

New York parents opt for English education

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A new school in Manhattan hopes to attract well-heeled residents by teaching according to the English national curriculum.

The school was originally designed to appeal to expatriate Britons who wanted to ensure continuation of study for their offspring in a city where there are currently no international schools offering the English system.

However, the founders of the British International School say that half of the inquiries about the newest addition to New York's private school market have been from American parents.

Andrea Greystoke, headmistress of Abercorn School in London and one of the co-founders, said the English private education system had long been regarded as the "gold standard" by many Americans.

"We have found that there are some US parents who are looking for something just a little bit different. They seem to like the more structured approach of the English curriculum."

Elizabeth Perelstein, president of Schools Choice International and the other co-founder, said the school would also benefit from the city's Anglophilia. "There's a really strong feeling in New York that all things British are good and that British standards of education are excellent."

Traditional school uniforms and a focus on discipline and good manners would also win admiring parents, she said.

Robin Aronow, an education consultant who advises parents on the choice of schools for their children, said New Yorkers would be "intrigued" at the prospect of English schooling.

"But the main reason it will attract attention is because of the shortage of school places in the city."

The number of available school places in the city has remained roughly static for the past decade, while the number of children under five in Manhattan has

increased by 25 per cent between 2000 and 2004, according to census estimates.

The \$26,000 (£14,800) a year school on the East River will take 100 children aged four to 13 when it opens on a patch of reclaimed land not far from the United Nations building in September.

Plans are in place to expand numbers to 250 and to open further schools in the New York area and in other US cities.

It will blend the English curriculum and the International Baccalaureate at primary level. For very young children the IB is more of a philosophy rather than a prescriptive curriculum.

The company expects its £2m investment, which will pay for the refurbishment of pre-existing buildings, will turn a profit within a year.