



Kindergarten (Early Years) Parent Handbook

About

We welcome you to our CIS Kindergarten and the beginning of your child's educational journey. In our Kindergarten division, we believe in fostering a holistic approach to learning where each child's emotional, social, physical, creative and academic development are nurtured by our highly experienced and caring practitioners. Our dedicated teachers and instructional assistants cherish the uniqueness of every learner, tailoring their approach to accommodate your child's needs. Through this individualised support, we enable students to gradually take charge of their learning, cultivating a sense of resilience and independence right from the start.

Kindergarten is organised into grade level communities, Nursery and Pre-Kindergarten, Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten. At the core of our ethos lies the establishment of an inclusive and vibrant learning community where every child feels a profound sense of belonging.

The school day runs from 8.30am to 3.30pm, with half-day (12 noon pick-up) options for our Nursery students. The gates open for drop off at 8:20am and we ask that parents pick students up sharply at dismissal time, 3.30pm.

To limit transitions (which can be stressful for very young children), our Nursery students spend most of their day with their homeroom teacher and instructional assistants. The teachers blend music, role play, expressive arts, physical development and language and communication activities into the daily schedule for the Nursery students to ensure that all areas of development are supported. In Pre-Kindergarten to Senior

Kindergarten our students are supported by their homeroom teachers and instructional assistants. Additionally, specialist teachers enrich the curriculum through dedicated instruction in visual and performing arts, Move to Learn (physical development), Library and Language Acquisition.

We're happy to share that CIS was awarded the Parent's Choice award for Best International Preschool in Singapore, 2024, by The Asian Parent.



Our CIS Language Programmes

At CIS, we are committed to promoting multilingualism.

From Nursery to Senior Kindergarten families may opt for their children to study in the English (language of instruction) programme. From Pre-Kindergarten to Senior Kindergarten students in the English programme are offered French or Chinese Language Acquisition throughout the week.

Beginning in Junior Kindergarten, students' English levels are assessed using tools and indicators from WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) and if deemed necessary, students in the Senior Kindergarten English programme receive English Language Learner (ELL) support. Once students have reached a certain level of proficiency measured using the WIDA tools (determined by our ELL and homeroom teachers) they will exit the ELL programme. Ongoing English language support will continue to be provided by homeroom teachers.

CIS' Chinese-English bilingual programme (CEB) was one of the first to be offered in Singapore by an international school. Our established track record makes us one of the most experienced and trusted international schools in the region to educate students in becoming fluent communicators in both languages. In our bilingual programme (offered from Pre-Kindergarten), students attend classes (with the respective teacher) in English one day, and in Chinese the next, ensuring equal exposure to both languages. In order for students to succeed, they should have a competent level of either English or Chinese to join the programme.

From Junior Kindergarten, students can opt to join our French-English bilingual programme (FEB); again, it is necessary for students to be competent in one of the two languages to join the programme. Both bilingual programmes provide students with experiences to learn equally in both languages. This model is achieved by offering alternate weeks of instruction in French and English. The FEB programme is organised so that students have equal exposure to both languages. A critical component of our bilingual programmes is to ensure that students learn about, experience and appreciate the cultural heritage of both languages.

From Pre-Kindergarten to Senior Kindergarten students in the French-English and Chinese-English bilingual programmes are also offered French or Chinese Language Acquisition (respectively) throughout the week.



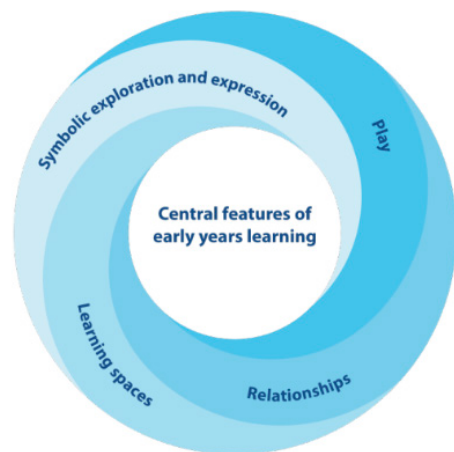
The CIS curriculum

CIS stands out as one of the select international schools in Singapore offering all three International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, from the Primary Years Programme (PYP) to the Diploma Programme. Our students learn through the PYP framework from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 6.

