ENGLISH PRIMARY DEPARTMENT
INFORMATION BOOKLET
AUGUST 2007

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INTRODUCTION

The GSIS English Primary Department endeavours to create a warm atmosphere producing caring and secure surroundings in which each child is respected as an individual and learns to value and to respect others. We believe that our environment of imaginative and dedicated teaching enables each student to develop a strong moral sense and spirit of co-operation and consideration for others. We consider this part of their education equally important as their academic success.

Our students learn to play and live happily with other children and to relate to adults. They learn to respect the property of other people and not to be selfish or self-indulgent. They are taught to develop tolerance and understanding of others regardless of their differences, or their preferences, together with self-discipline and self-evaluation and with supportive guidance from our teachers. We aim to be encouraging and supportive of our children and urge them to take certain responsibilities and obligations within the school society. Each child learns to embrace the rich cultural diversity of our student population and to respect the traditions and beliefs of others. We aim for a strong partnership with parents and the wider community.

Our English Primary Department has classes from Year One to Year Six with two classes in each year band. The curriculum taught at GSIS emphasises the enjoyment of learning and the mastery of skills and is carried out on an integrated or organised basis. Our teachers come from diverse countries - including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand - and that diversity in culture and teaching methods adds significantly to the richness of the education our students receive. Our core curriculum is the U.K. National Curriculum but we complement it with the culture and environment about us in Hong Kong to give our children the best of both academic and practical worlds.

We aim to prepare our students for entry into our Secondary Department where the I/GCSE examination and “A” levels are taken before they enter tertiary education. GSIS will, however, be adopting the IB programme, and the first students to sit the Diploma will be those in Year Thirteen in 2014/15.

From Year Two onwards the German language is taught in the English Primary Department and Mandarin is introduced at Year Four. Whilst our syllabus stresses academic achievement, it is well balanced with a strong emphasis on physical development and an appreciation of music and the arts. Excursions, camps and field trips engender an awareness of the environment and demonstrate to our students how to integrate into their society. We aim to lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning for our students.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

GSIS AIMS ARE AS FOLLOWS

- To foster the development of every student, catering for different needs, abilities and aptitudes
- To develop each student’s full potential and encourage the pursuit of excellence
- To enable children to prosper from an all-round development in academic and social skills
- To ensure the attainment of a high level of competence in knowledge and skills including literacy, mathematics, etc
- To cultivate good learning habits and a positive attitude towards life
- To foster curiosity and an interest in learning
- To build the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning
- To develop habits of initiative and persistence
- To help develop self-esteem
ENTRY
Entry to the English Primary Department is available at all levels. Potential Year One students visit the school for standardised group assessments. At all other levels, children are required to take standardised tests in English and Mathematics.

UNIFORM
There is no school uniform although there is a dress code, which requires students to be tidy and to wear appropriate clothing. There is a PE uniform, which all students are required to wear for PE lessons and sporting events.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child’s learning and to liaise closely with the class teacher. Reading mothers/fathers play a valuable and important role in school life. Parents are also encouraged to help with homework monitoring and to be involved, when appropriate, in project work research, outings, camps and school sporting events. Parents are kept up to date through newsletters, which are regularly sent to parents.

SYLLABUS
Literacy and numeracy are of prime importance. The children follow a highly structured curriculum comprising Mathematics, English, General Studies, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Art, Music and PE. Although we are not bound by it, we include the National Curriculum in our teaching for all the relevant subjects. In addition to structured class work children work on a number of selected projects during the year.

Year One is, arguably, the most important year in a student’s school life. A happy and successful Year One is the bedrock for all future learning. At GSIS we focus on the basic skills that students need to enable them to progress. In addition we encourage and develop good work habits, enquiring minds and social awareness.

We aim to create an environment in which children develop to the full - intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. We want children to feel secure and to be able to develop a positive self-image and independence. We aim to ensure that children reach their full potential.

Language confidence grows through an interaction of talking, listening, reading and writing. The ability to speak well is the foundation on which the other communication skills are based. At GSIS we promote activities, which encourage self-expression. We aim to develop a child’s ability to listen with understanding. Our children write almost from day one. We emphasise that writing is worthwhile as a means of communication and we promote the idea that children should enjoy writing. Our children look for meaning in texts and combine that with a thorough phonetic knowledge and awareness of the reading process to become successful readers. At GSIS we use a variety of reading schemes at every level.

We implement the widely used New Heinemann Mathematics resource, which provides for the development of mathematics through practical activities, experiences, self-discovery, understanding of concepts, investigations, written skills and games with emphasis on oral discussion and language. Practical mathematics is reinforced with workbooks, work cards, computer programmes, problem-solving activities and mathematical games. In addition to the basic scheme we use supplementary material and extension work from a variety of sources.

