

Surat Thani International School Testimonial

Surat Thani International School is an excellent place to work. The Students are very enthusiastic and affectionate with an exceptionally high level of English comprehension and ability. The small class sizes allow teachers and students to establish a real rapport with each other, leading to relaxed, but challenging lessons which are enjoyable for all. The students are happy and secure in their environment allowing them to freely express their opinions, make jokes and expand their English ability. Teachers have the freedom to run their classes as they would like, as long as the required material is covered, with support available if required. STIS has great facilities allowing students the space to enjoy learning.

My experience working at STIS differs from the majority of teachers as I started mid semester after completing my contract at Thida, a local Thai school. This has given me a somewhat unique perspective as I am able to draw comparisons between two different working atmospheres here in Thailand. I greatly enjoyed my time at both schools and feel incredibly privileged to have had this experience.

One of the most apparent differences between Thida and STIS is the sheer size and number of students in each. Thida is a large Catholic school with class sizes ranging from the high twenties all the way up to over sixty students whereas at STIS the classes are capped at eighteen students per class. This obviously makes a huge difference to teaching style and the amount of time and attention you are able to spend on each child which has a clear affect on the students progression and understanding. STIS is a small and intimate school with less than two hundred students in the student body as opposed to at Thida where I taught over one hundred and fifty students across my five classes. Having smaller class sizes is massively beneficial for both students and teachers as it allows time to pin point and work on specific areas individual students are struggling with.

Another major difference between the schools is the movement of information and the amount of input teachers are allowed in day to day activities. At Thida communication could be a bit of a struggle at times, with the English teachers sometimes being given important information at the very last minute with very few explanations on what was happening and why. This was generally related to specific assemblies, camps and semester dates and while we did always manage to get the information eventually it could be a bit annoying and confusing at times. In contrast to this at STIS there is a teachers morning meeting everyday before the students arrive for class leading to a real transparency of information. This is an invaluable resource as it serves as an open forum to discuss upcoming events in the school calender, approaching deadlines and any issues or concerns anyone is experiencing. Peter is always open to hearing teachers suggestions, ideas and concerns and the morning meeting provides a great opportunity for this, as well as allowing teachers to share ideas and assist each other with any issues. The morning meetings are normally full of laughter and amusing anecdotes adding to the friendly working atmosphere.

In addition to the western staff STIS also has a fantastic team of Thai teachers, classroom assistants and administration staff. Not only are they amazingly helpful in class and with work related things they will also go our of their way to help with any outside of work language barrier issues. I have been taken to the bank and immigration countless times as well as being assisted with personal errands ranging from where to find massages and

manicures to taking the cat to the vets and visiting the water board when I forgot to pay the bill! They are truly amazing and so friendly, they have all enhanced my time here greatly.

Surat Thani International school has gone to a lot of trouble and expense to ensure their students have a good learning environment as can be seen by the facilities available at the school. STIS continues to grow year by year with more classes and age groups being added, consequently the facilities also continue to expand and improve. The most recent addition to the school is a large covered gymnasium which also has a stage allowing the students to present their accomplishments in front of parents and friends.

Another major difference between STIS and Thida is the different focus they put on school performances. Thida, like most Thai schools love to put on a show, with costumes, crazy amounts of make up for both boys and girls, music and dancing. On the other hand STIS focuses more on showcasing the students academic achievements and progress. We recently had an academic expo which many parents attended. Each class had time on stage to present what they have been working on, with each child having the opportunity to speak into the microphone. This was a great event, the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves despite a few cases of stage fright and they were able to demonstrate their excellent progress.

As is abundantly clear there are many major differences between Thida and STIS, however despite this I really enjoyed both working environments regardless of their differences.

In conclusion Surat Thani International school is a great place to work, the amazing students make coming to work everyday a pleasure and the support and advice offered from my colleagues has been invaluable. I feel that my time in Thailand has really helped me further develop my teaching skills and techniques, something that, along with my many happy memories, will stay with me as I continue with my teaching career.