

# Summer Newsletter

June 2020



# ICHK

KINDERGARTEN  
PRIMARY AND  
SECONDARY

## Head of School Message

School year 2019 – 2020. Well, it wasn't exactly the 10-year celebration that we had in mind back in August of last year, but, reflecting on how well we have coped with the many challenges presented to us as a community, I believe we can be proud of the way we have weathered our voyage through troubled waters over the course of not weeks but months. Crisis management in the short term is one thing; sustaining it over months is quite another.



However, along with all the obstacles and occasional disappointments, we can point to two authentically major *positive* developments in our evolution as a school this year. Once the immediate pressures of COVID-19 are behind us - which we recognise might not be for many months to come – both will stand as permanent and ongoing testimony to our growing maturity as a learning community.

Firstly, as reported last week, this year we have graduated a new model student, one equipped not just with an IB Diploma but also a Mastery Transcript.

I cannot overstate how encouraged I am by this achievement. It places us in select and exclusive company: a global family of progressive, pioneering schools and colleges, dedicated to transforming what educational assessment can capture and, let's hope, revolutionizing how universities and employers conceive of the secondary phase.

It's not just that we were able to offer our students an experience that satisfied the MTC's insistence on an all-round, holistic education, but still more that, at a time of already

substantial and prolonged challenge, we were able to gather sufficient human and structural resources to turn good ideas into reality - and in record time. All this while galvanizing some initially rather crestfallen students, disappointed at the cancellation of their exams, into sustained and trailblazing activity.

Just four other schools from a roll call of over three hundred member institutions were able to pull off this trick. It's impossible to give too much credit to Ross Parker, who played a lead organising role, or to the teachers who acted as guides and mentors. But, most importantly, congratulations to all the students who took on and ran with this challenge. We will be posting one or two of the Transcripts on the website in due course and, when we do, I urge you to take a good look: the strengths to which they stand as testament are breathtaking.

Secondly, and with similar determination, throughout the year we developed our plans for a custom-built centre for students with pronounced educational needs, with the intention of adding to the promise of ICHK's offer for children with the widest possible range of learning profiles.

We have long catered for young people who find the contours of mainstream education a challenging match for their own learning styles and developmental journeys. And we employ an extensive team of wonderfully committed and inventive Learning Support Assistants, who apply themselves on a daily basis to the support of those students who need a little extra input if school is truly to come alive for them.

But now, our new +1 Centre is designed to augment and extend this well-established tradition of inclusive education much further, with the addition of a space and a teaching staff dedicated to the support of students with a greater and more exacting level of need. In launching the +1 Centre, we believe that we are delivering on our responsibility to educate children across the widest possible range of capabilities, in line with the commitment of all institutions that consider themselves places of community learning.

Throughout my career in secondary education, I have been struck by the value of such centres as they feature in mainstream school settings. Everyone benefits: the specialist staff bring new and expert voices to conversations about learning and teaching, leading to higher quality discussion and debate among all staff; the children attending the centre take therapeutic benefit from being in a comprehensive, vibrant, caring environment, dedicated to growth and acceptance; while the mainstream students are strengthened by the insight to other ways of experiencing the daily flux of life and by witnessing the fortitude of children who face chronic challenges and by the passion of adults who work alongside them.

The +1 Centre will open in September, and we look forward keenly to this further milestone in our history as a school.

Finally, then, as 2019 – 2020 draws to an end, I would like to close this unprecedented year by passing on my most sincere thanks and appreciation to all the ICHK community. We are truly fortunate as a school to have the full range of components necessary to flourishing as a family of learners – an unbelievably dedicated and can-do teaching and non-teaching staff, a fantastically supportive and enlightened board of Governors, a level-headed and realistic set of parents, and some really amazing students, who fully understand their own responsibilities as



learners - and it brings me great pleasure to be able to reflect on what we have accomplished in our tenth year, in the most unpromising of circumstances.

## Graduating Class 2020

Congratulations to our graduating class of 2020.

Our Year 13 students celebrated the end of their school journey with a special graduation ceremony at school. They are now preparing to take up places at prestigious universities across the world.

We salute the whole cohort for their many contributions to life at ICHK over the past seven years. We commend them especially for the maturity, dedicated approach, and clear focus they have displayed during the challenges of recent months, and the disappointment of their IB exams being cancelled. These skills will be critical to success at university and beyond

Everyone at ICHK joins together to wish them every success in the next chapter of their lives.



## The Year that has Passed

Our last newsletter, which was distributed before the Chinese New Year break, seems to belong to another time. It was just days before Hong Kong found itself one of the first cities in the world to be swept up in the coronavirus crisis and at a time before the world found itself engulfed by Covid-19.



After four months of online learning, we have slowly settled back into school, navigating the delicate point of transition from social distancing to a return to more familiar routines.

