

The ISF Pre-School Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

Education at The ISF Pre-school is based on the belief that effective learning takes place in a supportive, nurturing environment founded on mutual trust and respect. The ISF Pre-school adopts a holistic view of child development where the child is seen as a whole person with a desire to learn and to be active in the learning process. The cognitive, social, cultural, physical and spiritual dimensions are fully integrated throughout the curriculum. Learning tasks take into account the individual interests and needs of the children and are designed to be engaging, relevant, interesting, challenging but achievable, and meaningful to the learner.

The ISF Pre-school acknowledges that first hand experience is essential for intellectual development. The children are encouraged to think for themselves. With teacher support, and in collaboration with parents, children are encouraged to set their own goals and to evaluate their progress towards attaining those goals. The ISF Pre-school believes that children learn through social interaction and that collaborative learning is a powerful source of cognitive development. At The ISF Pre-school children are encouraged to work in small groups and to participate in whole class activities so that they can form positive social relationships, and share their learning and knowledge with others.

The ISF Pre-school teachers are encouraged and supported to be innovative and creative in their teaching methods through the provision of an international curriculum and supplementary programs, well-resourced classrooms, and a wide range of high quality teaching aids.

Teachers at The ISF Pre-school place a premium on knowing the children as individual learners. In this way teachers can plan to meet the needs of each child and to foster their independence. The teachers and support staff provide encouragement, warmth, acceptance, sensitivity, well-informed judgments, and supportive interventions to ensure the children are prepared to take risks and to engage in challenging and more complex activities without fear of failure.

The ISF Pre-School aims to provide children and their families with a learning environment where they feel a sense of belonging, where they feel comfortable and familiar with the routines, customs, and regular events, and where they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behavior.

The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

At The ISF Pre-School we believe that high quality early childhood learning experiences extend the child's learning outside of the home, fosters their development into competent and confident learners, and lays the foundation for later school success. The curriculum and supplementary programs implemented at The ISF Pre-School have been selected and developed to take into account contemporary research based understandings of how children learn, and the optimum conditions for that learning to take place.

Features of The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

- Deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and values, updated to be relevant to today's world.
- The underlying values are based on The ISF Academy's "*Eight Virtues + One*". (Please refer to section on Vision, Mission and Values).
- The focus is on the individual child as a learner and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that the child brings to their experiences.
- The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) Early Years Program forms the basis of the integrated, topic-based approach to teaching and learning. This contemporary international curriculum has been developed into a bilingual program of study specifically for The ISF Pre-School.
- The ISF Pre-school delivers the curriculum through two principal languages of instruction: Putonghua (70%) and English (30%). This medium of instruction articulates into the ISF Academy Foundation Years bilingual immersion program.
- A premium is placed on providing all children with the opportunity to further develop knowledge and an understanding of their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others.
- Structured, guided discovery, and free play sessions provide opportunities for children to follow their own interests, ask their own questions and find the answers through exploration, experimentation, prediction, creating, and sharing their learning in a variety of interesting ways.
- Activities are structured to ensure the systematic development of skills and concept understandings in preparation for the transition from pre-school to primary school.

Developed in accordance with the recommendations set out by the Curriculum Development Council and recommended for use in pre-primary institutions by The Education Bureau HKSAR 2006, The ISF Pre-school Curriculum covers the following six key learning areas:

- Language and Early Literacy Skills

- Early Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- The Arts
- Physical Fitness and Health
- Self and Society

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) Early Years Program

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) Early Years Program forms the basis of The ISF Pre-school curriculum. Developed approximately 12 years ago by an international team of curriculum experts, the IPC is the curriculum of choice of 1,785 UK and International schools. The IPC has been developed to provide support for teachers so that four main aims can be achieved. They are:

- To help children learn the subject knowledge, skills and understandings they need to become aware of the world around them.
- To help children develop the personal skills they need to take an active part in the world throughout their lives.
- To help children develop an international mindset alongside an awareness of their own nationality.
- To do each of these in ways that take into account up-to-date research into how children learn and how they can be encouraged to be life-long learners.

The IPC's fully integrated, thematic approach to teaching and learning capitalizes on young children's interests and their desire to explore, ask questions, and find the answers. Each unit is designed to last from four to six weeks and covers the six key learning areas. The IPC Early Years Program is designed to be an international curriculum and The ISF Pre-school have further adapted it for instruction in Putonghua and English, taking into account the *Eight Virtues + One* and the unique Chinese culture and language. In each of the units there is an international dimension to ensure the cultures, interests and experiences of all children are taken into account when teachers collaboratively plan their activities and select the resources.

