



# English Schools Foundation Primary Curriculum – Years 1 to 6



The responsibility of educators is no longer just to prepare good mathematicians, good scientists or good historians. The mission of schools is to prepare young people — the decision makers of tomorrow — to live in a complex multicultural society undergoing a rapid process of change and opening up a new world order. Of course, the cognitive component of an educational system is fundamental for the acquisition of intellectual and professional skills. Even more important is the acquisition of attitudes in the learning process in a context of cultural exchanges.

(Adapted from Gérard Renaud, 1991)

## Life-long learning for ESF students



ESF students engage with an international, transdisciplinary programme designed to foster the development of the whole child, not just in the classroom but also through other means of learning. The curriculum focuses on the academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural developments of the child.

The nine primary schools, two Private Independent Schools (PIS) and four kindergartens do this through the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Jockey Club Sarah Roe School through a tailored, school-developed curriculum framework.

At secondary level, we continue with a school-based curriculum in Years 7-9, and then offer Cambridge's GCSE and IGCSE courses in ESF schools, whereas in the two Private Independent Schools the IB's Middle Years Programme (MYP) is offered. At post-16 the majority of students follow the IB Diploma (IBD) programme, or may follow an applied learning curriculum.

We give increasing priority to the teaching of Chinese language, culture and history.

All of our primary schools offer an extended Chinese programme.

**In all ESF schools, there is a clear determination to:**

- Develop internationally-minded young people who will help to create a better world in the future and who recognise their common humanity;
- Encourage our students to be ambitious, innovative and conscientious in their learning;
- Offer opportunities for young people to achieve success in many different ways, to enable them to grow as responsible, caring and contributing members of the community; and
- By the end of schooling, enable our students to gain the qualifications to secure access to higher education, and later to enter professional, creative and business careers world-wide.



**ESF primary schools will do this through the curriculum they offer and will ensure that each of our students has opportunities (in line with the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile) to be:**

- Inquirers - Develop natural and systematic curiosity, by developing skills of inquiry;
- Thinkers - Be creative, critical and reflective thinkers who are able to apply their thinking to new situations;
- Communicators - Be effective communicators, conversant and creative with technologies;
- Risk Takers - Be prepared to experiment and take calculated risks, to explore new ideas both independently and in collaboration with others;
- Knowledgeable - Become more knowledgeable, and be able to explore and evaluate ideas and issues;
- Caring - Be caring, with respect and empathy for diversity in the world;
- Open minded - Be open-minded, valuing the language, culture and beliefs of others;
- Balanced - Be well balanced individuals, resilient in the face of difficulties;
- Reflective - Be reflective learners, developing an awareness of their own strengths and areas that need improving; and
- Principled - Develop underlying principles that reflect the values of common humanity, community and respect of individuality.

These aims provide a long-term vision for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are central to the Primary Years Programme. They are a set of attributes that inspire, motivate and focus the work of ESF kindergarten and primary schools and teachers, uniting them in a common purpose. They represent our aims, drive the IB curriculum framework and pedagogy and are central to assessment. More importantly, they summarise the qualities we would hope our graduating students from ESF primary schools would possess in order to make a positive contribution to this complex changing world.

The characteristics of the Learner Profile, are continually modelled by the ESF staff. Through the strategic professional development implemented at ESF, teachers demonstrate their ability to **inquire** into latest research, processes and strategies relating to teaching and learning, to **think** about the best ways to enhance the learning of their students, to **communicate** their classroom strategies and to justify these, to be **open-minded** to other opinions and values, to **take risks** with new ways of thinking and teaching and to **reflect** on their practice. This action has resulted in the teachers becoming more **knowledgeable** and better practitioners.



