

# School Newsletter

September 2016



What a smooth start to the new school year with previous students delighted to be back and new students settling in very well. We have a busy year ahead with lots of exciting events planned and new opportunities for parents and siblings to get involved at school. This year looks set to be our best year ever!

## School Director's message

Dear parents and children,

We are delighted that the students have adjusted so quickly to their new classes, teachers, and timetables. Encouraging children to adapt to different situations whilst at preschool helps develop confidence and social skills as they foster new friendships and learn to work in initially unfamiliar settings.

Our young Pre-Nursery students are already proudly pointing out their own cubbies when they arrive at school each day and a few can even identify their nametag during circle time registration. They really are taking their first steps as independent learners. K1 children are making good friends and widening their vocabularies with pre-writing and counting activities and alphabet songs. K2 students are making firm attempts at writing both in Chinese and English. Higher up the school in K3 (Year 1) we are seeing wonderful efforts being made during the weekly mental maths, spelling, dictation, and reading comprehension tests. Well done, everyone!

There's lots of serious learning going on at school and we always ensure it's delivered in fun and stimulating ways. Balance is the key at Mills, with our timetables and activities allowing abundant time for free exploration and imaginative play, whilst also allowing adequate time for the development of more academic skills. Current themes of study will be completed by mid-October and then teachers will do individual topic-based assessments with each child. These assessments help determine if the children have understood the information and if they are able to reuse the knowledge they have gained. Assessments are always done in relaxing settings at school with students enjoying the fun tasks set.

We continue to encourage K1 – K3 students to exercise their minds and reinforce their learning outside school hours by completing the homework set by teachers. This extra practice, done on a regular basis, proved highly beneficial for our students last year and we hope to see the same good results during 2016-17. Encouragement from parents is an important part of this programme and we appreciate your support.



The theme of our first parents' assembly was *Getting Ready for School* and K1, K2, and K3 students enjoyed demonstrating through role play scenarios just how independent they can be. It's reassuring to see the children so keen to do things for themselves as this promotes important practical life skills. Please urge your child to do as much as possible for themselves at all times.



The next parents' assembly is on **Monday, 3 October** and the theme is *Look What We're Learning ...* with each class presenting something relating to their topic of study. We look forward to having you join us.



The year ahead will be fun-filled with exciting events, school excursions, festive workshops, family fun days and parties, and lots more! During September we transformed our Star Room into an outdoor picnic scene for the Mid-Autumn festivities and the children enjoyed seeing their teachers reenact the story of the Moon Fairy *Chang E* and her rabbit *Yu Tu*. Educational research is unanimous in its findings that the more pleasurable and imaginative a learning activity is, the better our children understand and retain the knowledge.

With the first signs of autumn upon us, it's time to decorate our pumpkins and hunt for imaginary black cats, ready for our friendly Halloween celebrations coming up in October. A letter about this event will be sent to you soon. On the last day of October we will also be celebrating Diwali with one of our parents visiting school to explain the festival to the children and create beautiful artworks with them. We love having parents and family members join in at school, so do let me know if you are interested in getting involved in any way during our special events throughout the year.



Look out for our first **Sibling Day** on **Tuesday, 4 October** when Mills students' younger siblings are invited to come to school for a fun-filled event that includes singing, storytelling, movement, and art activities delivered in English and Mandarin. This will be a wonderful way for younger siblings to experience a bit of 'real school' and get a chance to savour a little of what their big brothers and sisters do each day.



Check out our **Autumn Workshops** at Mills during the mid-term break. We have lots of exciting themed storytelling, cooking, and art activities on offer for students aged 2.5 – 6 years between **24 – 28 October**. Pick up a booklet at school or check our Mills website for more details.

We're committed to supporting your children's learning and this year we've extended our popular Kids' Gallery and Star English co-curricular programme at Mills by offering afternoon classes for 2-3 year olds, as well as 3-6 year olds. If you would like to arrange a meeting with me so that I can explain the content of the courses, don't hesitate to email, or just stop and have a chat some morning or afternoon when you are at school. I'm happy to advise which courses would be best for your child.



Many of our K2 and K3 students are currently preparing for primary school interviews, and we were delighted to have educational experts Ruth Benny and Sarah Maria Bowler from Top Schools visit Mills in September to give tips and advice to our parents on applying to ESF and other primary schools. We have built up strong connections with many international and local primary schools in Hong Kong, and had two very busy days at *The Standard* Kindergarten Fair and the *SCMP* International Schools Festival recently. Please keep us updated on your choice of primary schools and application and interview progress – let's work together to ensure your child is successful in securing a primary school place of your choice.



Kind regards,  
Ms Deirdre

## Playgroup

Dear Playgroup Junior and Playgroup parents,

This month we have focused on the theme *All About Me* and the children have loved learning to identify the parts of their body, their emotions, the five senses, and family members. They also enjoyed celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival and some of our Playgroup students joined the rest of school during the lantern parade.