ICT
Each classroom has its own PC workstation with colour printer and Interactive Whiteboard. The children from Year One to Year Six visit the English Primary ICT Room twice a week. The lessons are based on the National Curriculum guidelines. Much of the work done is related to ongoing classroom topics.
Our aim is to teach and extend the student’s range of ICT tools, which they need to use for communication, investigation and control. We also hope to encourage them to become discerning in their use of ICT and to be able to select information, sources and media for suitability of purpose.

At Key Stage 1 level children learn to use a variety of hardware and software, discuss the uses of ICT in the outside world, enter, save and retrieve information, use ICT-based models to give direct commands that produce a variety of outcomes and describe the effects of their actions.

Children at Key Stage 2 level are encouraged to work more independently and to be able to assess the value of ICT in their working practices. They are taught to use ICT equipment and software to communicate ideas and information in a variety of forms incorporating text, graphs, pictures and sound. A full-time member of staff teaches Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY**

German is taught from Year Two onwards and remains compulsory until after I/GCSE. Mandarin is introduced in Year Four.

**JUNIOR LIBRARY**

The GSIS Junior Library serves students, staff and parents from the Kindergarten, Junior and Secondary schools. As this is a Junior Library, run by a Teacher-Librarian, our operation is as relaxed as possible. Reading and visits to the library are promoted as enjoyable experiences to be anticipated with pleasure to create life-long readers and users.

Students in Year One to Year Three spend one lesson each week in the library with their teachers. They are encouraged to choose a book by themselves to take home. They will also learn library skills, have stories read to them and enjoy other relevant activities.

Students in Year Four to Year Six also visit the library once each week with their class teachers. As well as this students have a library lesson with their language teachers who will help them to choose books in that language. They are encouraged to visit the library as often as they wish. In addition to the junior school students, lower secondary students use the library on a regular basis.

The library is stocked with books in both English and German side by side on the shelves with coloured labels used to differentiate between languages and categories. Our collections include: fiction and non-fiction books, magazines, Big Books, Videos, Audiocassettes, CDs and CD-ROMs. We also have a vertical index. The library frequently has students’ work on display and is also used for school community activities. Kindergarten classes regularly use the library.

Although the junior school finishes at lunchtime the library remains open in the afternoon for use by secondary students and parents. The library is very well utilised with between one and three classes in it in any one lesson.

During the summer of 2007 the classroom beside the Library was converted into a new Junior ICT suite to form an Integrated Learning Centre. The close coupling of the library space with an ICT room will facilitate librarians, ICT teachers, and class teachers to work even more closely together to deliver an integrated curriculum experience where class work is combined with authentic information literacy and ICT skills. The research literature clearly shows that this type of integrated approach is the most effective way of delivering both information literacy and ICT skills, both of which are critical elements of education today.

The new room will also be available for secondary classes during the afternoon session and to facilitate this, the latest model of interactive whiteboard (IWB) has been installed. Positioning IWBs to meet the needs of a wide range of student age groups has always been a challenge as the height of the students varies so much from year to year. Now, this latest board comes with a built-in height adjustment mechanism and integrated Data Projector allowing the height of IWB to be easily changed to match the height of the students.
The room has also been designed to operate as a meeting venue out of school hours with a central conference table and independent air conditioning unit. This will be a very welcome addition to our school facilities.

**MUSIC**

Children are taught music twice a week from Year One to Year Six in the English Primary Department.

The emphasis is on learning through enjoyment and the classes are well equipped with many percussion instruments, keyboards and music-related games.

The lessons take place in one of four locations within the school: the music room with keyboards and audio-visual equipment, the sprung-floor ballet studio, the Percussion Room or the Primary ICT Lab.

In the lower primary, the children explore rhythm, pitch and movement through singing, dancing and investigative percussion activities. A combined music/ICT programme has been developed with successful and enjoyable results. Recorder is introduced in Year Two and most students opt to continue recorder classes after school in subsequent years.

As the students progress through the school, they are introduced to tuned percussion playing in the form of xylophones, glockenspiels and metallophones, where they have their own instruments to experience up to six-part playing. At this stage, the students begin to learn some basic music theory and develop appreciation and listening skills through selected pieces of music. The three main elements - singing, instrumental work and listening - continue to be developed throughout the primary course. Class musical productions take place during the year to which parents and the student body are invited to attend.

Our choir of over one hundred is made up of students from Year Four to the Secondary Department. Entry to the choir is by audition and the standard is very high. Recorder groups also meet weekly. They perform in the two concerts at Christmas and in the spring, along with the choir and percussion ensembles.

