools selling global polish, NFLS offers something harder-edged and more specific: ***public-sector prestige***, ***institutional seriousness*** and a direct association with China’s diplomatic and language-training

tradition.

What sets it apart is focus. The school's identity rests on foreign languages, and that gives it a sharper profile than the many academically strong Chinese schools that treat languages as an accessory. Parents looking for a school with a diffuse "all-round" pitch will find better-known alternatives. Parents looking for intellectual intensity, strong peer calibre and a school whose mission has held for more than **60** years will find NFLS more compelling. It is also a boarding school, which widens its appeal beyond immediate local catchment and reinforces the sense of structure. The school sits in the sweet spot for ambitious Chinese families who want *high academic pressure* without abandoning the national system, and for students whose interests run towards languages, international affairs and the formal disciplines of elite public education.

This is not the right school for every teenager. It suits students aged **15–18** who are comfortable with competition, responsive to clear standards and energised by rigorous study rather than hand-holding. A child who wants a loose, highly personalised, western-style sixth form experience will find the model too formal. A student who thrives on mastery, relishes languages and is drawn to *clear hierarchy*, *serious scholarship* and the prestige of a selective public institution will fit. For parents building a shortlist, NFLS earns its place because it offers a rare combination in China: *historic purpose*, state backing, boarding, and a foreign-language identity that is not cosmetic but foundational.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1963, NFLS is a municipal public secondary school for grades 7-12, run by the Nanjing City Education Bureau, with an 8:1 student-teacher ratio.
- NFLS is one of the foreign language schools approved by the Ministry of Education for recommendation-based admission and is a participating school in Peking University's Principal's Real-Name Recommendation System.
- Alumni have won International Olympiad gold medals, including physics in 1996, chemistry in 2008, and informatics in 2005, 2006 and 2009, and the school's own materials cite over twenty alumni who became national ambassadors, alongside two foreign ministry spokespersons.
- The Rhodes Scholarship has been awarded to 16 students from mainland China, of whom three, so far, are NFLS alumni, according to the school's own account.
- The NFLS network includes several branch campuses across Nanjing and Jiangsu, such as the Xianlin site established in 2002 as a twelve-year private boarding school.

TRADE-OFFS

- Admission to the main Beijing Road campus's junior-high program is restricted to applicants with Nanjing municipal household registration (hukou), effectively excluding most expatriate and non-local families.
- Entry is narrowly quota-based and highly selective: the 2025 intake plan was capped at 580 places across five languages, with a computerised lottery invoked once applications exceed eight times capacity.
- The core programme follows the Chinese national gaokao curriculum rather than IB or A-Level, so families seeking an internationally recognised diploma must look to separately administered affiliate campuses instead.
- Published tuition and fee data for the main campus are not readily available in English-language sources, making cost planning difficult for relocating families comparing schools.

ADMISSIONS

Junior-high entry to the main Beijing Road campus is chiefly through a competitive language-aptitude test open to Nanjing-hukou-holding primary graduates; the 2025 intake was capped at 580 places (524 English-track, the rest split across German, French, Japanese and Spanish), with a 1:1 gender quota. If applicants exceed eight times capacity, a computerised lottery decides who sits the assessment. Senior-high places combine zhongkao scores with a supplementary language exam, plus separate STEM 'special-talent' tracks. Non-Chinese-passport families are generally directed toward NFLS's semi-independent Xianlin or other affiliated campuses rather than the main site.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_599e50baac.