

RGS VIETNAM
ADMISSIONS HANDBOOK
PYP A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
VIETNAM



Our Vision

Reigate Grammar School Vietnam aspires to nurture, empower and connect students with their local and global communities, to become international citizens who are active, compassionate and life-long learners.

- Nurture
- Empower
- Connect

Our Mission

Reigate Grammar School Vietnam empowers and inspires students to become active, lifelong learners by providing a challenging, globally relevant curriculum that meets the needs of individual learners.

Our holistic and balanced approach nurtures each student's potential as well as their inquiring minds. We foster international-mindedness by connecting students to their local and global communities and towards an awareness of sustainable action.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust



❖ What is the International Baccalaureate Organization?

- It is a non-profit educational and non-governmental (NGO) organization of UNESCO. The IB's alliance with UNESCO encourages the integration of its educational goals into the IB curriculum
- It was established in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland
- It is governed by a 16-member council and is funded by fees from IB World Schools
- The IBO offers three programs of international education for students aged 3-19 years old:
 - *The Diploma Program at the high school level (grades 9-12)*
 - *The Middle Years Program (MYP) (students 11-16 years old)*
 - *The Primary Years Program (PYP) (for students 3-12 years old)*
- There are over 651,000 IB students and 2,390 authorized IB schools in 129 countries

❖ What's the story behind the IBO?



Marie Therese Maurette created the framework for what would eventually become the IB Diploma Programme in 1948, when she wrote *Is There a Way of Teaching for Peace?*, a handbook for UNESCO. In the mid-1960's, a group of teachers from the International School of Geneva (Ecolint) created the International Schools Examinations Syndicate (ISES), which would later become the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). The IB headquarters were officially established in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968, for the development and maintenance of the Diploma Programme, which provided an internationally acceptable university admissions qualifications for young people whose parents worked as diplomats or with international and multi national companies.

❖ What is an IB PYP School?

Regardless of location, size, or make-up, an IB PYP school strives to develop an internationally minded person.

The mission of the IBO:

- To develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people
- To create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect
- To work with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment
- To encourage students worldwide to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who
- understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right



❖ What does that mean at RGS Vietnam?



It means our students are taught WHY they should know something and how it connects to other subjects and the world around them. It means high quality teaching and learning - challenging instruction and knowledge about your locality and the world. It also means great opportunities to study abroad for college/university, as well as opportunities to make friends with other students at IB schools around the world.

❖ How does the IB PYP teach students to be internationally minded?

Through teaching and modeling the learner profile attributes. Regardless of the IB school your child may visit, these characteristics remain foundational to the IB PYP learning experience.

❖ But, really, what does it mean to be internationally minded and why is it important?

It is a thoughtful, critical perspective that applies to who we are and what we do. It includes how we communicate, our political awareness, cultural understanding, celebrating diversity, global awareness of global issues, and a reflection on how knowledge is constructed and applied. At RGS Vietnam, we focus on moving students toward becoming people who reflect the characteristics of the learner profile.

❖ Who is an internationally minded person?

According to the IB PYP, an internationally minded person is someone who demonstrates the attributes of the learner profile.



❖ What is the learner profile?

These are qualities determined to be most important in creating positive and productive citizens of the world. But, what does profile mean?

HINT: Think Facebook. A profile is the description of a person's qualities, values, and characteristics.

❖ What are these “Learner Profile” qualities?

- Inquirers - I am curious and know how to discover answers to many of my questions. I love to learn!
- Thinkers - I use my thinking skills to make good choices and solve problems.
- Communicators - I understand and share ideas in more than one language.
- Courageous - I try new things, love to explore, and confidently share my experiences.
- Knowledgeable - I explore big ideas that are important. I know and can do a lot of important things.
- Principled - I am fair and honest. I can make good decisions about what is right and wrong for me.
- Caring - I am concerned about other people's needs and feelings. I believe it is important to help others.
- Open-minded - I am comfortable with differences. I welcome and respect other people's points of view and ways of doing things.
- Balanced - To be healthy, it is important for me to balance the needs of my mind body, emotions and spirituality.
- Reflective - I think about and discuss my learning, skills, and work.



❖ What are the PYP attitudes?

The attitudes are the daily expressions of the learner profile attributes used by teachers in teaching and by students in their learning.

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

Winston Churchill

- Appreciation - seeing and being thankful for the wonder and beauty of our world
- Commitment - being responsible for my learning, showing self-discipline, and perseverance and sticking with a difficult task until it is completed
- Confidence - knowing I can do it! Having courage to take risks, using what I have learned, and making good choices
- Cooperation - working with others and being willing to lead or follow as needed
- Creativity - using my imagination while thinking and doing things
- Empathy - being able to put myself in someone else's place in order to understand her or him
- Enthusiasm - being excited about learning and life
- Independence - thinking and acting on my own
- Integrity - being fair and honest
- Respect - showing that I respect others, our world, and myself
- Tolerance - understanding, appreciating, and celebrating differences in each other

An attitude is an outward expression of an inner feeling. Some people try to mask their attitude but the cover doesn't last long. Our attitude always finds a way to leak out.

“It is the vanguard of your true self. Its root is inward but its fruit is outward. It is your best friend or worst enemy. It is more honest and consistent about you than your words. It is what draws people to you or repels them. It is never content until it is expressed. It is the librarian of your past. It is the speaker of your present. It is the prophet of your future. There is not a single part of your current life that is not affected by your attitude. And your future will definitely be influenced by the attitude you carry with you from today forward.” - The Difference Maker



❖ So, what will my child learn at RGS Vietnam?

With the IB PYP at RGS Vietnam, we are committed to structured inquiry as the vehicle for learning. Six transdisciplinary themes provide the framework for exploration and construction of knowledge.