In Year Three, students are invited to enrol in the private instrument programme, which takes place at school after lessons have finished for the day. We currently have students learning clarinet, flute, trumpet, violin, cello, drums, harp, guitar and piano, either in small groups or on an individual basis. In 2001 we staged our first wind instrument concert, which has become an annual event due to its success. Primary students who have reached a sufficient standard of instrumental playing are permitted to audition for the Secondary School orchestra.

During the year, visits to musical shows and orchestral performances take place and we also invite instrument ensembles and music groups to the school to present their programmes.

Music is taught by a specialist teacher. In addition, many class teachers use their own musical skills to teach other music and movement activities within the classroom.

**IMMERSION CLASSES**

Students in Year Six enjoy an Art lesson and a Music lesson conducted in German by the German specialist teachers.

**SCHOOL CALENDAR**

GSIS enjoys a busy and fulfilling calendar. Our school boasts a multicultural, multiracial society in which more than thirty nationalities are represented. In this unique environment staff and students can learn to appreciate and enjoy the various customs and celebrations of its members. Plays, sporting events, festivals, camps and outings are integral parts of our curriculum.
SPORTING FACILITIES AND EVENTS

Excellent sporting facilities comprise a large fully equipped sports hall, two outdoor games areas, an undercover playground and a 25m outdoor swimming pool. The Sports Day and the Swimming Gala are our main sporting events of the year. Each is divided into two sections - one for the upper and the other for the lower school - held on separate days. This enables the children to enjoy games, races and events appropriate to their ages, abilities and skills. Sports Day for the lower school takes the form of a ‘round robin’ of team games and individual races followed by a picnic, while the older classes participate in traditional athletics events and team races. Our swimming galas follow a similar programme combining breaststroke and free-style events with team and ‘fun’ races.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

There are many performances and productions within the English Primary Department each year and the children also have the benefit of seeing visiting artists. They are all encouraged to participate in drama, music and art. One day a year is set aside for the German celebration of “Fasching” when the children and staff dress up and enjoy a Mardi Gras. All classes enjoy at least one educational outing and one ‘Wandertag’ or ‘walk’ each year. These educational visits are frequently linked to class projects providing another learning dimension.

CAMPS AND FIELD TRIPS

This is an eagerly anticipated, enjoyable, socially rewarding and academically enlightening part of the EPD syllabus and is an invaluable experience for teachers and students alike.

Year Four pupils participate in a one night, two-day camp at Po Leung Kuk, in October. The camp venue may vary but the emphasis remains on teaching the students to be independent and to encourage the strengthening of social skills and peer integration.

Year Five students travel farther afield to the Bradbury Camp, on Cheung Chau Island. This is a three-day educational field trip and is a practical introduction to the humanities subjects. In addition to learning about the history of this former small fishing village the children study physical features, the development of the industry, land usage and agriculture, the seashore and mapping of the island. This camp, held in October, is an integral part of the first term’s General Studies programme, which centres on Hong Kong.

Each year in October the Year Six students and their teachers are involved in a five-day, four-night course at the Outward Bound School in Sai Kung. The Outward Bound School’s main aim is to stimulate personal development by setting challenges in a safe but demanding environment, providing experiences which develop responsibility, self-reliance, confidence, team work and compassion for others. As it is an intrinsic and vital component of our normal school curriculum it is imperative that all students attend.

Students from both streams in Year Five and Six have the opportunity to attend the annual GSIS ski trip.

The EPD organises class outings from Year One to Year Six throughout the academic year. These outings may be conducted cross-stream with our German counterparts. This adds an extra dimension to an enjoyable excursion and is fundamental to the GSIS philosophy of ‘One School, Two Systems’.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

The educational support team are teachers who have taken further courses in this field and have many years’ experience both in the classroom and in the special needs areas of primary school education. Educational support is available to all children from Year One to Year Six. This support is delivered in a flexible manner to suit individual children or small groups. Students may be withdrawn from the class for extra tuition, or support may be given in the classroom.
**SCHOOL COUNSELLOR**
A school counsellor supplements the established system of pastoral care. The counsellor provides a sympathetic and supportive point of contact for students to discuss any problems.

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT**
Members of staff are encouraged to undertake professional development to keep abreast of the latest educational philosophies. Workshops and in-service training are held either in-house or by participating in programmes offered by other educational institutions.

**LEAP**
GSIS participates in the Life Education Activity Programme (LEAP). This is a ‘healthy living’ programme designed to promote the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In the upper primary classes it includes discussions about drugs and cigarettes and dealing with peer pressure.

Further information may be obtained by contacting the Head, or Deputy Head, of the English Primary Department the school on Tel. 2849 6216.

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