The Six Key Learning Areas at The ISF Pre-School

The following section provides an introduction to each of the six key learning areas and associated developmental objectives in accordance with the Curriculum Development Council and recommended for use in pre-primary institutions by The Education Bureau HKSAR (2006).

Language and Early Literacy in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

Literacy skills and the ability to read opens up our understanding of many worlds – factual, exciting, interesting, relevant, historical, disturbing, fantastic, and make believe. We read for a variety of aesthetic and academic purposes: for relaxation and enjoyment; to develop a skill; follow directions and instructions; to unlock the secrets of the past; to immerse us in cultural heritage and rituals, and to help develop an understanding of ourselves, the world, and our place in it.

The Aims of The ISF Pre-School Early Literacy and Emergent Reading Program

At The ISF Pre-school the role of the teacher is to provide all students with the opportunities and support they need to develop the early literacy skills that will lay the foundation for them to develop as motivated, confident, and competent readers and to achieve the following aims:

- To develop a permanent interest in reading
- To develop in the child an attitude of demanding meaning from what he or she reads – that it makes sense
- To develop independence through the systematic introduction of pre-reading and emergent reading strategies
- To bring each child into contact with books and other reading materials that will enrich his/her experience

Early Mathematics in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

Mathematics is part of the young child's daily world. Young children possess informal mathematical abilities and enjoy using them. Before they enter school many children develop number and geometry abilities – they count, sing number songs, make shapes, use mathematical ideas in everyday life, and develop informal mathematical knowledge that can be quite sophisticated.

The ISF Pre-School promotes a view of mathematics as a positive, self-motivated, self-directed problem-solving activity at the time children first develop their mathematical beliefs and feelings. Their play and interests are the first source of young children's mathematical experiences.

Using a variety of strategies, The ISF Pre-school teachers help to develop mathematical knowledge by building on young children's everyday activities, incorporating their cultural backgrounds, languages, mathematical ideas, and strategies. The learning environment is planned so that it is conducive to mathematical explorations with the inclusion of a range of specific mathematical activities and designated areas in the classroom containing manipulative materials and blocks for construction, maths games and puzzles, and a shopping area.

The IPC Early Years Curriculum incorporates many mathematics-related activities. The development of selected mathematical skills and competencies at each year level provide the basic foundation of the mathematics program at The ISF Pre-school. Where children already demonstrate competencies beyond those selected, teachers will ensure their mathematical development is further fostered through the provision of additional extension activities.

Science and Technology in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

Science and technology is the study of the world and how it works. Children are natural scientists and from a young age may already demonstrate a number of basic attitudes, learning dispositions, and an open-minded approach to their learning. These attitudes are capitalized on in The ISF Pre-school Curriculum.

Young children's natural curiosity leads them to ask questions, make guesses, and make connections. Through their use of prior knowledge and experience, their interest in experimentation, making predictions, exploring, testing observations, and investigating, young children learn about the world they live in.

Children learn important scientific skills and methods through hands-on experience with the objects and materials in their environment. Participation in a stimulating science and technology program with opportunities to use tools and simple measuring devices, make comparisons, and collect and record information fosters young children's ability to learn these skills.

At The ISF Pre-school the children's interest in science and technology is stimulated through designated science areas containing a variety of resources, displays, science-related investigative tools and materials. The emphasis is on a fully integrated curriculum with the children's developing scientific knowledge and understanding extended at each year level.

The IPC Early years Curriculum provides a rich bank of resources for teaching science and technology in the following key areas that form the basis of The ISF Pre-school Science and Technology Curriculum:

- Scientific skills and attitudes
- Science and its relationship to technology
- The living world
- The physical world
- The material world
- Planet earth and beyond

The Arts in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

The arts are important and powerful forms of personal, social, and cultural expression and are considered by many to be an essential element of daily living and of lifelong learning. An essential part of a young child's development is exposure to opportunities that facilitate experimentation, creativity, imaginative thought and action, emotional growth, and self-expression. Participation in an Arts program that encompasses Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts helps young children acquire a range of creative and artistic talents and skills and develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of their cultural heritage and that of other cultures.

Of particular relevance to The ISF Pre-School Arts Curriculum is one of the core *Eight Virtues*, Xiao. "Through Xiao we are connected to our past and our traditions; we are the inheritors and guardians of our culture, bridging the gap between the old and the new, building on the strengths of the past to create the future" (ISF Academy Strategic Plan 2011-16, p.5).

