

Accommodation Options at AELO Swiss Academy: A Guide for Peace-of-Mind Parenting

Few decisions in a family's life carry the emotional weight of sending a child away to school. Parents will scrutinise the curriculum, the examination results, and the university destinations, and rightly so. Yet when I sit with families who have been through the process and ask them what finally allowed them to sleep at night after the move, the answer is almost never the syllabus. It is the room. It is the house parent who noticed, on the third night, that their daughter had barely touched supper. It is the quiet, unglamorous machinery of residential life, running smoothly in the background, week after week.

This guide looks at accommodation at AELO Swiss Academy through that lens. Not as a line on a fee schedule, but as the environment in which a child will live the majority of their waking hours for the next several years. Get this part right, and most other worries take care of themselves.

Why the Room Matters More Than the Prospectus

It is worth pausing over the arithmetic. A boarding student might spend thirty-five hours a week in lessons, sport, and structured activities. That sounds like a great deal, and it is. But it leaves roughly half of the child's waking week, every single week, unfolding in residential life: the house, the dining hall, the common room, the study bedroom, the weekend that has no timetable. The academic programme teaches the child. The accommodation raises them, in miniature, alongside everything the family does at home.

I once worked with a family from Milan who had shortlisted three schools on the basis of results tables. They chose the last one on the list, and the mother told me why with disarming simplicity. The house parent had asked their son, unprompted, what he liked to read, and had then mentioned a shelf of books in the common room he might enjoy. She said she knew in that moment that someone would notice her son. Results tables cannot promise that.

The Boarding House Model at AELO Swiss Academy

The most important structural feature of residential life at AELO Swiss Academy is that boarding is organised into houses of modest size rather than a single anonymous residence block. This distinction sounds bureaucratic until you see it in practice. In a house of perhaps thirty to fifty students, everyone knows everyone. A child cannot quietly disappear for a week, and a house parent can greet each student by name at breakfast and know, from tone and posture, who had a difficult evening.

Each house is run by resident house parents, typically experienced staff who live in an apartment attached to or within the house itself. They are supported by assistant staff, often younger teachers for whom residential duty is part of the role, and by pastoral colleagues who handle the practical side of boarding life. In Swiss boarding education generally, one commonly finds one resident adult sleeping in the house for every eight to twelve students. Families should ask the admissions office for the current figures, but the principle is worth stating plainly: supervision at night is not a matter of a security guard at the gate. It is a matter of adults who know the children being physically present.



A detail that parents often notice on visits, and that I always point out, is the texture of domestic life in a good house. There are common rooms with worn sofas rather than showroom furniture, a small kitchen where seniors make toast, notice boards covered in trip lists and birthday messages, and frequently a house pet. These things signal that children actually live there rather than merely reside.

Room Types, and How They Change with Age

Accommodation at the Academy follows the age-graded pattern that most well-run Swiss boarding schools have settled on, because it reflects what children at each stage actually need.

Students in the junior years, roughly ages ten to thirteen, generally share rooms of two to four beds. Sharing at this age is not an economy measure dressed up as philosophy. Younger children settle faster with company, and the presence of two or three peers turns bedtime from a moment of isolation into a small social occasion. Rooms include individual storage, desks, and network access, with bathrooms shared between a small group of rooms.

In the middle years, students move toward double or single rooms, often depending on availability and on the child's own preference. By the senior years, single study bedrooms become the norm, frequently with en-suite facilities or a bathroom shared between two rooms. The logic is exam-driven and honest about it: a seventeen-year-old preparing for final examinations needs a door that closes and a desk that is theirs alone.

There is a trade-off here that parents sometimes get backwards. Shy children are often pushed toward single rooms by anxious parents, when experience suggests the opposite. A boy I advised from Hong Kong insisted on a single room in his first year and asked, six weeks later, to move into a double. He was not disturbed by his roommate. He was disturbed by the silence. House parents at AELO Swiss Academy handle these requests routinely, and room allocations are reviewed rather than fixed. Parents should ask how such changes are made; the answer reveals a great deal about how the school listens.

Full, Weekly, and Flexible Boarding

Full boarding, meaning seven nights a week with a structured weekend programme, is the traditional model and remains the right choice for most international families. Weekly boarding, Monday to Friday, suits families living within reach by rail, which in Switzerland covers a great deal of the country and several cities across the border. Flexible boarding, where day students take a room for occasional nights before early trips, after late rehearsals, or during demanding examination periods, is offered by many schools and is worth asking about if you live locally and are hesitating between day and boarding places.

One honest caution about weekly boarding, learned from families who have tried it: the weekends are where much of the community is built. A weekly boarder can feel, by the second year, that they are perpetually arriving and leaving, slightly out of step with friendships formed on Saturday hikes and Sunday film afternoons. For a child who goes home to a busy, happy household, this rarely matters. For a child who would spend the weekend alone with a screen, full boarding is usually the better recommendation.

