

ISA Awards 2022 Case Study: Innovation in Independent Education



KENSINGTON WADE

MARCH 2023



History of the School

Kensington Wade is a nursery and prep school that was founded in 2017 by Professor Hugo de Burgh, an expert in Anglo-Chinese studies, and the founding Head Joanna Wallace. Supported by prominent educationalists from both Britain and China the school offers a fully bilingual and bicultural immersive environment in which children learn in both English and Chinese.

First and foremost, Kensington Wade is a high-quality British prep school, preparing children for 11+, but what sets the school apart from other prep schools is the fact that half of the curriculum is delivered in Chinese. This means that pupils still experience the broad curriculum expected in an independent school setting but that they also reap the benefit of spending half of their day immersed in a Chinese classroom and the other half in an English classroom.

The vision for Kensington Wade was based on the belief that future generations of global opinion formers and decision makers should have the opportunity to learn Chinese at an early age – to enable them to operate in a world in which Chinese was increasingly influential in culture, business, politics and international affairs.

The background of the pupils at Kensington Wade reflects the international mix of the local community in west London. The majority of families already speak at least two languages at home, but not necessarily Chinese.



Suzanne Haigh
Head



The current Head, Suzanne Haigh, and her team are dedicated and enthusiastic and enjoy sharing their expertise with each other as well as the community around them. The pupils slip seamlessly between their sessions taught in English and Chinese. The school currently shares a site with a local primary school but benefits from the spacious facilities available.

<https://www.kensingtonwade.com>



AIMS

- To provide a first class prep school education with all children leaving fully able to understand, speak, read and write Chinese.
- To equip pupils with the skills needed to succeed in an ever-changing world.
- To provide a curriculum which incorporates the best from the two education systems while following a robust British curriculum.
- To establish a strong focus on STEM, computing and coding as well as an emphasis on cultural awareness.
- To involve the school community in events throughout the year that celebrate both cultures.
- To foster close relationships with pupils' families and support those who don't speak Chinese at home.
- To give as many children as possible the experience of learning the Chinese language and culture.



KEY OBJECTIVES AT SCHOOL LAUNCH

- Using the American model of dual language immersion, develop a similar model for the UK.
- To ensure that the provision across both the English and the Chinese classrooms is of a similarly high standard.
- Ensure all parents are supported and fully understand the benefit of developing a bilingual brain and of learning a language from an early age in an immersive setting.
- To recruit native Chinese teachers who are able to work in the UK and are qualified and confident to teach three year olds.
- To offer a completely immersive approach whereby English and Chinese are used for both the curriculum content and as the medium of teaching.
- To use the Shanghai approach to teaching mathematics.



OUTCOMES

- The school opened in 2017 with one Early Years class of 15 children and now has over 100 pupils.
- Pupils are excited by their learning and extremely happy.
- Pupils are more bi-culturally aware and are tolerant of different religions and beliefs.
- Children consistently show over expected levels of progress in English, mathematics and Chinese.
- Educationalists from around the world including the Chinese Department of Education have visited the school.
- Our Head of Chinese regularly meets local language teachers, visits local senior independent schools' Chinese departments and speaks at a number of events including the Chinese School Convention.
- The school sponsors teachers from abroad who are keen to join the team.
- The school will have their first Year 6 leavers' cohort in July 2024 and these pupils are on track for entry into top senior schools.
- The school won the inaugural ISA 2022 Award for Innovation in Independent Education.



NEXT STEPS

- The school is in the process of creating a community outreach project with state primary schools both in the local borough and beyond to support them in working towards different award levels in Chinese. It plans to provide a full-year video content and lesson plan programme based around the Chinese calendar, including introductory material on the Chinese language, for schools to integrate into their cultural curriculum.
- The school plans to introduce cultural exchanges and partnerships with bilingual schools in China and the United States as well as cultural visits to schools, online programmes and summer camp events.
- The school plans to relocate to new premises in the local area in 2024.

As the famous Chinese proverb says "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" — this is something with which the school would wholeheartedly agree.

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