The children have been having fun exploring lots of different techniques and media in the art studio, and have created lovely artworks related to the current theme. During our music and movement activities, they have focused on practising essential gross motor skills through fun dances and games. It has been wonderful to watch the children start to understand instructions and cooperate during the lessons. Well done, everyone!

Warm wishes,  
Miss Alana



## Pre-Nursery (PN)

Dear Pre-Nursery parents and children,

What a wonderful first month of preschool it has been! The children are settling well into the daily routines at school and making new friends. They are always excited to participate in circle time activities and it is lovely to see more smiles every day at school. Many of the children can already join in with rhymes using words.

During September, the children have been exploring the theme *Amazing Me* and have learnt to name their body parts and facial features by matching them correctly on a large body puzzle. They've also had fun discovering wonderful things their bodies are capable of doing.

The children were very excited about the topic *My Family* and they brought in their own family photos to share with their classmates during circle time. Each child had a chance to name and count their family members in front of the class. They also created beautiful photo frames during art class for their lovely family photos.

We are currently exploring the topic *Taking Care of Myself*. The children have been learning to wash their hands properly, and take off and put on their own shoes. They have also been practising self-help skills by dressing, grooming, and feeding the baby dolls. We are proud to see that they are achieving their first steps as independent learners. They now clean up after eating their snack by putting the dishes away and pushing in their chairs. Many of them are able to line up and hold hands with friends when we transition to different activity rooms. They are also learning to socialise with each other by sharing toys, as well as saying *please* and *thank you*. These are all great accomplishments.

We would like to thank you for your support during the first month and we look forward to a wonderful school year with your children.

Regards,  
Miss Sylvia, Miss Emma, and Miss Michelle



Dear KI parents and children,

The KI students have had a fantastic start to the new academic year. They have been settling well in class, socialising with new friends, and enjoying a variety of learning activities.

The children have been exploring the theme *Animal Magic* and have learnt about different animals on the farm. Through table-top activities, storytelling, and group discussion, they have broadened their knowledge of the importance of farm animals and how they provide us with useful foods and materials – they can now talk about cows giving us milk, sheep giving us wool, and chicken giving us eggs. They had a lot of fun during our ‘milking the cow’ activity. This was a very sensory experience for them as they got to experience squeezing the cow’s udder (plastic glove) and feeling the milk (diluted white paint) squirt through the small holes in the teats. There was lots of surprise and laughter in class.

Our KI artists have also created some amazing topic-based artworks and these are displayed around the school. We all love seeing their masterpieces on show. During phonics activities, the children are introduced to a letter of the alphabet and initial sound each week through storytelling and singing. Their phonetic understanding is also reinforced in art class through craft-based tasksheets that focus on the letter and sound of the week, for their *My Alphabet Book*. Most of the children can recognise and name the letters and numbers that we are learning.

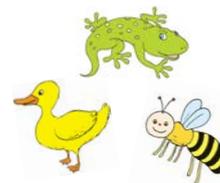
We’ve also explored lots of different activities, such as paper tearing, modelling and manipulating playdough, sorting beans, and threading that help the children strengthen their hand muscles and develop good hand-eye coordination. These activities are extremely important as they set the foundation for pre-writing practice and skills. We look forward to supporting every child so that they develop the ability to write recognisable letters and numbers during KI.

We’re lucky that this year KI classes get an opportunity to meet and socialise together at least three times per day. Circle time and show and tell are proving the most popular group activities so far. Many of the children are enthusiastic to step up during circle time and describe today’s weather for their friends, name the day of the week, answer questions, tell us what’s happened at home, or what they have done recently. The children are excited and willing to participate, and this is helping to develop their confidence, social skills, and understanding of the world.

The children have also started their specialist music lessons with Mr Eric each Thursday. The way they sing and dance has shown how much they love music! They never fail to impress, and some of them are able to quickly memorise song lyrics and even spontaneously initiate singing with friends.

Keep up the great work and keep shining bright!

Best wishes,  
Miss Jean, Miss Michelle, and Miss Alana



## K2

Dear K2 parents and children,

K2 has had a wonderful start to the academic year. The children have adapted to the new schedule and routines with ease.

We have been busy with the first theme *Tell Me a Story* and have studied two stories so far: *Elmer* by David McKee and *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson. The children will also be exploring *Goldilocks and The Three Bears* in October. The first week of this theme involved identifying the main features of a storybook. The children are now able to identify the title, author, and illustrator by looking at the cover of a book, and they have also learned new songs about the stories we have read.

Technology has been incorporated into our lessons by using interactive presentations and learning lyrics from songs. The children are intrigued by this and it is a positive hands-on way of learning.

