



Principal's Blog

13 January 2015

Happy New Year to you all. I hope you have a peaceful and prosperous new year. In my home country of Scotland, New Year is a big celebration. We call it Hogmanay and it is a time for family and friends to come together, remember the last year and look forward to the new one. That is why the song by Robert Burns – Auld Lang Syne – is important and is sung around the world. It is a song about friendship and memories, and celebrates both of them.

Our aim for 2015 here in Hong Kong is to continue to share, enjoy and develop the success our NAIS school community. It was wonderful to welcome 24 new children and their parents to the school and I am sure you will all welcome them to our NAIS community. I enjoyed talking to and getting to know them better at our Welcome Breakfast and, after only one week, the children have settled in well and are making good friends.

We have 16 new staff join us too - including five new teachers: Mr Boast, Mr Widger, Miss Bu, Miss Ji and Miss Meng – and several Teaching and Learning Assistants and support staff. Our new teaching staff join us with several years of experience and, most importantly, a passion for teaching each one of our pupils as an individual. We opened another Year 4 class, have additional specialised music lessons and laid the foundation for enhancing our Mandarin programme.

Our goal for our Mandarin programme is that, from day one of this new term, we offer a much-enhanced programme based on a common curriculum across our six China schools. The first challenge was to ensure that we had the best teachers in place and to offer intensive training (we were fortunate to have our Head of Chinese from our school in Beijing to support the training here in Hong Kong). We made a significant investment in the *Mandarin Matrix* language programme, which offers reading and online resources that support learning in a way that is similar to how we teach other subjects. The online aspect of *Mandarin Matrix*, with pupil-specific log-ins, allows our children to extend their knowledge outside the classroom as well. You can learn more about our language programmes by going to our website and looking in the Learning -> Languages section.

You should also have received by email details of our residential trips for our pupils in Years 3 and above. These take place in June and this year our Year 3 and 4 pupils will be heading to Hong Kong's outlying islands, while our Years 5 – 7 will be heading to Mainland China. We will also be sending sports teams to the COBIS Primary school Games in Athens in May. There will be more information on all these exciting opportunities soon.

Yesterday, we finally marked the opening of our Panda Playground in the best possible way: by inviting our Year 1s to try it out. It was lovely to see them all enjoying the space and we hope our other pupils will enjoy it just as much over the next few days (wet weather, notwithstanding).

Finally, we began our preparations for the Chinese New Year on Monday with a whole-school Assembly. The children have started practising a Mandarin New Year song as part of the school performances coming up before the Chinese New Year holiday. We certainly look forward to celebrating with you and the children at that time.