

Korea Science Academy of KAIST

Busan, South Korea



Korea's only national gifted-science school, running an ungraded, research-driven curriculum with direct KAIST credit transfer from its Busan campus.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	75/100
Academic outcomes	85/100
University placement	82/100
Prestige & heritage	76/100
Alumni network	58/100
Facilities	72/100
Transparency	52/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Korea Science Academy of KAIST sits in a category of its own. It is Korea’s only national gifted-science high school, founded in ****1991****, boarding, and tied directly to KAIST. That combination matters. This is not a conventional Korean academic high school with a science emphasis bolted on. It is a specialist institution built for mathematically and scientifically exceptional teenagers, with an ungraded, research-driven Korean curriculum and instruction in Korean and English. The school’s public structure points in one direction: advanced study, laboratory work, academic festivals, research publication, international

exchange, and sustained project activity. The attraction is obvious for the right family: *serious intellectual ambition*, *high-octane science culture*, and a campus organised around students who want more than textbook mastery.

What sets KSA apart is the depth of its research infrastructure at school level. The site foregrounds R&E programmes, final research presentations, joint presentations of outstanding work, international academic conferences, exchange schemes, teacher exchanges, and international collaborative research. That is a stronger signal than the generic “STEAM” language many schools trade on. KSA trains pupils in the habits of early-stage scientific work: asking viable questions, handling failure, presenting findings, and living with open-ended problems. The KAIST relationship adds another layer of market value, including direct credit transfer, which few schools can match. For a parent comparing elite options in Korea or wider Asia, that makes KSA *a clear outlier*: a school with a narrow mission, a coherent design, and no interest in being all things to all children.

There are limits, and they are important. This is not a broad liberal education in the international-school sense. Families looking for a balanced arts-heavy programme, a conventional graded structure, or a softer academic tempo should look elsewhere. Selectivity is central to the school’s identity, and the social environment will be intense. With an average class size of **20** and a boarding model, students do not get much room to hide from pressure, competition, or the demands of communal living. Publicly available outcomes data are less useful than they should be; the school and Wikipedia point to elite university destinations, but no aggregate admissions breakdown or equivalent whole-cohort performance data are published here. Parents therefore need to buy into the model itself, not just a headline outcomes story.

KSA belongs on a shortlist for a very specific student: academically fearless, science-led, comfortable with abstraction, and energised by peers who think at the same speed. The ideal candidate wants *full-immersion boarding intensity*, relishes research over routine worksheet success, and does not need hand-holding. This is a school for teenagers who want to build things, test ideas, write papers, attend conferences, and move early towards university-level science. It will suit the student who finds ordinary top schools too slow, too general, or too constrained. For that child, KSA offers *rare academic concentration* and *a formidable peer group*. For everyone else, it will feel narrow, hard, and unforgiving.

STRENGTHS

- One of only eight state-designated gifted science high schools in Korea, and the only one with formal national institute status under KAIST since 2009.
- Around 97% of faculty hold a doctorate in mathematics or science, per the school's own published overview.
- Domestic tuition has been fully waived since 2023, with students paying only dormitory and meal costs.
- All students, domestic and international, live in on-campus dormitories, and international admits receive a full scholarship covering tuition and board.

TRADE-OFFS

- Admission is described as among the most selective of any Korean high school, regularly ranked alongside Seoul Science High School and Gyeonggi Science High School as the toughest to enter.
- The academic programme is narrowly focused on mathematics and science for gifted students, offering little breadth in humanities, arts or vocational tracks.
- Instruction and daily school life run on a Korean curriculum and largely in Korean, which is a real barrier for expat families whose children are not already fluent.
- International applicants must hold no Korean citizenship and still cover flights, uniforms and

- Curriculum is delivered in partnership with KAIST, including lectures by KAIST professors and access to KAIST's High School Research and Honors Programs.
- personal expenses of roughly USD 4,500 over three years despite the tuition/board scholarship.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is via a competitive two-stage process combining document review, a mathematics and science written test, and an interview; international applicants apply separately, must hold non-Korean citizenship (or have completed all prior schooling abroad), and submit a teacher recommendation plus full transcripts. About 15 international places are offered per intake alongside a much larger domestic cohort. Given KSA's status as Korea's only national gifted-science high school, competition is intense and places are limited; strong prior achievement in maths/science and basic Korean or English communication ability are expected.

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_a523f07bef.