We have spoken a lot about the need to put "the learning agenda" in its rightful place, that is behind the simple human agenda of making sure that everyone in our community is well and feels safe, happy and comfortable.

Protecting our community and ensuring that every single member feels supported has been a priority from the start. All student learning has been planned with this in mind, and our hardship and scholarship policy has been designed to bring, so far as we are able, peace of mind and a sense of shared solidarity to our community.

Despite the many challenges of this period, the year has, in other ways, been a milestone for our school.

We reached our 10th anniversary and recorded record numbers. We launched the Kingston Chinese Programme, introduced our new clinics and scholarships, expanded our outdoor learning programme and further consolidated and refined all the innovations that form the bedrock of ICHK. Our new ICT policy was launched after a period of long reflection, which has led to the establishment of healthier habits, as we strive to strike the right balance in the use of digital technology.

A PhD research programme into our Human Technologies programme began, marking a significant point in our development, and following increased international attention from education leaders over the past eighteen months.

Our priority from the start of the year was clear - to make more explicit and compelling the 'epistemic apprenticeship' built into the fabric of our school. This term, coined by Professor of Psychology and Education Guy Claxton, describes the ways in which school provides guidance and role modelling for every aspect of students' performance, encompassing not just academic work but the social, emotional and values-driven dimensions of students' lives.

Our ongoing goal is to create and sustain the emotional, mental and physical environment in which it is desirable and possible for students to want to be - and to build towards being - the best people they can be.

This year has also seen the launch of the Mastery Transcript at ICHK - which is the culmination of an approach that we have been developing and refining for a number of years, through our innovations to timetable, curriculum and pedagogy.

Last week we were delighted to award some of the very first Mastery Transcripts in the world. Year 13 students Eric Chen, Serena Cheung, Oscar Chow, Lore van Eetvelt, Katie Leung, Ivan Choy and Alvin Ng, became our first ever recipients of the new qualification.

These trailblazers have the honour of being amongst the very first global cohort of MT graduates, and the first in Hong Kong.



From August, the journey towards Mastery will begin in Years 10 and 11, when all students will be offered opportunities to become 'journeymen', through engagement with projects, activities, internships, and other learning experiences.

The aim is to value and recognise graduating students for all their attributes, capabilities, passions, achievements, and interests, not just for their academic abilities.

## Reflections from Deputy Head of School Sean McDermott on his first year at ICHK

This is my first year at ICHK, and what a time it's been. My plans to see through three school terms and learn their various routines so that I feel thoroughly prepared for 2020/21 have not materialised as expected.

However far from being disappointed, this has been an opportunity to learn about something far more significant - the incredible character and strength of the community that underpins learning at ICHK, and why it exists to the degree it does here.

What I see, every day and without apology, is a thorough and genuine commitment to supporting positive wellbeing within our students, teachers, families and wider community. For students, this means constant checking in and discussions about how they are feeling and learning, what their needs are and what adjustments or supports need to be put in place.

For teachers, it's about providing whatever is needed to ensure that they are valued and supported, and at their best and ready to serve our students and community to the highest professional standards.

