

## IMS ELEMENTARY YEARS PROGRAMME CHINESE CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

### Introduction

The Elementary Programme at IMS changes with the maturing child, and is designed to fit your child's development and learning as s/he moves from the Montessori Casa dei Bambini Programme to the Montessori Elementary Programme. One of the key differences between Montessori Elementary and Casa dei Bambini is that the Elementary aged child now shows the preference to work in groups, which is one of the new attributes of the Reasoning Mind.

At IMS, the Chinese language Programme offers:

- The opportunity to have a natural dual-language environment in the classroom each day, in which the children participate in one three-hour Montessori work cycle with both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking teachers in the classroom, and a similar, shorter work cycle on most days. During the cycle time in the classroom, both the English-speaking and the Chinese-speaking teachers provide small-group lessons and overall guidance for work in the class. Each child is encouraged to do the extension of the Montessori work in both English and Chinese.
- In addition, each child participates in a tailored Chinese lesson each day for forty-five minutes. These lessons are given in small groups targeted at the Chinese language level and ability of each child. The curriculum uses specific textbooks to allow tracking of progress, along with many multi-sensory approaches to extend the student's language acquisition.

Please note, the teacher directing the child's small group Chinese lessons may not be the child's classroom Chinese-speaking teacher.

### ELEMENTARY CHINESE LEARNER PROFILE

The Chinese curriculum in the IMS Elementary Years Programme is specifically designed to cater to children across a broad spectrum of abilities, including for those children who join us in Elementary from other schools.

As part of the process of transition into Elementary, our Elementary Chinese teachers would meet with the Casa dei Bambini Chinese teachers to ascertain their Chinese level in a variety of areas. In consultation with the child's Casa dei Bambini Chinese teacher, a recommendation is made for the best fit for each child in our Elementary Chinese Programme to ensure that the child maintains confidence and feels successful in the new environment. Once a child begins in the Elementary, ongoing monitoring at school continues to ensure that the Programme Stream continues to be most suited to supporting each child's ability to solidify knowledge and form a solid foundation for continued Chinese language learning and development.

Retaining and writing characters from memory is a new and critically important part of learning the Chinese language in Elementary, and IMS has developed an Intermediate / Transitional Chinese Programme option in order to better meet the needs of the complete continuum of our children's Chinese language abilities:

- **Stream 1 Chinese Programme:** Generally, we find that students who are primarily native or "near-native" Chinese speakers, most of whom have been through the full 3-year Casa dei Bambini Programme at IMS, are comfortable in this stream. Children will require assistance at home by either a Chinese-speaking parent or caregiver, or a Chinese tutor in order to maintain the level of Chinese in this stream.
- **Intermediate I Transitional Chinese Language Programme:** students whose ability to communicate in Chinese is strong, and who have native or "near-native" Chinese speaking ability, either through home exposure or three or more years in the dual-language environment at IMS; however, they are not yet confident in learning and writing characters. This programme allows IMS to cater for children who are likely to find the Stream 1 programme too challenging in the first year of Elementary, but the Stream 2 programme too easy. This Programme allows children the opportunity of either moving into the Stream 1 Chinese Programme after one year, or to be placed in a Grade 3 Stream 2 Programme group. Children will require assistance at home by either a Chinese-speaking parent or caregiver, or a Chinese tutor in order to maintain the level of Chinese in this stream.
- **Stream 2 Chinese Programme:** Children who are non-native Chinese speakers, who have no or limited Chinese at home, and/or who are new to IMS find this approach to language learning the most enjoyable and successful. Children are placed in an appropriate group which is designed for children learning Chinese as a Stream 2 (CSL). As the needs and abilities of these children vary widely, so does the Programme. Children in this stream may be students with less than three years in the Casa dei Bambini or without any Casa dei Bambini background. Lesson groups therefore range from beginner (see comment on "New" students below) to groups meeting the needs of children with reasonably strong Chinese abilities.
- **New (Beginner):** Children who are new to IMS either in the last year of Casa dei Bambini or who join from outside will join special small lesson groups designed for the beginner. These students are introduced to nomenclature cards similar to those introduced in the Casa dei Bambini, and use other materials created by IMS for at least one term, at which point the lesson group begins the Stream 2 Chinese Programme approach when appropriate.

In both streams the children are learning all aspects of the Chinese language: speaking, listening, reading and writing (using the complex/traditional characters introduced in the Casa dei Bambini). Approaches differ with regard to the relatively greater emphasis placed on communicative skills for Stream 2 students. This approach allows the native and near-native speakers to broaden their vocabulary and compositional skills to complement their speaking ability, and provides children in the Stream 2 Chinese Programme with extensive practise in speaking and listening, giving them the confidence to use the Chinese language well, whilst developing their reading and writing skills at the same time.

