

Sandford International School

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Founded by the family that helped restore Haile Selassie's throne, this Addis Ababa day school now runs Ethiopia's oldest Cambridge exam centre.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	60/100
Academic outcomes	62/100
University placement	60/100
Prestige & heritage	61/100
Alumni network	60/100
Facilities	62/100
Transparency	49/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Sandford International School occupies a rare position in Addis Ababa: a long-established, non-religious English-medium day school with roots in **1946** and a history tied directly to Ethiopia’s wartime restoration. That backstory is not decorative. It explains the school’s longstanding place in the city’s educational landscape and its early commitment to educating Ethiopian and expatriate children together. In a market where many schools trade on imported identity, Sandford has something harder to manufacture: *historical weight*, *local legitimacy* and continuity on one site since **1949**. It also runs

as a full **3-18** school, which matters for families who want one institution rather than a series of transitions.

What puts Sandford on a serious shortlist is that combination of heritage and usable international infrastructure. It holds BSO and Cambridge International accreditation, and the school itself states that it offers IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate in the secondary years. The editorial context identifies it as Ethiopia’s oldest Cambridge exam centre, which gives Sandford a concrete claim to experience rather than branding. For parents, that translates into a school that sits between two poles: not a transient newcomer, and not a local school borrowing international language. It has *institutional memory*, *earned credibility* and a clearer sense of public purpose than many schools built around facilities first and substance later.

The ideal Sandford student is not chasing a glossy campus narrative. This school suits children and teenagers who will thrive in an established, academically structured environment with a mixed local and international community, English as the language of instruction, and a day-school rhythm. It fits families who value *serious schooling* over theatrical polish, and who want their child educated in a place with deep roots in Addis rather than an enclave detached from it. Students who do well here will value steadiness, a broad peer group and a school culture shaped by history rather than fashion. Parents who want aggressive marketing, luxury signalling or published headline-grabbing outcomes will find Sandford more restrained and, in parts, more opaque than newer competitors. Parents who want *substance over show* will read that restraint differently.

STRENGTHS

- One of the longest-established international schools in Ethiopia, tracing its roots back to the 1970s, giving it deep local institutional knowledge.
- Follows the British curriculum through to IGCSE and A-Level, providing a recognised exit qualification for university applications abroad.
- Located in Addis Ababa, home to the African Union and a large diplomatic and NGO community, giving pupils a genuinely international peer group.
- Operates as a single-campus day school, which typically means shorter commutes and a more cohesive community than multi-campus operators.
- Long operating history suggests institutional stability relative to newer international schools that have opened in the city.

TRADE-OFFS

- Addis Ababa's international schooling market is small, so extracurricular, sporting and co-curricular breadth is limited compared with schools in larger regional hubs like Nairobi or Dubai.
- As a day school with no boarding option, families based outside Addis Ababa cannot access it, restricting its catchment to the capital.
- Ethiopia's periodic political instability and infrastructure constraints (power, internet reliability) can affect day-to-day school operations in ways schools in more stable markets do not face.
- Public data on university destinations, exam results and independent inspection reports is limited, making it harder for relocating families to benchmark outcomes before enrolling.

ADMISSIONS

Admissions run on a rolling basis with entry points typically at the start of each academic year, though mid-year places are considered subject to availability. Applicants generally submit previous school reports, a application form, and sit an assessment or interview depending on age group. Given the small pool of international schools in Addis Ababa, demand is steady rather than intensely competitive, but places in popular year groups can fill ahead of the academic year, so early enquiry is advised.

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_80606bbf81.