The children have been doing a wonderful job completing their homework on time. We have noticed a big improvement with their writing skills and see that the objectives are being met. Thank you for supporting your children with their homework and getting them into a healthy routine at home.

They have also been busy with the Jolly Phonics programme and have learned the first set of sounds *s - a - t - i - p - n*, by firstly saying the name of the letter, and then sounding it out. Once they know the sound, they are asked to make a word that starts with the sound. We mainly focus on consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words to start with and later proceed to longer words. They then practise writing the letters in their *My Phonics Book*. This will give them a thorough knowledge of each sound.

The children have also started their weekly specialist music lessons with Mr Eric and will soon receive their Sky and Sun House ukuleles and begin learning how to play their instrument.

Thank you once again for all your support during the first month. Please feel free to contact us or leave a note in the Communication Book if you have any concerns or questions.

Kind regards,  
Miss Franziska and Miss Jasmine



## K3

Dear K3 parents and children,

We have had a good start to the year, with the children settling in well and focusing hard on their work.

In English, they have been learning to spell a weekly list of common words. They have been practising letter formation in lower and upper case, and whilst working in their phonics books are also learning to recognise and sound out various letter sounds and long and short vowel sounds. I really appreciate parents spending the time to help their children with reading every day, be it with their library books during the week or their Oxford Reading Tree books over the weekend. It is also important that the children



practise reading the high frequency words each day at home, and we revise these each week in class also. Each Friday, I test the students on their weekly spelling words, dictation sentence, and mental maths. Our Friday timetable also includes an aural comprehension activity which helps develop good listening, comprehension, focus, and recall.



In Maths, the children have been practising writing the number names from one to ten. As the year progresses we will go further. The class is starting to count in twos and are getting the hang of it. I appreciate the practice done during homework time, as I can see an improvement in many of the children. They have also been working in their *My Numeracy Book*, and have completed tasks involving counting, matching, pairing, and sorting, as well as correct number formation.



In Art and Design, students have created a variety of artworks based on anatomy and are currently making a creative and colourful life-size skeleton which will be displayed in class. For the Mid-Autumn Festival they made fabric lanterns that were displayed during the school parade.



In Science, the children have been growing their own beans in class and have written a diary about their experiment. They are always excited to run into the classroom and check how much their plant has changed from the previous day. As part of the theme *Amazing Anatomy*, we have been getting to know and name different human body parts. We are now focusing on the form and function of the skeleton. The students have enjoyed watching educational videos explaining how the body works, and they are always eager to ask questions and gain further knowledge. I gradually introduce different terminology to them and continue to ask them questions and check on their understanding.



I appreciate the encouragement and support the children are getting from home and can see a noticeable difference because of this. Thank you!



Kind regards  
Miss Tracy

## Mandarin Activities

### **Playgroup Junior and Playgroup**

Playgroup children enjoyed holding the prop hand whilst singing the song *Shoulder Touches Shoulder* and also during movement time. They really enjoyed it. Look how happy they are!



Sze Laoshi (Miss Yan)

### **Pre-Nursery**

For PN children, our current theme is *All About Me*. Through playing different games, the children have learnt to name different body parts such as eyes, mouth, and ears, and have learnt vocabulary such as *matching* and *mask*. Through the matching game, they have reinforced their knowledge of different body parts.



Sze Laoshi (Miss Yan)

## K1

The current theme for K1 children is *Farm Animals*. Through storytelling and games they have learnt the names of some common farm animals, such as *sheep*, *cow*, and *chicken*. Various interactive activities have revised and reinforced the names of different farm animals and also introduced animal sounds through sentences such as *baa baa sheep*, *moo moo cow*, *cheep cheep chicken*.

Sze Laoshi (Miss Cici)



## K2

The K2 year is an important stage in kindergarten life. Our theme has been *New Classmates*. The children learnt to say their Chinese name and also their friends' Chinese names. They also learnt to say hello to teachers and friends, and introduce themselves and their age in sentences.

Through games and art activities, the children learnt to hold a pencil correctly and are now writing Chinese characters. We expect them to build confidence in learning and create a good study habit through writing exercises. Look how focused they are!

The children learnt about the Mid-Autumn Festival through the story *The Legend of Chang'e*, the nursery rhyme *Play Lanterns*, and the song *Lantern*. We had so much fun!

Fan Laoshi (Miss Selina)



## K3

In K3, our recent theme was *Mid-Autumn Festival*. The children learnt about the festival and how to name festive foods. Through art activities, they explored the view on the night of the festival and wrote the characters for *Mid-Autumn festival* and *full moon*. Well done! Through playing activities related to celebrating the festival, the children also learnt vocabulary such as *eat moon cakes*, *play with lanterns*, *look at the moon*.

Sze Laoshi (Miss Yan)