A summary of the goals of the [Early Years in the PYP](#) is as follows:

The PYP transdisciplinary framework offers young students authentic opportunities to focus on key developmental abilities.

- The learning community values the early years as a time in which **play is the primary driver for inquiry**.
- Play involves choice, promotes agency and provides opportunities to inquire into important concepts and personal interests.
- The following features are central to learning in the early years: play, relationships, learning spaces, symbolic exploration and expression.



As a PYP school we view play as crucial to every student's development.

Play is highly adaptive, involves choice, promotes agency and provides rigorous opportunities to inquire into important concepts and personal interests. Through play, children actively construct meaning from their interactions with their physical and social worlds. These meanings, models or ideas are revisited and revised in light of new experiences and further learning. In play, children construct, test, confirm or revise these ideas by themselves or with their peers, constantly adapting their personal models of how the world works. Teachers interact with students while observing, monitoring and documenting their learning. During uninterrupted time for play, teachers initiate a range of intentional learning experiences, offering support and feedback when needed.

The Early Learner - International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2019

Our play-based approach at CIS is intentionally designed to ignite curiosity, foster creativity, and lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Through play, our students learn to make sense of the world and grow in all areas of development: physical, language, social emotional, expressive arts, literacy and mathematics. Our learning spaces are filled with excitement as children engage in hands-on activities, guided by our passionate educators who seamlessly blend child-initiated play with adult-initiated learning opportunities. Whether exploring mathematical concepts or expressing themselves through art and music to enhance literacy skills, every moment in our PYP Early Years programme is a journey of discovery and growth for our students.



PYP units of inquiry

In our Kindergarten (Early Years), students dive into concept-based learning through PYP units of inquiry (UOI). Authentic connections support the exploration of transdisciplinary themes in context across six subject knowledge areas: language; mathematics; science; social studies; arts; physical, social and personal education. Students also have dedicated, stand-alone, literacy and mathematics lessons with homeroom teachers (see below).

From Nursery to Junior Kindergarten we have also adopted the [Development Matters](#) (a non-statutory curriculum guide for Early Years Foundation Stage from the UK) which compliments the PYP. Development Matters supports teachers in promoting holistic development and fostering a positive learning environment. Its focus on individualised learning and clear developmental milestones (birth to five years old) makes it a robust framework for guiding early childhood education. By acknowledging that children develop at different paces and through diverse experiences, the Development Matters framework promotes high-quality kindergarten education with a strong emphasis on communication, recognising the crucial role of the early years in shaping future success.



Outdoor Discovery Centre

Outdoor learning

We are very fortunate at CIS to have a beautiful green, Outdoor Discovery Centre (ODC). Our kindergarten students are located in a spacious building that opens directly onto our ODC. CIS's ODCs were a first in Singapore and were featured in Finland's 100 global education innovations.

Living up to its name as a “discovery centre”, our 2,600 square metre ODC features a bike track, a nature trail, sandpits, a waterfall pond, a mud kitchen, art and music gardens, open lawns, multi-level decks and even a treehouse. All of these spaces have been purposefully designed to support our inquiry and play-based approach stimulating our young learners' imagination and curiosity.

Our ODC provides wonderful opportunities for exploration and hands-on experiences, enhancing each child's cognitive, physical, and social emotional development. Immersed in the natural environment, children engage all their senses as they navigate the terrain and encounter diverse flora and fauna, sand, water and mud.

