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# Brillantmont International School

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## **Swisster continues its profiles of private schools in Vaud with the Brillantmont International School, a bijou environment for 12-18 years olds in the heart of Lausanne**

**Walking into Brillantmont International School in Lausanne is like opening a good book. There is an immediate sense of promise and potential in the calm and bright setting. It is like taking part in a story that is about to begin.**

The story of Brillantmont was actually started more than 125 years ago. How it has maintained an old world flavor, whilst developing a state-of-the-arts learning environment is largely due to the continuity and vision of one family. For five generations, the Frei family has been at the helm of an educational institution recognized for a singular achievement: by offering the comfort of a family atmosphere, but inviting students to discover new cultures – including the one that they live in - it prepares them well for the competitive requirements of the modern world.

Brillantmont International School states as one of its objectives the development of a sense of internationalism, a startlingly new approach to the complexities brought on by globalization. As far back as 1954, the first two articles of a code of honor written by a group of students declared: 1) Each person's religion is sacred: don't touch it. 2) Each one of us is proud of their country: respect our patriotic feelings.

How this foresight has been translated into the everyday school life has depended on the composition of the student body. Although the school is near to capacity with 150 students, of which approximately 50 are day students, 43 countries are currently represented. In order to preserve the variety, which over the years has reflected the flux in world political and economic events and now includes a list of 120 countries, the school is careful to apply a maximum quota of 10 to 12% per nationality.

“We aim to make students aware of the value of other cultures” explains Sarah Frei, the Head of Marketing. During the frequent international evenings students can present the traditions of their own cultures, be they dances, poems or food delicacies prepared with the resident chef.

Discussions in classes offer the opportunity to compare national views either on historical interpretations or current world events. Teachers draw on different experiences to use “the knowledge, but also the prejudices” of the students. Recently, during a summer course, an Israeli and a Palestinian student became best friends.

*“Where I am today would not have been possible without BM. I think being able to see so many different cultures and viewpoints is one of the greatest benefits of going to Brillantmont and, in light of the current political climate, I really encourage the current BM students to get to know one another's backgrounds and embrace the differences as well as similarities.”*

Jason Caldwell (student 1993-1995)

The school offers an American and a British program. Students can follow a college preparatory curriculum which leads to a High School Diploma giving access to American colleges in the USA and

Europe. Or they can follow a traditional British program of studies that prepares them for the University of Cambridge International IGCSE and A Level Examinations. The latter give access to universities worldwide.

*“We liked the set up of the school, which has old fashioned charm on the outside but is modern inside. The interview we had centred around the children and when they came to look around, great interest was shown in them and their interests. This was the first move for our children, so the smaller school combined with small classes was definitely a positive factor for us.”*

The McBeth family, British

Although the language of instruction for both programs is English, Brillantmont’s energetic and ebullient Director, Philippe Pasche, insists on preserving French as the conversational language. Since an astonishing 60% of the students stay for the five year program, many of them leave Brillantmont with fluent French.

Mr. Pasche, who has worked at Brillantmont for 30 years, took over as Director in 2001 following on from Françoise Frei-Huguenin who had led the school for forty years and given it the character that remains its strength today. Mrs. Frei had realized very early on the importance of maintaining a family environment, but never attempting to replace a student’s real family.

In 2002, Brillantmont set up an IT network that has allowed it over the years to develop a unique web communication tool with the families. Parents can monitor homework and scheduled activities and receive a progress report every four weeks. Sarah Frei acknowledges that working closely with the parents is an ingredient of the success of the school and adds nicely that “digital is transcribed in the area of transparency”.

*“We were attracted to Brillantmont for several reasons : its strong international make-up, its focus on a particular age group, its accreditations, the flexibility of its academic programmes to fit the scholastic requirements of our daughter and the school’s integration of technology.”*

The Savoie family, American

A rich extra-curricular and cultural program completes the offer, which is also open to day students on week-ends. This includes outings to theater, ballet, exhibitions or thermal baths, weekends skiing in Verbier or trips to France and Italy. There are plans to build an underground sports hall, which would allow for an even wider range of sports activities and clubs.

Brillantmont is the only international boarding school in Lausanne and as a small school, its great strength is its human size. With never more than 15 students per class, and an average of only nine, students get individualized attention from the 30 or more fully-qualified teachers. Originating from around the world (see the delightful portrait of the Indonesian-Dutch-Canadian-Swiss languages coordinator and teacher, Ester Cornaz Nikyuluw) some teachers have been around for 30 years, offering stability to transient students, others have just arrived with lots of fresh ideas.

The accreditation process that Brillantmont has undergone for the past 25 years has remained its “motor for improvement”. Fully accredited by the [New England Association of Schools and Colleges \(NEASC\)](#) and the [Council of International Schools \(CIS\)](#), Brillantmont International School also plays an important role in the Vaud private schools association, [AVDEP](#).

To continue turning the pages of this good book, the [Brillantmont website](#) is a colorful and lively insight to the story that awaits you.

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