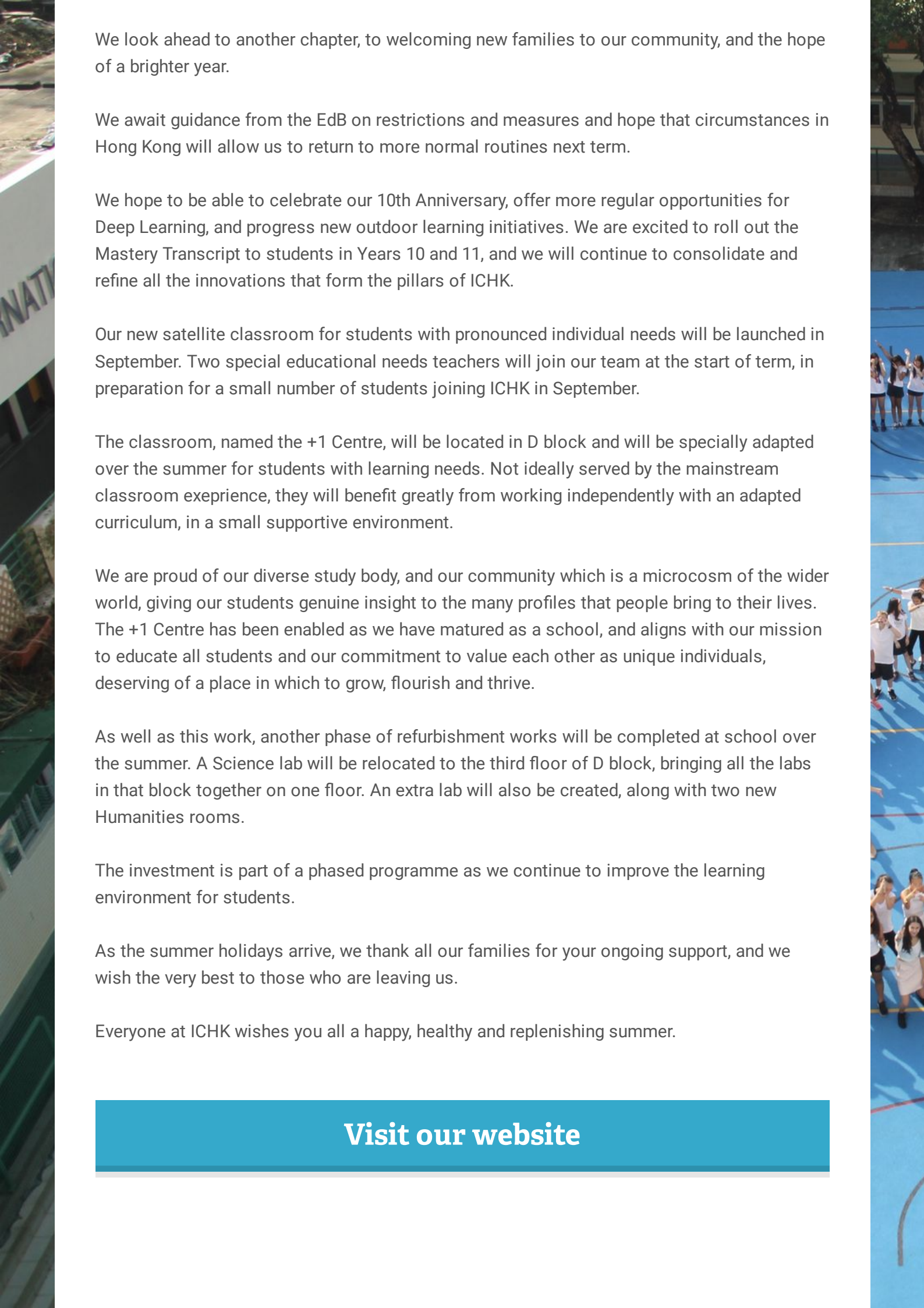
For our families, commitment to wellbeing means clear and thoughtful communication, constantly gathering and acting on feedback and moving to support families through every available means at the school's disposal. Many schools talk about these things, ICHK does them.

Our strength has been tested this year, and there's no question that we've had some tough days. But what I am struck by daily is the sense of optimism and purpose that abounds at ICHK, and the opportunity that we have to grow even further. As we finish this year we are planning for 2020/21, preparing to navigate further uncertainty while remaining true to our values and commitment to learning together.

I for one am excited, and feel enormous gratitude to be able to participate in the culture and community at ICHK. Have a lovely summer, and I can't wait to join you all through whatever comes next.



## A New Year Ahead



We look ahead to another chapter, to welcoming new families to our community, and the hope of a brighter year.

We await guidance from the EdB on restrictions and measures and hope that circumstances in Hong Kong will allow us to return to more normal routines next term.

We hope to be able to celebrate our 10th Anniversary, offer more regular opportunities for Deep Learning, and progress new outdoor learning initiatives. We are excited to roll out the Mastery Transcript to students in Years 10 and 11, and we will continue to consolidate and refine all the innovations that form the pillars of ICHK.

Our new satellite classroom for students with pronounced individual needs will be launched in September. Two special educational needs teachers will join our team at the start of term, in preparation for a small number of students joining ICHK in September.

The classroom, named the +1 Centre, will be located in D block and will be specially adapted over the summer for students with learning needs. Not ideally served by the mainstream classroom experience, they will benefit greatly from working independently with an adapted curriculum, in a small supportive environment.

We are proud of our diverse study body, and our community which is a microcosm of the wider world, giving our students genuine insight to the many profiles that people bring to their lives. The +1 Centre has been enabled as we have matured as a school, and aligns with our mission to educate all students and our commitment to value each other as unique individuals, deserving of a place in which to grow, flourish and thrive.

As well as this work, another phase of refurbishment works will be completed at school over the summer. A Science lab will be relocated to the third floor of D block, bringing all the labs in that block together on one floor. An extra lab will also be created, along with two new Humanities rooms.

The investment is part of a phased programme as we continue to improve the learning environment for students.

As the summer holidays arrive, we thank all our families for your ongoing support, and we wish the very best to those who are leaving us.

Everyone at ICHK wishes you all a happy, healthy and replenishing summer.

**Visit our website**





# ICHK Secondary



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ICHK is a school which is proud to embrace innovation in learning and a unique and stimulating curriculum has been developed for students. Our campus is located in a stunning location, providing unrivalled opportunities for outdoor learning.



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