## ✿ Effective learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Learning for ESF students is rigorous, engaging, challenging and should equip them for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Effective learning for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognises that:

- the knowledge base is increasing rapidly, requiring learners to process and evaluate knowledge, not just acquire it;
- the world is changing rapidly, requiring learners to anticipate the unknown and adapt to change, not just respond to it;
- learning to work and solve problems collaboratively is becoming as important as learning to work individually;
- how the brain learns is becoming better understood with implications for teaching and learning that need to be respected;
- developing self-confidence in learners, as well as academic competence, is essential if learners are going to be able to function effectively; affective dispositions in addition to cognitive competence are central to learning;
- constructive critical thinking is a tool necessary for individual and collective survival; students must learn to be able to distinguish sense from nonsense, propaganda from truth and make their own well informed judgments; and
- workplaces increasingly require an ability to transfer skills and learning.

Taken from "IB towards a continuum of education" 2008

The curriculum in ESF schools is designed to stimulate young people to be intellectually curious and equip them with the knowledge, conceptual understanding, skills, reflective practices and attitudes needed to become independent lifelong learners.

ESF recognises that learning is a process. Students of all ages come to school with their own beliefs, knowledge and experience about how the world works. These mental constructs are revisited and revised in the light of new experiences and learning. ESF students learn how they learn, their own preferred styles, strengths and limitations. ESF teachers are expected to use a wide range of teaching strategies and to teach in a way that supports the progress of all students.



## Relevant and engaging pedagogy

**We believe that students in the primary years learn best when:**

- their prior knowledge is considered to be important;
- learning is in the context of today's world;
- context is relevant to the students;
- they can learn collaboratively;
- the learning environment is stimulating;
- they get appropriate feedback to support their learning;
- diverse learning styles are understood and accommodated;
- they feel secure and their ideas are valued and respected;
- values and expectations are explicit;
- there is a culture of curiosity at the school;
- they understand how judgments about learning are made, and how to provide evidence of their learning;
- they become aware of and understand how they learn;
- structured inquiry and critical thinking are central to teaching in the school;
- learning is engaging, challenging, rigorous, relevant and significant;
- they are encouraged in everything they do in school to become independent, life-long learners.



## Primary Years Programme curriculum

The Primary Years Programme curriculum incorporates five essential elements – concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and action.

Students are given the opportunity to:

- gain knowledge that is relevant and of global significance – for all students in all cultures;
- develop an understanding of concepts, which allows them to make connections throughout their learning;
- acquire transdisciplinary and disciplinary skills;
- develop attitudes that will lead to international-mindedness; and
- take action as a consequence of their learning.



