



YEAR 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Will the cafeteria provide a vegetarian option on the menu? Our family is strict vegetarian.

The cafeteria always provides a Vegetarian option for students. We have a number of staff and students who are vegetarian.

Can a parent or helper bring lunch to school everyday before lunchtime?

No. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we cannot have a group of extra adults on the premises during lunch. Organising a system to deliver lunch is complicated. Secondly we want the students to develop independence.

Will you offer a fridge or microwave oven to maintain the food quality? Will any staff help him to reheat the food?

We do not have fridge or microwave facilities for the students to access. With so many students to feed at lunchtime this would be difficult to manage. We do not reheat food. If you want your child to eat hot food that is nutritious and freshly prepared we would suggest you use the cafeteria service.

What is the arrangement for lunch hours? Will the students be served or do they need to queue up at the cafeteria? Will these lower grade students dine in the classroom? Will the teachers look after the students if they do not touch the food at all?

The Year 1 & 2 students all eat in the cafeteria. Those who have ordered lunch have their trays delivered to the table. They will be brought down to the cafeteria by the staff and seated. We always have staff on duty in the cafeteria and we do our best to ensure that all students eat their lunch.

Can we have a combination of home lunch and school lunch?

Parents have the option of ordering cafeteria lunch on some days and not others, however, this can become quite complex for the children. It would be better to order lunch on a monthly basis – 1-month home lunch, 1-month cafeteria. The lunch enrollment form for the cafeteria can be downloaded from the RCHK website.

Do most children have a packed lunch or a bought lunch?

This is really parental choice. We have parents who choose to provide home lunch, whilst others opt for cafeteria food. Home lunches should be healthy and wholesome. We would recommend that children who suffer from allergies should be provided with an appropriate home lunch.

Are there any extra-curricular activities that Year 1 students can participate in at school, especially arts and instrumental lessons?

All the Year 1 students have Arts in the context of their class programme - music, visual arts and drama. We do not have these young students engage in 'extra curricular activities as they have such a full day already - and they are young. Rather, we are looking to develop playground zones so that the RCHK children can learn to play together - happily and effectively - cooperating, collaborating and having fun. Year 1 students will engage in 'Studio Time' which is designed to enhance learning through play – developing concrete skills in a range of areas.

ESL does run after school programmes that Year 1 students could join. ESL produces information regarding the course/programmes they offer.

Is it compulsory to buy an RCHK school bag?

No – it is recommended but not essential. The school bag has been carefully designed to prevent back injuries. We would request that students do not use 'wheelie' bags. They are difficult for the students to handle in the context of the school day.

How do children manage their books at school? Will there be a locker or drawer for them to place their things in instead of carrying them back and forth from school to home?

The school organizes an initial 'start up' stationery kit for the students in Year 1. The class teacher will keep this at school. The students will have 'cubby hole' spaces to place their bags in upon arrival at the school. These are located outside the hub areas. In some year levels there are chair bags in use. Most classes also use trays for the students to store their things.

What shoes do students wear?

Black or brown school shoes. On days when they have Physical Education they can wear their track shoes and their PE uniform. Parents should ensure that the students wear the appropriate uniform to school.

Have you thought of better ways to ensure student safety when they are playing in the playground during recess?

We are always looking for ways to improve playground safety. We have 'zoned' the playground so that students have discrete areas within which to play. We do however expect students to develop positive playground skills, attitudes and behaviours, and to take PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, even from this early age. Children must LEARN: *how to relate positively to others, to deal with conflict and how to resolve problems.* This is an ongoing process.

Our 5 year old has extracurricular classes on weekdays. Can our helper stay at the school with him?

When the Primary day ends all Primary students are expected to go home. If they are at school 'after hours' for specific reasons, they *must* be supervised by parents or a helper.

What is the procedure for students getting off the bus in the morning? Are they supervised?

Bus escorts supervise the Primary students. When they get off the bus they are escorted to the covered playground. If it is raining they follow a sheltered pathway to the playground.

What bus system do you have in place to ensure students leave safely and on time at the end of the school day?

The Primary school day ends at 3.00 and the bus children line up in the covered playground area before being taken to the bus. The bus escort and school staff both check they have all students safely on the bus before the bus departs the College grounds.

When is the 'smart card' distributed to students?

