

# Malvern College comes to Hong Kong

The private school adds Hong Kong to their portfolio, Carolynne Dear finds out more.



Artist's impression of the brand new Kowloon-based campus.

British private school Malvern College is opening a pre-school in August 2017 and higher years in September 2018. The pre-school will have 120 places available in 2017/18 with its school to house 960 places at full capacity.

Backed by 150 years of education experience in the UK, Malvern College Hong Kong will follow the ethos from its mother school and offer a "hands-on", "child-centered" Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum at its Kowloon-based pre-school.

The curriculum is inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, a teaching philosophy that views the environment as the "third teacher".

A wood hut, sand pit and open-ended play equipment will create an environment where children will be able to freely explore their five senses. "Our educationally harnessed play programme builds on UK's EYFS curriculum, which sets expectations for each age and stage of a child's developmental progress," said Malvern College Preschool principal Jacqueline McNalty.

Seven areas of learning and development are targeted, including personal, social and emotional; physical; communication and language; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive art and design. The emphasis will be on play-based learning,

with a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. "While such a play-based approach might be different from that of other Hong Kong kindergartens, many European and Scandinavian countries take a similar approach in Early Childhood Programs and achieve academic results that top global leagues tables," said McNalty.

The school will embrace diversity and expects a proportion of its students to be learning English as an additional language. Teachers will be appropriately trained to ensure children acquire good standards in spoken English. Each classroom will be assigned a native English speaker as well as a native or near-

native Mandarin speaking teacher and songs and activities will be devised for children to take an active role in acquiring vocabulary in each language.

Classes will accommodate 20 students for Pre-Nursery (from two years), Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2; with a ratio of one teacher to six students in Pre-Nursery, and nine students to each teacher in Kindergarten 1 and 2. Students enrolled in the pre-school for at least one year will receive priority for assessment for Malvern College.

Applications for admission in August 2017

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are now welcome and prospective students and their parents will be contacted for observational assessments. According to the school, this assists teachers in reviewing the child's social and emotional skills, school readiness, interest and knowledge of the EYFS and physical skills. They are then in a better position to tailor their teaching to the needs and learning styles of the child. Parents will also be required to attend an interview with the child present.

With its foundation stone laid earlier this year, the primary and secondary section of the school is on track for a 2018 opening and has appointed Dr Robin Lister as founding headmaster of its New Territories-based campus.

Lister has been teaching at the 150-year old British private school since 1989 and will be leaving his current post as senior deputy head at Malvern College UK to take up the top spot at Malvern Hong Kong.

"I am really enjoying Hong Kong," he enthuses as we meet to discuss Malvern's opening. "I'm loving the "backyard" - the mountains, the beaches - it's certainly not all high rise as we're led to believe overseas."

A keen hiker and cyclist, Lister's enthusiasm for all things outdoors also stems from the importance the school places on nature as a learning platform. The college will be based in leafy Tai Po, and while the preschool has premises in not-so-green Yau Ma Tei, Malvern has secured land in the New Territories to enable preschoolers to access Hong Kong's great outdoors on a regular, weekly basis.

"The environment will be fundamental to our learning process," says Jacqueline McNalty, who will be moving from Singapore to head up the





Malvern Pre-school students get back to nature.

new pre-school.

Malvern College Hong Kong will be the territory's first Forest School, run by Forest School leaders, certified by the UK's Forest School Association at the highest level (level 3).

"Our Forest School programme will run in all weather conditions, subject to safety conditions

of course," says McNulty. "As students extend their education beyond the confines of the classroom walls, they grow in confidence and increase physical and social skills, enabling holistic development of the children."

Malvern College Hong Kong will offer a International Baccalaureate curriculum with

rigor in teaching mathematics and sciences and compulsory English and Chinese studies. However, the education of the "whole child" is indeed at the heart of Malvern's ethos.

"Academics are of course important, but not exclusive," says Lister. "I am a strong proponent of a holistic education, educating the whole child,

not just the academic child."

Extra-curricular activities, for example, will be central to the school day, not just an add-on after the bell rings. Where sport is concerned, there will be inter-house competitions and the school is keen to make its mark on the wider, Hong Kong school sporting leagues.

Although maintaining day-school hours, the school will offer boarding school options.

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Students will be divided into "houses" with designated house masters or mistresses, plus personal tutors to monitor every student as they progress.

"The personal tutor will not just be checking whether the student is academically on track, they will also be ensuring the child is taking

up every opportunity available to them - from community work to sports, music and drama, the tutors will make sure students are participating in school life to the best of their capacity, with report cards going home regularly during term-time," explains Lister. Academically strong students will be offered "stretch" classes, and if any students are found to be struggling, personal programmes will be set up to support them.

Tutors and housemasters will also be asked to sit with students during meal-times. "This encourages good table manners and social skills, all part of educating the "whole child"," says Lister.

The school is looking at exchange opportunities with Malvern College UK to further enrich its education programme.

As far as technology is concerned, Lister believes nothing beats a teacher interacting with a class. "Of course this will be backed up with the latest tech. But I strongly believe in the strength of old fashioned interaction."

**The application process is now open for both Malvern College and Malvern College Pre-school.**

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### School Report

Scheduled opening: Pre-school to open in August 2017 and Malvern College in August 2018

Ages: Pre-school 1-6 years old; 5-18 for higher years

Curriculum: Early Years Foundation Stage for Pre-school, and full International Baccalaureate for higher years programme.

Fees: Pre-school starts from \$8,500 per installment and approximately \$148,000/annum, subject to Education Bureau approval for higher years.