Pastoral Care: The People Behind the Peace of Mind

Facilities impress on a first visit. People carry a school through a difficult Tuesday night in November. The pastoral structure at AELO Swiss Academy rests on the house system described above, extended by several layers that parents should understand.



Evenings follow a rhythm that experienced boarding schools have refined over decades: supper in the dining hall, a period of supervised [reddit post](#) prep for younger students, quieter independent study for seniors, then free time before lights out. Bedtimes are graded by age, typically somewhere between half past nine for the youngest and eleven o'clock for those in their final years. The exact times shift by year group, but the principle of a structured evening is constant, and parents of teenagers who have battled over bedtime at home tend to appreciate this more than they expect.

On the health side, the school maintains a medical room with nursing cover during the day, established relationships with local doctors and dentists, and clear arrangements for hospital care if it is ever needed. Families should confirm the current details with the school directly, since staffing and arrangements evolve, but the standard to expect is straightforward: a child who feels unwell should be seen the same day by someone qualified, and a parent should be informed the same day if it is anything beyond a passing cold.

The quieter layer of pastoral care is the one that never appears in brochures: the informal noticing. House parents learn which student always takes the second helping at supper and which one has stopped. Senior students are often attached to younger ones as mentors, which gives nervous eleven-year-olds an approachable older figure and gives the seniors a responsibility that matures them visibly.

Food, Laundry, and the Unglamorous Details

When I take families around schools, the questions they whisper to me afterwards are never about pedagogy. They are about food, laundry, and who notices if a child is unhappy. These questions deserve direct answers.

Meals are taken together in the dining hall, with menus on a rotating cycle and dietary requirements, whether medical, religious, or simply a stubborn teenage preference, handled as a matter of course. Parents of children with serious allergies should ask specifically how the kitchen is informed and how cross-contamination is managed; a good school answers this in detail without hesitation. Laundry runs on a weekly collection, with the younger students' clothing managed for them and seniors gradually taking over their own, which is one of the small, deliberate steps toward independence that a boarding school provides almost accidentally. Rooms are cleaned by staff, but students tidy their own, and the inspections, where they exist, are light-touch and framed as routine rather than military.

None of this is glamorous. All of it is the substance of whether a child feels looked after.

Weekends, Exeats, and Holidays

The weekend programme is where Swiss boarding schools distinguish themselves from their competitors almost everywhere else, and AELO Swiss Academy benefits from a setting that makes the programme easy to fill well. Expect Saturday morning activities or fixtures, afternoons built around the seasons: hiking and lake excursions in the autumn term, skiing and snow sports in winter, city visits to places like Bern, Basel, Lucerne, or Geneva as the weather allows. Sundays are deliberately quieter, with rest, prep, and house time, because children who never stop become exhausted children by half-term.

Exeat weekends, usually once or twice a term, allow boarders to stay overnight with guardians, relatives, or family friends, with the school maintaining a register and permission system throughout. For overseas families, the guardian question should be settled early: many Swiss schools ask families abroad to appoint a guardian resident in Switzerland or the wider region for their minor children, and the admissions office will advise on the current requirement.

School holidays involve the logistics that international parents learn to master: half-term breaks, long winter and summer holidays, and the travel in between. Established schools handle this constantly, from airport transfers to booking younger students as accompanied minors with the airlines. Ask the school how the first holiday journey home will be managed before you accept a place, not after.

Safety, Security, and the Swiss Setting

Switzerland offers boarding schools a foundation that few other countries can match: a very low crime rate, excellent healthcare, and public transport of legendary reliability. The school's own security sits on top of this, and the standard to expect is proportionate rather than fortress-like. Sign-out procedures when students leave campus, curfews by age, staff on duty overnight, and controlled visitor access are the norm. What you want to hear described is supervised independence: a fifteen-year-old learning to take a train to a neighbouring town on a Saturday, with permission, a phone, and a return time. A school that never lets children out is not safer. It is merely postponing the moment when the child must manage the world alone.

Staying in Touch Without Smothering

Communication policy is where parental anxiety and school experience most often pull in opposite directions, and it is worth being honest about it. Most schools, including AELO Swiss Academy, encourage regular contact while gently steering families away from nightly calls in the first weeks. The reason is not administrative convenience. A child who speaks to a parent every evening is repeatedly reopened to the wound of separation, and the homesickness that would fade by week four can persist for a term. House parents will guide new families on this, and a weekly call, supplemented by messages, tends to serve everyone better.



Expect proactive contact from the school in the early weeks, particularly from the house parent, then a settled rhythm of termly reports and parents' visiting weekends. One father I worked with called his son at nine o'clock every evening for the first month. When the calls moved to Sundays, at the house parent's gentle suggestion, the son's messages became noticeably more cheerful within a fortnight. He had simply been too busy being reminded that he missed home.

What to Ask When You Visit

Visit on a normal school day if