In Years 1 & 2 the students are not issued with a 'smart card.' When the students move to Year 3 they will be issued with a card and must take responsibility for looking after it.

Are there restricted areas on the RCHK website?

The only restricted area to the school web site is the school community area. This area is used by staff to add content to the website.

Do all students have web mail accounts?

Years 4 to 13 have email accounts; our younger Primary students do not. They are given a class email address and do on occasions, use the teachers email account.

Are the students allowed to speak Cantonese at school?

The medium of instruction is English but students are allowed to speak Mother Tongue at school where appropriate. In Chinese classes students are expected to use Putonghua. There are times when students *need* to process ideas in their Mother tongue - whether that is Cantonese, Korean or Hebrew. It is normal and natural to do so. We do however encourage them to be '*inclusive*.' This means that when they are in situations where someone in a group does not understand the language being spoken, we expect English to be used.

Do you plan to enhance the Chinese curriculum?

We offer Chinese at all levels in the Primary school and we are constantly evaluating, reviewing and refining the curriculum in an effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning. At each Year level, Chinese language is taught in conjunction with Units of Inquiry where natural and effective links and connections can be made.

How does the level of Chinese proficiency of children coming out of Renaissance compare with students from the traditional local HK system?

Students at RCHK receive quality Chinese instruction, but they only have one lesson a day. Our first two cohorts of Diploma students achieved superb grades in Chinese.

Will you group students with similar levels for Chinese lessons?

The Chinese team spends considerable time assessing the Putonghua language experience of students in the Primary so that they can be placed in appropriate classes. We have 2 levels – CNL (Chinese Native Language) and CFL (Chinese Foreign Language). Students are grouped accordingly.

What form of Chinese characters is taught in the Primary school?

Whilst traditional characters are predominantly taught, the teaching of Chinese takes into account the language experience of the students and therefore the simplified version is used to support students for whom Chinese is not strength - our CFL students for example.

How often do the students study Mandarin?

Chinese is taught in periods of 40 minutes, each year group has one double period a week and 3 single periods.

Other than the Mandarin, which is used to teach Chinese, are all other subjects conducted in English?

Yes.

How are the students classified into different classes?

The process we use for class placement takes into account a wide range of factors including gender balance, friendship groups, language background and student strengths and needs. Considerable time is spent on class placement.

Are there any ways or schemes that I can join so that I can observe the class to see how they run?

There are many instances where parents are invited into school. You might be invited to assist with a trip, share a skill or expertise with the children, or become a class parent. These are great ways to see what is happening and will also support the learning in your child's class. Parents who do wish to become actively involved in class-based activities will be asked to complete a 'Memorandum of Agreement' which will outline the significant responsibilities they need to acknowledge and adhere to in supporting student learning. We will be hosting Parent Education workshops during the academic year that will give you the opportunity to take an active role in learning more about the PYP at RCHK. We look forward to seeing you there.

Will the school bus bring the students home during the first 2 weeks when the children have half days?

Yes. The bus company are aware that the Year 1 students have an 'alternative' day at the beginning of the academic year and will collect the children early during the first two weeks.

We return to Hong Kong after school begins so our child will not be able to join the orientation day. Is that a problem?

No it is not a problem although he will miss out on being at the school with just the Year 1 students - the personalized tour for the class etc. The class teacher will make every effort to ensure that your child is assimilated into the life of the school even though he will miss the induction.

How do I apply for a holiday for my child during the school term? We had pre-booked a holiday before our child was accepted to RCHK.

We ask that parents adhere to the school term so that the children attend class and take a full and active part in the daily life of the school throughout the year. That said there are instances where families do request time away from school for their children for a variety of reasons. In such cases we ask that parents put this request in writing and send it to the Head of Primary for consideration. We are establishing a 'protocol' that we will ask parents to follow.

What do you offer for the Gifted and Talented? Do you believe in grade skipping or acceleration within their year group? Do the year 1s have to sit a test to determine their ability?

We differentiate for the diverse needs in the classroom setting and are in the process of exploring how we can further strengthen gifted education across the curriculum. We focus on the whole child – physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs and aim to place them in developmentally age appropriate classes, hence we do 'accelerate' students.

At lunchtime do the Year 1 students play in a supervised area with their year level or are they allowed to play with older children?