Learning outdoors is a critical aspect of life at CIS as it encourages children to engage with the world in an experiential manner. For example, students will learn fundamental concepts like volume and measurements by playing in our mud kitchen, enhance their gross-motor skills riding on our bike tracks and learn phonics by spelling out their names with paint in our art garden. Through outdoor learning, we nurture a deeper appreciation of the wonders of nature, laying a strong foundation for the future growth and well-being of our students.

One of our students' favourite areas in the ODC is our Mud Kitchen. The students freely play and explore, creating mud pies, digging, channelling water, cooperating, problem solving and getting wet and muddy!



PYP units of inquiry

Literacy

Our literacy and language programme emphasises creating rich learning environments that encourage exploration, communication, and expression. Through a combination of interactive activities, story-based learning, and scaffolded instruction, children are supported in developing their phonemic awareness, listening, speaking, early reading skills and writing. Our programme emphasises the importance of individualised support and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners, ultimately aiming to cultivate a strong foundation for lifelong literacy success.

Mathematics

Our mathematics programme prioritises hands-on exploration, problem-solving, and critical thinking to build a deep understanding of mathematical concepts. Children are encouraged to develop foundational skills such as numeracy, spatial reasoning, measurement, and pattern recognition through engaging activities and real-world applications. The programme emphasises the importance of play-based learning and inquiry-based approaches to foster curiosity and confidence in mathematics.



PYP units of inquiry

Social studies and science

In our Kindergarten (Early Years) programme, social studies and science are blended into our units of inquiry, aligning with specific standards and benchmarks tailored to each unit. Through our social studies curriculum, our learners embark on exciting explorations rooted in the vibrant Singapore community, allowing for real-world connections to enrich their understanding. Our social studies units focus on families and communities, celebrations and traditions, myself and others, local environment, transportation and travel, food and nutrition, jobs and roles, and environmental awareness.

Through our science curriculum we foster skills such as; observing, measuring, explaining, using scientific vocabulary, questioning, planning investigations, testing hypotheses, evaluating findings, and communicating ideas. Our science units focus on; living things, earth and space, materials and matter, as well as forces and energy, sparking wonder and igniting a lifelong love for scientific inquiry.

Move to learn (Physical Education)

Research shows that movement plays a crucial part in early brain development. The movements involved with crawling, climbing, jumping, balancing, swinging, rotating, twisting and crossing (the midline) prepare children cognitively, socially, emotionally, and of course, physically for the rigours of formal learning. Our Move to Learn programme supports both the gross and fine motor development of our young learners while encouraging them to take risks, persevere and show resilience. The programme develops the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for understanding oneself, building relationships with others, and embracing a balanced, active, and healthy lifestyle.

Waterplay and swimming

Gaining confidence in the water and understanding water safety are essential skills for our children to learn. With a covered, heated, shallow wading pool and an 8 metre pool in our Kindergarten wing, we strive to have our students experience the water on a regular basis. We have trained swimming instructors on our team who differentiate the learning and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all students. As a crucial part of our curriculum, all students are expected to take part in our water exposure experiences.



PYP units of inquiry

Arts, Music and Drama

In Kindergarten, students are exposed to art, drama and music everyday in their classrooms. They also learn to be artists through art and role play provocations in the outdoor discovery centre and shared spaces. We have two well resourced art studios (aka The World of Wonder), where students dive into a land of creativity, process art and art expression supported by our art specialists. During the students' studio time they are invited to express themselves through a variety of mediums. In Senior Kindergarten the students have music lessons once a week with our music specialist.

Throughout the school year, all students in the Kindergarten (Early Years) collaborate to create musical productions and exhibitions (Wonder Wanders) to share with the community.

STEAM

Science, Technology, Environmental Studies, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) form an essential part of our early years education. Our teachers provide dedicated resources and spaces for students to tinker, experiment, explore, create and engage in the foundations of design thinking.