The goal of The ISF Pre-school Arts Curriculum is to help young children develop practical knowledge, understanding and ideas in the four main disciplines of dance, drama, music, and visual arts, and to be able to communicate their knowledge and ideas in each of the disciplines.

Dance

For very young children, dance is a natural progression from learning to walk. Dance in The ISF Pre-school curriculum capitalises on young children's natural sense of rhythm and desire to explore and move in different ways.

Through participation in a varied dance program, the children will:

- Develop practical knowledge in dance through the exploration of movement, body awareness, space, energy, and relationships with others.
- Develop ideas in dance through the use of personal experience and imagination to express their own ideas.
- Communicate through dance by sharing movement through informal presentation, and to respond personally to their own and others' dance.
- Understand dance in context through an awareness of dance as part of community life and as an expression of their cultural history and traditions.

Drama

Drama is integral to young children's play. Drama helps us understand ourselves, our own particular culture, the culture of others, and the world in which we live. A stimulating, varied drama program enables young children to express their emotions,

understandings, ideas, and experience in a variety of roles and contexts. As young children start to mature, drama enables them to enrich their lives through imagination, humour, and more abstract thought.

Through participation in a varied drama program, the children will:

- Explore basic elements and techniques of drama.
- Participate in drama and share ideas using personal experience and imagination.
- Share drama through informal presentation and respond to ways in which drama conveys ideas and tells stories.
- Develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own culture through exposure to performances and explanations by experienced actors.
- Develop drama ideas and activities in response to concepts drawn from IPC drama topics and topics in other curriculum areas (for example Health and Physical Education, Science)
- Use significant personal and community events to develop and share a scene. Examples include: birthdays, weddings, significant festivals and cultural events such as Chinese New Year, Christmas, family gatherings.
- Take on character roles from well-known folk tales, nursery rhymes, TV characters, mythical creatures.
- Explore historical and traditional forms of drama through attending performances and inviting guests actors to the school.
- Perform in front of selected audiences (other classes, parents, friends)

Music

Music is a fundamental form of personal and cultural expression. Music education enables all students to contribute to the cultural life of their school, family, and community through making and sharing music. Participation in a rich music program helps young children to develop musical literacy that involves the development of skills and knowledge related to styles, genres, and basic technologies and structures. Through music, children learn of their history through the transmission of stories and songs.

Through participation in a varied music program, the children will:

- Explore and respond to basic musical elements including beat, rhythm, pitch, tempo, and dynamics.
- Develop the confidence and skills required to make their own music using musical instruments and improvised objects.
- Share music making with others through informal presentation and respond to live or recorded music.

- Develop a deeper understanding of their own culture and the culture of others through exposure to performances by musicians and others.
- Develop a love of singing and sharing their culture through music.
- Learn action songs and chants from different cultures.
- Listen to and discuss musical works for special occasions (birthdays, wedding, festivals).
- Participate in informal performances for parents, peers, and friends.

Visual Arts

The visual arts constitute a wide range of fields including drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, graphic design, electronic media, and film. The visual arts inform our cultural identity and enable us to communicate, learn about ourselves, and our relationships with others.

Through participation in a varied visual arts program young children will:

- Develop artistic and creative skills and knowledge as a vehicle for self-expression and an appreciation of the world of art.
- Explore elements of the visual arts using a variety of tools, materials, processes, and procedures.
- Experiment and express visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, using imagination, observation, and invention with a range of materials.
- Express ideas about their own art works and respond to and discuss art works from their own countries and cultures.
- Make drawings or paintings based on personal or shared experiences. Share and discuss finished compositions.

Physical Fitness and Health in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

At The ISF Pre-school a premium is placed on the physical fitness, health, and safety of children at all times. A holistic approach to the development of young children ensures well balanced health and physical education programs are delivered in an environment where the children's social skills development and their physical and emotional health are promoted.

The teachers at The ISF Pre-school plan learning experiences and activities related to selected topics. In addition they constantly observe and monitor the children's development in the key areas listed below. Through sensitive observation and social interactions with the children while they are engaged in a variety of contexts and activities, the teachers are able to capitalise on opportunities to further develop these skills in a natural and spontaneous manner.