## Transdisciplinary learning



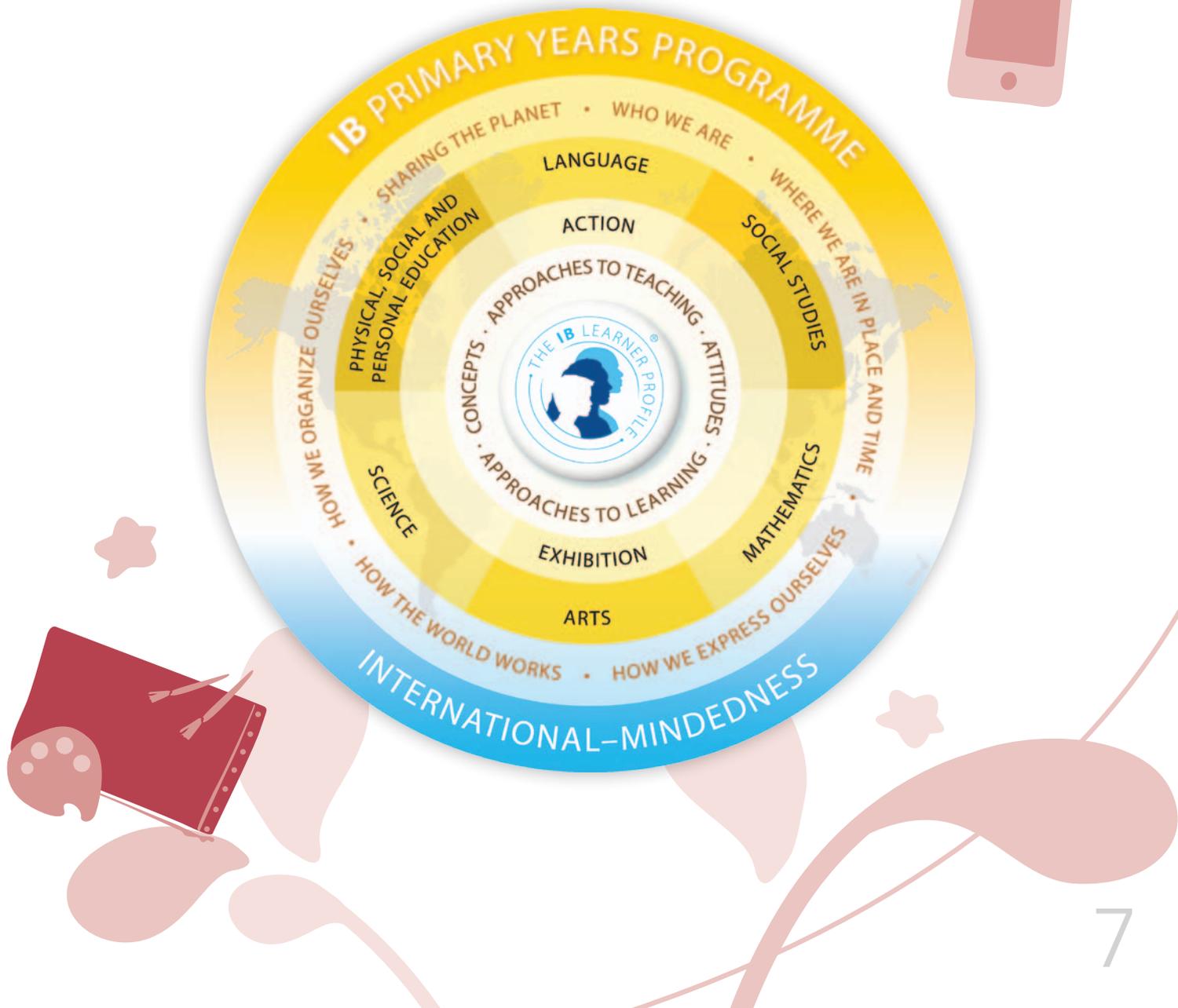
*To be truly educated, a student must also make connections across the disciplines, discover ways to integrate the separate subjects, and ultimately relate what they learn to life. (Boyer 1995)*



*The PYP endorses a belief that students learn best when the learning is authentic and transdisciplinary—relevant to the real world—where the learning is not confined within the boundaries of traditional subject areas but is supported and enriched by them. (Making the PYP happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education 2009)*

The six subject areas identified within the IB Primary Years Programme:

- **Language (English and Chinese)**  
Written Language (Reading and Writing)  
Oral Language (Listening and Speaking)  
Visual Language (Viewing and Presenting)
- **Mathematics**  
Number  
Data Handling  
Shape and Space  
Pattern and Function  
Measurement
- **Science**  
Living Things  
Earth and Space  
Material and Matter  
Forces and Energy
- **Social Studies**  
Social Organisation and Culture  
Continuity and Change through time  
Human and Natural Environments  
Resources and the Environment
- **Personal, Social and Physical Education**  
Identity  
Active Living  
Interactions
- **Arts**  
Dance  
Drama  
Music  
Visual art



The most significant and distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years Programme is the six transdisciplinary themes. These themes are supported by knowledge, concepts and skills from the traditional subject areas but utilise them in ways that transcend the confines of these subjects, thereby contributing to the **transdisciplinary model of teaching and learning**.



The six transdisciplinary themes are:

- **Who We Are**

An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.

- **Where We Are in Place and Time**

An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilisations, from local and global perspectives.

- **How We Express Ourselves**

An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.

- **How the World Works**

An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.

- **How We Organise Ourselves**

An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organisations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.

- **Sharing the Planet**

Learning about the rights and responsibilities in sharing finite resources with other people and living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.

Students inquire into, and learn about, these globally significant issues in the context of **units of inquiry**, each of which addresses a **central idea** relevant to a particular transdisciplinary theme. These units collectively constitute the school's **programme of inquiry**.