Library

Our Kindergarten (Early Years) library is a warm and welcoming place designed specifically to nurture a lifelong passion for reading and writing. We have a diverse collection of books catering to varied cultural backgrounds, and language abilities. Our teacher librarians actively support classroom instruction and collaborate with teachers to inspire our students, spark their curiosity and develop early reading and research skills.

Digital Literacy

Through age-appropriate activities and guidance, we introduce children to the fundamental concepts of digital literacy, including understanding the basics of coding. We integrate digital literacy into our units of inquiry while maintaining a healthy balance between screen/device time and other learning experiences.



Activities

Co-curricular and Extra-curricular activities

Activities are an integral part of school life and student learning. Opportunities are wide in scope including the arts, languages, games and swimming.

Junior and Senior Kindergarten students have the opportunity to learn to play the violin, during the school day, through our peripatetic programme. Parents may sign up their children for weekly one-on-one lessons with our highly skilled violin teachers who understand how to make learning the violin fun and engaging.

Other activities are also offered to Senior Kindergarten students.



Outdoor excursion

Field trips

Field trips serve as valuable experiences for our students, connecting them with the local community and enhancing their classroom learning. Through hands-on exploration, these off-campus trips deepen their understanding of the real world and foster a sense of independence.



Lunch and Snacks

Lunch is included in the school fees for our Kindergarten students. Meals are provided by Sodexo, our on-site caterers. You may also purchase or send in snacks from home. Students may opt to bring food from home instead of using our school food services. If you opt to send food from home we require that you send healthy foods that your child is able to open, handle, cut up and eat by themselves. All containers should be unbreakable (no glassware) and clearly marked with the student's name. We do not allow sweets, confectionaries, fast food or sugary/fizzy drinks. We also encourage children to be independent (we don't use highchairs) and responsible during snack and lunch by having them feed themselves and clean their area after eating. We ask that you support your child as they learn to self feed, by ensuring adults in your home or child's life (parents, grandparents, helpers, etc.) encourage your child to use utensils and feed themselves.

Food may not be delivered from outside caterers or restaurants.

We ask that parents clearly communicate any food allergies that their child may have and keep our school nurse and homeroom teachers updated if any new allergies arise. Nuts or food containing nuts should not be brought to sign posted 'Nut-free' areas or classes.



Communication and reporting

Home-school communication

We emphasise the importance of parental engagement in your child's educational experience and utilise various forms of communication to ensure continuous collaboration and transparency. These include regular updates through emails, newsletters, and our online platforms, such as Seesaw and Managebac. Your child's teachers share an update every Friday to keep you informed about classroom happenings. The school administration also releases a Week at a Glance (WAG) newsletter every Friday. Our goal is to create a supportive partnership between home and school, enabling effective communication and shared involvement in each child's learning journey.

Assessment and reporting

We tailor the learning journey for each student by employing continuous observation, documentation and assessment practices. This personalised approach allows us to gain a deep understanding of each child's unique needs and next steps, enabling us to provide guidance and support as they progress in their learning and development.

We provide many opportunities to discuss your child's growth and progress. These include:

- A phone call or an email home in the first two weeks of school
- Back-to-school night in August
- Open invitation for parents to make an appointment to meet the teacher throughout the school year
- Parent- Teacher conferences each semester, with student-led conferences in semester 2.
- A personalised student digital online portfolio (Seesaw)
- Learning reports are issued each year



Health

We will phone you if your child gets sick at school, so please ensure your number on the contact sheet and MyCIS is correct and up to date. Please inform your child's teacher if someone other than the parent we called will be collecting your child.

If your child is sick or absent from school, please email your child's teacher and the kindergarten office at kattendance@cis.edu.sg as soon as possible so that we know that your child is safely in your care. Children who are sick **must** be fever free, without medication, for 24 hours before coming back to school. Students will have to visit the school nurse before they can re-enter the classroom. These measures are in place to protect the health and well-being of all our children.