The following key elements of The ISF Pre-school Physical Fitness and Health, and Self and Society programs embody the *Eight Virtues + One* where Zhong (loyalty and commitment), Xiao (respect and obligation), Ren (compassion and kindness), Ai (love and passion), Li (etiquette and ceremony), Yi (principles and justice), He (harmony and tolerance), and Ping (balance and equity) culminate in the achievement of Zhi (intelligence and wisdom).

Key learning areas for all children include:

- A growing awareness of their bodies and how to take care of them
- Movement and gross and fine motor skills development
- Caring for our teeth
- Healthy eating
- Dressing appropriately for different activities and seasons
- Exercise and sleeping routines
- Safe play and playground safety
- Toxic chemicals and medicines
- Phoning for assistance
- People who help us to stay safe (doctors, nurses, dentists, police, fire safety officers, traffic officers)

Self and Society in The ISF Pre-School Curriculum

The young child's social and affective development is greatly influenced by the behaviour, attitudes, and values of the significant adults in their lives. At The ISF Pre-school *Eight Virtues + One* provide the foundation for the child's self-image and the enhancement of their interpersonal and communication skills. Through participation in positive learning experiences in a supportive environment where they are treated with respect by positive adult role models, children learn about their own value and understand the feelings and needs of their peers.

Key learning areas for all children include:

- Social skills and emotional development
- Development of independence, confidence, and sense of personal worth
- Taking increasing responsibility for themselves and others
- Development of positive interpersonal relationships and cooperative skills
- Fair play and adhering to class and school rules
- Appreciating difference (physical, cultural, gender)
- Awareness of personal safety
- Caring for the environment
- Stranger danger
- Fire, road and water safety

Language at The ISF Pre-School

The ISF Pre-school recognizes that learners within the pre-school community come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds and have the potential to develop proficiency in communication and literacy in two or more languages that may or may not include their ‘mother tongue’. The ISF Pre-school further recognizes the need to provide programs that ensure the sustained development of language and literacy for all students, including ‘mother tongue’ maintenance.

Consistent with the ISF Academy, The ISF Pre-school believes that:

- Language acquisition is fundamental to achieving the pre-school’s vision to create a community of happy, life-long learners;
- Language acquisition is fundamental to an education based on communication, intercultural awareness, and holistic learning;
- Language acquisition allows students to explore multiple forms of expression;
- ‘Mother tongue’ maintenance promotes cognitive, social and emotional development;
- All teachers are language teachers in a bilingual pre-school following a model of language immersion;
- All teachers are teachers of culture in a multi-cultural pre-school;
- Language immersion provides an ideal learning environment for The ISF Pre-school’s students to learn Chinese and English, thus become future contributors to local, national, and international communities;
- The provision and development of a bilingual program is fundamental to achieving the pre-school’s mission.

The ISF Pre-school teachers develop strategies for meeting the language learning needs of all children in ways that are tactful and respectful. Teachers lead students to realise that different forms of language are appropriate for different contexts and occasions, and that they can help them to become articulate in standard and public uses of the Chinese and English languages.

Guiding Principles

- The languages of instruction at The ISF Pre-school are Putonghua and English.
- In view of the cultural and linguistic diversity in The ISF Pre-school community, students are educated and encouraged to be inclusive and communicate in languages that are understood by all members of the pre-school community.
- Students learn to write Chinese using traditional characters which are used in Hong Kong and Taiwan and recognize Hanyu Pinyin.

- Cantonese is a language of wider communication in Hong Kong. The ISF Pre-school is committed to celebrating the Cantonese language and culture.

Assessment at The ISF Pre-school

Effective assessment procedures are critical to effective teaching and learning. Teachers at The ISF Pre-school use a range of informal observation and assessment strategies to systematically monitor and record the children's progress towards meeting selected learning outcomes in all areas of development. Individual student portfolios are used at The ISF Pre-school and are regarded with pride by students and their parents as tangible proof of their progress. The appropriate placement of new students is ensured through a range of assessment and interview procedures.

Parental Involvement in Learning

There are many ways that all parents can be involved in their child's learning – both at home and at school. The ISF Pre-school staff encourage parental involvement through sharing relevant expertise and ideas.

At The ISF Pre-school parents are strongly encouraged to support their children and school in implementing school policies. In particular, we would like parents to:

- reinforce the Eight Virtues + One in daily life;
- ensure that your child has the best attendance record possible;
- ensure that your child is equipped for school with the correct uniform, sports uniform and resources;
- ensure your child is healthy and fit to attend school;
- inform the school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect your child's performance or behaviour at school;
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general;
- fulfil requirements as stated in the admissions and enrolments documentation