At RCHK we have playground zones within which Year levels have space to play. All Year levels have the opportunity to play together at times. The playground is a microcosm of society and we all share the responsibility in playing safely and for caring for one another. The Primary students do not play with Secondary students.

If there is a sibling currently in the school is it likely that the child commencing in Year 1 will be in the same House colours?

Yes. We do our best to keep families in the same House group, though we do also try to 'balance' student numbers across the Houses.

Will there be any homework to do and examinations to prepare?

Home learning in Year 1 is minimal. It provides students with an opportunity to review what has been taught, consolidate what has been learned and share learning experiences with their families. We do not have examinations for any students in Primary.

Will there be any 1:1 discussion group held regularly between the teachers and parents to track the students' adaptability of new school life and progress, especially in the first 3 months?

At the beginning of the year there will be a 'Back to School' evening for parents as well as an opportunity to meet . Subsequently we host a 3 Way Conference with the child, parent and teacher present. At the end of the year we have Student –Led conferences. Regular communication with parents is undertaken through the student organizer, email and meetings upon request. We do want parents to feel that they can contact the school at any point in the year but do ask that parents arrange meetings outside the context of the school day as teachers have the responsibility for an entire class.

What specific care/assistance will be offered to Y1 students to help them easily and quickly adapt to the school life?

The transition into Year 1 is important hence we have the 'half day' beginning. The first unit the students focus on is 'Communities,' during which they will learn much more about themselves, each other and the school environment. Most adapt quickly and settle into the routines with relative ease.

Apart from tuition fees what other cost do parents need to pay in addition to tuition fees?

Our ePayment system enables parents to track additional expenditure. Individual accounts are set up for families into which they deposit funds. Each family will be issued with a login password with which they can access their accounts. Each child in a family will have a separate account. Costs of Chinese resources, excursions, swimming, LEAP etc. will be billed accordingly and will vary across Year levels. Parents will be able to log on to their account and view payments made to the school. Stationery packs and classroom materials for all Year 1 students will be organised and ready for the children when they arrive at school.

I have sent my child to many extra-curricular courses since the age of 3. Is there any special areas we should take note of that may interfere or counteract the IB approach of learning.

No. Whilst it is wonderful that parents want their children to be actively involved in as many activities as possible, sometimes 'less is more.' Let your child play and learn through natural experiences. Spend time with them going to museums and places of interest. This will give you all much to talk about.

Does RCHK have teaching assistants in the classroom?

We will have 27 students in each class and a fulltime educational assistant. In fact all our educational assistants across the Primary are fulltime.

In the area of mathematics, I read from your web site the learning process is interactive such that learning of math may be integrated with science. Trying to think more to the future, how does this approach compare with the more conventional education approaches in preparing a student to take university entrance exams?

Perfectly. The Primary Years Programme provides for an integrated approach to learning. It is designed to help students make tangible and realistic connections to the core curriculum and therefore deepen their understanding of key concepts taught. For example, mathematics concepts are taught such that students can apply their knowledge and understanding to other subjects such as science. The PYP approach to learning supports students as they move into the Middle Years and beyond, irrespective of what system they move into anywhere in the world.

How do you approach assessment – in particular how the goal setting and Student –led conferences work?

Assessment takes many forms – it is continuous, targeted and important in supporting learning. At RCHK students are given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, including assessment. They will assess themselves and at each other at various stages. Formalised conferences are designed to provide the students with opportunities to not only share their learning experiences, but also establish new and significant goals for them to achieve. In Year 1 the class teachers closely support the students in facilitating conferences.

Will there be any school helper to assist the Y1 students when they to go to the toilet?

We expect all children to be toilet trained. There will be a teacher to supervise the behaviour of the children prior to break times but there will not be anyone in the toilet helping them. We do acknowledge however that there will be accidents, and in such instances there will be a teacher and EA to assist. Toilets are a manageable size and the emphasis on personal hygiene is high.

Will year 1 students have swimming lessons? Will there be helpers to help students for shower, tidying up and so on? What is the ratio of coaches/teachers to students for swimming lessons?

We offer an aquatics programme for the students in Year 1. Parents/helpers will be asked to assist their child in changing. We do however; encourage children to practise being independent. There will be 5 swimming teachers, with approximately 5 students to a group.

J. Schmitz
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