Toileting

Being potty trained is not a requirement for **Nursery children**. However, we ask that you provide CIS with the necessary diapers, diaper wipes and extra sets of clothes. Please check your child's bag each day to remove their soiled clothing, and please remember to replace it on the next school day. Diapers are checked approximately every 2 hours (unless needed sooner) starting from your child's arrival at school. We ask that you help to ensure your child is changed, fed, and ready for school when you both arrive.

Your child's toileting needs are your responsibility while you're at school. If they need a diaper change while you're here, please feel free to change it before you leave.

When the time presents itself, we will gladly help your Nursery child with toilet learning. Consistency is key, so when your child shows signs of readiness we will discuss the strategies you're using at home, so that we can continue them throughout the day (as fitting with our daily routine).

When a child shows signs of toilet readiness, we typically begin by placing them on the toilet with each diaper change. This associates the use of the toilet with urination/bowel movements. We observe and take things from there.

Some children start using the toilet and then regress if put back into diapers or pull-ups, so once your child is staying dry and using the toilet successfully at home, send **lots** of extra clothes and underwear to school. Please support your child's progress by ensuring they wear underpants at home - no more diapers!

Pre-Kindergarten to Senior Kindergarten

Students applying for **Pre-Kindergarten to Senior Kindergarten must be toilet trained** in order to enroll in the programme.



Nap/rest time

Children in Nursery and Pre-Kindergarten have a scheduled nap time each day and sleep on mats. Please ensure your child's special blanket or stuffed animal (if they need it to sleep) is available each day.

Junior Kindergarten students have a quiet/relaxation time in the afternoon so they need to bring bedding to school too.

The bedding will be sent home each Friday so that it can be washed. Please send it back to school on Monday.

Senior Kindergarten students do not nap at school.



Birthday party protocol

Young children love to celebrate their birthdays with their peers at school. However, so that these celebrations do not interfere with teaching time, the classroom teacher will advise a suitable time and date that food can be shared during a break period (not during class time).

Guidelines for children who would like to celebrate their birthday at school:

- Cakes must be single serve, eg cupcakes or similar as they are easy to share and do not need a lot of handling or cutting. Slab cakes are not allowed.
- The cupcakes/treat should be store bought (not homemade)
- Candles with a naked flame are not allowed. Battery operated candles are acceptable.
- Food choices must be respected - allergies, sensitivities and/or religion.
- Loot/goodie bags must not be brought to school.

Although we prefer that birthday party invitations are distributed outside of school, teachers will distribute paper invitations to students on behalf of parents, but only if the entire class is invited.



Uniform and other items needed each day

All Kindergarten students (Nursery to Senior Kindergarten) are expected to wear the CIS school uniform every day. Even on days when the uniform might not be required, we ask that you not send your child to school in their best clothes. We spend a lot of time outdoors and the students may get wet or messy.

Each day, your child will need to have these items:

- lunch and 2 snacks (if you choose not to order school meals)
- water bottle full of water
- two clean uniform sets (shirts and shorts)
- closed comfortable shoes (sports shoes)
- two sets of underwear
- an extra set of outdoor waterproof shoes (eg: crocs/natives - no flip flops)
- CIS hat or cap
- nap/rest items (pillow, blanket, soft toy) (Nursery to Junior Kindergarten only)
- diapers, wipes and diaper cream (Nursery only)

Please send your child to school wearing sunblock and insect repellent everyday (or wearing insect repellent patches).



Who to contact

We recognise that choosing the right school for your child is a significant decision. Our dedicated team of school administrators, counsellors and teachers is available to address any inquiries you may have.

Whether you seek more information or simply wish to discuss your child's needs and their integration into school life, we are here to assist you every step of the way. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity to connect with you.

KINDERGARTEN

Angela Speirs	Principal
Lily Zhang	Vice Principal
Kylie Broomhall	PYP Coordinator (English programme)
Yan Minbin	PYP Coordinator (Chinese-English bilingual programme)



Notes.

Contact us



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