### STREAM 1 CHINESE PROGRAMME PATH

This stream uses a series of textbooks, "活學中國語文" ("Chinese Language"), which has been designed for local schools in Hong Kong. Most children join the stream at the "local" Elementary 1 (age 6) Level, and follow the sequence of textbooks year by year.

**January Transition:** Children who transition into the IMS Elementary Programme in January are grouped together, and use the "高效識字法"("Integrated Literacy") and "美洲華語"MeiZhou Chinese" Textbooks, which has been designed for use in local schools. These children will then join a **Stream 1 Grade 1** lesson group as it forms, the following September.

**Daily Homework:** After the daily lesson, each child will have about 20-30 minutes of Chinese homework each day. Homework is designed to be suitable for the group, and possible for each child to achieve.

In group lessons, each child is responsible for writing down the lesson and taking responsibility for the homework, which should be completed every evening in preparation for the next day's lesson.

If a child is struggling, parents are encouraged to work with the Chinese teacher to help us try to determine the reason why, and for us to be able to work with the child.

**Year One Typical Homework Items:**

1. Reading aloud the text (朗讀課文)
2. Practising the writing of characters (寫字練習)
3. Verbal Words Compounding (口語組詞)
4. Forming Sentence (造句)
5. Pin Yin (拼音) (Term II)
6. Dictation (聽寫)
7. Dairy (日記) (Term II)
8. Composition (作文) (Term II)

**Process and Progress:** Students are expected to complete the appropriate level local textbook series for their age each year (Elementary 1 - Age 6). Upon graduation, students are expected to enter and stay in the highest level offered in any international secondary school in Hong Kong.

**NOTE:** Stream 1 Chinese Programme students without Chinese at home should begin with some Chinese tutoring service per week. A child's motivation to do his/her own work outside of school is a key factor determining the level of success the student will have in Stream 1 Chinese Programme, and whether this remains the right Stream over time as the expectations of the work increase.

INTERMEDIATE/ TRANSITIONAL CHINESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMME PATH  
- YEAR 1 ONLY

Some children who make transition into the IMS Montessori Elementary Programme need more time to determine the best stream for the daily small group Chinese language lesson. These students are grouped together, and use the "高效識字法"("Integrated Literacy") and "美洲華語"MeiZhou Chinese" Textbooks, which have been designed for use in local schools. This is a year-long programme designed to prepare children for more advanced Chinese language learning at IMS.

Children are monitored closely in the first few months of the term, and significant levels of parental support are required. Please note that this is an intermediate / transitional Chinese language programme, and therefore, some programme changes may be made to better suit the children.

**Daily Homework:** After the daily lesson, each child will have about 20-30 minutes of Chinese homework each day. Homework is designed to be suitable for the group, and possible for each child to achieve.

In Chinese language group lessons, each child is responsible for writing down and taking responsibility for their homework, which should be completed every evening in preparation for the next day's lesson.

If a child is struggling, parents are encouraged to work with the Chinese teacher to help us try to determine the reason why, and for us to be able to work with the child.

**Year One Typical Homework Items:**

1. Reading aloud the text (朗讀課文)
2. Practising the writing of characters (寫字練習)
3. Forming Sentence (造句) (Term II)
4. Verbal Words Compounding (口語組詞)
5. Pin Yin (拼音)
6. Dictation (聽寫)
7. Simple Composition (作文) (Term II)

**Process and Progress:** Students are expected to complete one year in this programme, and then move into either Grade 1 of the Stream 1 Chinese Programme series "活學中國語文" ("Chinese Language") or move into Grade 3 of Stream 2 Chinese Programme series ("Chinese Made Easy for Kids", "MeiZhou Chinese").

**NOTE:** the key factor for comfort and successful master of character writing is practice. Listening, writing, and speaking outside of school is very important. Intermediate / Transitional Chinese Language Programme students without Chinese at home should begin with some Chinese tutoring service per week. A child's motivation to do his/her own work outside of school is a key factor determining the level of success the student will have in the Stream 1 Chinese Programme, and whether this remains the right Stream over time as the expectations of the work increase.

## STREAM 2 CHINESE PROGRAMME PATH

The child will be placed in an appropriate group with other students who are at a similar level on the language learning continuum:

**Stream 2 Chinese Programme students** with 1-2 years of Casa dei Bambini background at IMS will start to learn Chinese Made Easy - For Kids, Book 1 at the age of 6 and “美洲華語 Meizhou Chinese” textbooks.