## Example of units on a Programme of Inquiry

Age: 5-6

Transdisciplinary Theme:

### **Who We Are**

An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.

### **Central idea**

People's relationships with each other can have an impact on well-being

### **Key concepts:**

- Function
- Connection
- Responsibility

### **Related concepts:**

- Cooperation
- Friendship
- Balance

### **Lines of inquiry**

- How we develop relationships
- How relationships affect us
- Roles and behaviours within relationships

### **Subject areas**

Personal and Social Education, Social Studies



Age: 8-9

Transdisciplinary Theme:

### **How the World Works**

An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.

### **Central idea**

Changes in the Earth and its atmosphere impacts on the way people live their lives

### **Key concepts:**

- Causation
- Change
- Connection

### **Related concepts:**

- Geology
- Adaptation
- Energy

### **Lines of inquiry**

- How the different components of the Earth are interrelated
- Why the Earth has changed and is continuing to change
- Human responses to the Earth's changes



## Subject areas

Science, Mathematics, Social Studies

Age: 10–11

Transdisciplinary Theme:

### ***How We Express Ourselves***

An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.

### **Central idea**

Rituals, traditions and artifacts provide a window into the beliefs and values of cultures.

### **Key concepts:**

- Function
- Perspective
- Reflection

### **Related concepts:**

- Beliefs
- Diversity

### **Lines of inquiry**

- What constitutes a culture
- Significance of rituals and traditions
- How artifacts symbolise beliefs and values

### **Subject areas**

Chinese, English, Arts, Social Studies



The importance of the traditional subject areas is acknowledged. The subject areas of language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, and personal, social and physical education (PSPE) are specified as components of the PYP curriculum model. It is also recognised however that educating students in a set of isolated subject areas, while necessary, is not sufficient. Of equal importance is the need to acquire skills in context, and to explore content that is relevant to students and that transcends the boundaries of the traditional subjects.

## Catering for all learners

Curriculum in our schools provides students with learning experiences that are engaging, relevant and challenging, in learning environments that are stimulating. Students are encouraged to be curious, be inquisitive, to ask questions, explore and interact with their local and global environments.

Our curriculum enables each student to develop in a manner and at a rate that is unique to that student. Learning is differentiated through the use of a range of teaching and learning strategies that cater for the different abilities, interests and learning styles of students. Students are supported to become independent learners.

In our schools guided inquiry is the leading pedagogical approach, which allows students to be actively involved and take responsibility for their own learning.

Inquiry, interpreted in the broadest sense, is the process initiated by the students or the teacher that moves the students from their current level of understanding to a deeper level of understanding. This can include:

- exploring, wondering and questioning;
- experimenting and playing with possibilities;
- making connections between previous learning and their current thinking;
- making predictions and acting purposefully to see what happens;
- collecting data and reporting findings;
- clarifying existing ideas and reappraising perceptions of events;
- deepening understanding through the application of a concept;
- making and testing theories;
- researching and seeking information;
- taking and defending a position;
- solving problems in a variety of ways; and
- reflecting on their learning.

Taken from “Making the Primary Years Programme Happen” – Page 29



Explicit teaching of knowledge and skills is used to support learning. This is evident in the area of Language where students are explicitly taught reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and presenting skills and in the area of mathematics through the number, space & shape, measurement, data handling and pattern and function strands. Explicit learning outcomes and the learning process are made transparent to the students.



## Jockey Club Sarah Roe School — Curriculum

As a school for students with profound learning needs, Jockey Club Sarah Roe School (JCSRS) strives to provide high quality and stimulating curricular experiences through which the students achieve their individual goals. JCSRS recognises the importance of the students' active participation in and interaction with their learning experiences. Guided by the values underpinning all ESF schools, JCSRS curriculum focuses on the total growth of the developing child, encompassing academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural needs.



Jockey Club Sarah Roe School has developed its own curricular framework, "The Primary Learning Programme", based on wide-ranging research and experience around special education theory and practice. The aim is to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to the needs of individuals and which focuses on the educational process as well as the product.