**Daily Homework:** After the daily lesson, each child will have about 20 - 30 minutes of Chinese homework each day. Homework is designed to be suitable for the group, and possible for each child to achieve.

In Chinese language group lessons, each child is responsible for writing down and taking responsibility for their homework, which should be completed every evening in preparation for the next day's lesson.

If a child is struggling, parents are encouraged to work with the Chinese teacher to help us try to determine the reason why, and for us to be able to work with the child.

#### **Year One Typical Homework Items:**

Homework will take many forms for young and new language learners to make learning more interesting. The completion of one Textbook & Workbook per school year is the target expectation, and can only be accomplished by routine work outside of school.

**Process and Progress:** Students generally move into the "Chinese Made Easy" - Secondary School Book 2 (which is equivalent to a High School/IGCSE level) by the age of 10 if they begin Stream 2 Book 1 in their first term in the IMS Montessori Lower Elementary Programme.

Students who complete the Stream 2 Chinese Programme are expected to enter and stay in a top group (Chinese as Stream 2) in any international secondary school in Hong Kong.

### BEGINNER CHINESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMME PATH

**Beginner** students with no background in Chinese are introduced to Chinese in a different way, and will begin learning with textbooks in formal lessons only when this is deemed appropriate. It is possible that a child will be taught verbal language in the classroom setting, and not have a breakout lesson in a Chinese group for some time, if this is deemed the best approach for the child.

#### **The beginner will focus on learning:**

1. Stroke order (筆劃練習)
2. Basic radicals (基本部首)

3. Different topics including: Numbers, family, nature, colour, animals, food, action, and opposite words. (不同的論題, 包括: 數字、家庭、自然、顏色、動物、食物、動詞和反義詞)
4. Vocabulary using classified cards (similar to those in the Casa dei Bambini) (生詞 – 教材: 分類卡和課本)
5. Reading basic storybooks to build understanding of language structure (我自己會讀 – 紅色系列開始和認識句子結構)

The new beginner group will begin the Stream 2 Grade 1 Chinese Programme path (see above) at the pace dictated by the progress of the new language learners in the group.

**Daily Homework:** Approximately 20 minutes each evening as assigned by the teacher, and as appropriate for your child's learning.

### A NOTE ABOUT PINYIN

We do NOT introduce Pinyin in Casa dei Bambini as it is not developmentally appropriate and will confuse the child as they are working to master phonetics. We generally introduce when English reading is strong.

### SUPPORT AT HOME

IMS groups children according to their ability, and needs the strong support of parents to ensure that the child stays with the group and is provided additional language support at home if required. Opportunities for speaking and expanding vocabulary outside of school are critical for a child to gain fluency. As a child matures and enters the reading/writing stage, as in any language, the gap between a native speaker and a non-native speaker widens further each year without consistent reading and writing as well as appropriate home support.

In both streams, homework and reading assignments are given daily, and we ask parents to support your child's efforts at home to complete and return these assignments in order for each child to keep up with the others in the group.

Parents can help their child feel more successful:

- Ensure you know if your child is missing their homework. Routine lack of completion will hold back the child from being as successful as s/he could be, it will reduce motivation due to lack of success and may also impact the progress of the group. A very structured framework for routine (daily) homework and reading will help the child. Please work with the small group lesson teacher and the Class teacher if this becomes an issue, so that we can work with you to determine the best way forward.

- Provide as much natural language support in the home as possible. Children need to gain an understanding of relevance in order to provide the motivation to improve their language skills. We encourage you to have your children participate in other Chinese-language based activities for natural language acquisition, including such things as listening to stories, watching Chinese-language video, spending concentrated time in Chinese speaking areas, and having other language acquisition opportunities provided.
- Students in a Stream 1 group without Chinese at home should expect that extra tuition or support outside school will be necessary to keep them learning in line with the group. Whilst many children who have been with IMS from the age of 2-3 without a native Chinese language environment at home can do very well in the Stream 1 Chinese Programme, some will struggle, especially in later years regardless of tutoring level, if the child is not highly motivated and supported at home with a structured time for routine, daily homework and reading.

Please be aware: when your child misses a class, it affects the group. Please ensure you have a proper understanding of any missed homework requirements.

**Helpful Websites** to introduce / learn stokes and stroke-order:

- <http://stroke-order.learningweb.moe.edu.tw/home.do>