The Primary Learning Programme is a thematic, transdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching. The curriculum consists of three main themes (Myself and Others, How the Natural World Works and The Local & Global Community) that students engage with throughout each year. These themes are subdivided into units of work for each class, in addition to the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Personal, Social and Health Education. This enables all the students to learn at an appropriately differentiated level. The curriculum is a spiral one, allowing students to revisit each theme every three years. This approach enables students to encounter the themes from a new perspective, broadening and deepening their learning, as they progress through the classes.



## Chinese in the primary years



Chinese is a mandatory core subject in primary years, attracting daily lesson of 45 minutes in Years 3 to 6 and 30 minutes in Years 1 to 2 or equivalent. The ESF Primary Chinese Curriculum, introduced in 2007, features a three pathway structure to cater for students learning Chinese as a foreign, second or near native language. They are different in the nature of expected outcomes and provide opportunities for students to learn at an appropriate pace while being challenged to the best of their ability. Central to all pathways is the empowerment of students through a fruitful and enjoyable learning experience. The four macro skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught in all three pathways. Although the Primary Chinese Programme does not aim to achieve the local school outcomes, it maximises the opportunities for students to reach a level that would help them to live and work in a Chinese speaking community if they so wish.

Chinese culture is a prominent element in the curriculum and often links to units of inquiry defined by the mainstream PYP. Students learn about Chinese people, their history and society as an integral part of the daily lesson, and in a wide range of specially designed activities. Those conducted locally and in the mainland supplement classroom learning with rich experiences.

In Year 6 all students sit a standardised benchmark test that helps ensure that students are placed in the most appropriate class in secondary schools. A lot of work is being done to maintain consistency between the two phases.

## Taking actions as a result of our learning

An expectation of ESF primary schools is that successful inquiry will lead to responsible action, initiated by the student as a result of the learning process. This action will extend the student's learning, or it may have a wider social impact.

Through the Primary Years Programme our schools should meet the challenge of giving all learners the opportunity and the power to choose to act; to decide on their actions; and to reflect on these actions in order to make a difference in and to the world.

In the PYP effective action does not need to be on a large scale. It can begin at the most immediate and basic level: with the self; within the family; within the classroom, the hallways and the playground. Effective action can be a demonstration of a sense of responsibility and respect for self, others and the environment.



## Enhancing learning through assessment practices

The prime objective of assessment in ESF primary schools is to provide feedback on the learning process.

Assessment is an important part of our curriculum framework as it both enhances learning and provides opportunities for students to reflect on what they know, understand and can do. The teacher's assessments and feedback to the students provides the guidance, the tools and the motivation for them to become more competent, more skillful and better at understanding how to learn.

The principal purposes of assessing what has been learned are to:

- determine what the student knows and understands;
- inform and differentiate future teaching and learning;
- monitor student progress;
- provide feedback to teachers, students and parents;
- monitor the effectiveness of the learning programme; and
- inform the professional development of teachers.

Students are assessed both formatively and summatively.

- Formative assessment is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what the students already know in order to plan the next stage of learning.
- Summative assessment occurs at the end of the teaching and learning process and provides students with opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned.



Teachers use a range and balance of school-based and ESF-wide assessment strategies and feedback techniques, including:



- writing samples;
- benchmarks and continuums;
- structured observations;
- anecdotal records;
- performance tasks;
- standardised assessments;
- rubrics or guiding descriptors;
- portfolios of work;
- student / teacher / parent conferences; and
- formal reports.

These authentic assessment strategies are used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, which include standardised tests, in order to assess student performance, basic skills levels and the efficacy of the programme.

## The Exhibition

Students who are in their final year of the programme carry out a collaborative inquiry project, known as the exhibition, under the guidance of their teachers.

The exhibition represents a significant event in the life of both the school and student, synthesising the essential elements of the Primary Years Programme and sharing them with the whole school community. It is an opportunity for students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile that have been developing throughout their engagement with the programme.



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