Teachers and students are guided by these transdisciplinary themes - as the design units of inquiry for exploration and study. Through this process, students develop an understanding of important concepts, acquire essential skills and knowledge, develop particular attitudes and learn to take socially responsible action.

❖ Ok, what does “transdisciplinary” mean?

Transdisciplinary is the word that IB uses to describe a discipline that applies across all disciplines - it is interconnected and can be applied across all subjects and real life. A transdisciplinary concept can stretch across Math, Science, English, Social Studies and the specialist subject areas and ties it all together; it is not isolated to one subject.

For example, the idea of change can be learned in Math, Science, English, Social Studies. The IB PYP strives to demonstrate this concept through learning and showing its application in the real world.

❖ The IB curriculum incorporates 5 essential elements:

I - KEY CONCEPTS

There are 8 fundamental concepts expressed as key questions, to propel the process of inquiry. These universal concepts drive the research units - called UNITS OF INQUIRY (have you heard of this before?!) - but they also have relevance within and across all subject areas (transdisciplinary).

The 8 fundamental concepts are:

- Form: What is it like?
- Function: How does it work?
- Causation: Why is it like it is?
- Change: How is it changing?
- Connection: How is it connected to other things?
- Perspective: What are the points of view?
- Reflection: How do we know?



2 - SKILLS

There are 5 sets of transdisciplinary skills acquired in the process of structured inquiry. These are:

- Thinking
- Communication
- Social
- Research
- Self-Management

3 - ATTITUDES

The PYP promotes attitudes that we want our students to feel, value, and demonstrate. These are: appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect and tolerance.

4 - ACTION

Our RGS Vietnam students are encouraged to reflect, to make informed choices and to take action that will help their peers, school staff, and the wider community. This is how our students demonstrate a deeper sense of learning, by applying their knowledge to service and positive action.

5 - KNOWLEDGE

The PYP recognizes that it is inappropriate and challenging to dictate what every child should know in an international environment and community.

Rather than provide a fixed syllabus or curriculum, the PYP has identified transdisciplinary themes, or areas of knowledge, which are used to organize the 4 to 6 Units of Inquiry, taught from early childhood through grade 5. These transdisciplinary themes provide the framework (as opposed to a text book curriculum) for a wide variety of resources to be explored in order to accomplish the objectives within each Unit of Inquiry:

- Who We Are
- Where We Are in Place and Time
- How We Express Ourselves
- How the World Works
- How We Organize Ourselves
- Sharing the Planet



❖ The Primary Years Programme Model

Here is a diagram that synthesizes the various aspects of the PYP programme.





❖ So, what is a Unit of Inquiry?

A Unit of Inquiry usually lasts for 6-8 weeks for K2 to grade 5 and the objective is to cover all 6 themes throughout the year (PreK–K1: Only four units required). For example, during the Unit of Inquiry on Sharing the Planet students may spend 6 weeks looking at the resources we have in the world and how various countries use, share and dispose of these resources. Students will answer questions like: how do these resources connect people around the world? Or, how are these resources changing and what does that mean for people? These concepts and questions move across all school subjects (i.e. Math, English, Social Studies, etc.) and apply to real life and the world around us.

❖ And, how does RGS Vietnam implement these Units of Inquiry?

These themes or Units of Inquiry, provide a framework on which our teachers build students' knowledge. With the IB PYP, the priority is not on using a set of textbooks, but rather the emphasis is on a wide variety of resources from which teachers and students extract knowledge, develop understandings, and explore ways of applying these to real life.

❖ What resources does RGS Vietnam use, if there are no textbooks or workbooks?

The PYP scope and sequence documents drive our planning, teaching and assessment in the classroom. To assist with the teaching intentions of the scope and sequence documents, RGS Vietnam has a wide variety of resources available.

❖ Why not use textbooks/workbooks? It seems more systematic?

Because the IB PYP philosophy believes that students learn best through authentic inquiry. While there is certainly a place in the curriculum for textbooks and workbooks, RGS Vietnam uses a wide range of resources that best cater to our students' individual needs and learning styles.

The IB PYP also recognizes that it is not knowledge alone that makes a learner successful, but the skills and attitudes they develop along the way.



❖ **How are students at RGS Vietnam assessed?**

Students at RGS Vietnam are assessed in a variety of ways, including tests, projects, oral presentations and written reports. Assessment in IB PYP is “criterion referenced”. This means students are scored against standards, not against each other (or at a teacher’s whim). An example, teachers may give the students a rubric on larger assignments that explains to the students what is expected of them. The rubric states what the criteria are for the assignment (in a report, for instance) and what the score will be for addressing or not addressing each point in that criteria. Such rubric allows students to “buy into” their grades and take ownership of their effort and learning.

❖ **Explain to me a little more about how my child will be assessed at RGS Vietnam?**

At RGS Vietnam, each Unit of Inquiry allows students opportunities to demonstrate that learning is taking place - that there are shifts, if you will, in their understanding. This may look different across all subject areas, however, this shift in understanding is not always best demonstrated through a piece of written work or a traditional exam. Students may be asked to put together a final project, draw, act out a performance, do a presentation, or some other way to show what they have learned. The goal is for our students to demonstrate that learning has taken place by showing what they understand and how they are applying that understanding to real life and the world around them. Authentic learning cannot always be demonstrated through traditional tests or exams. At RGS Vietnam, we believe that assessment is the continuation of the learning process. It is NOT assessment of learning, but it is assessment for learning.

The IB views assessment as needing to be authentic, essential, rich, engaging, and feasible - it should incorporate students in the process of evaluating their learning.

Formative assessment is interwoven into the daily lessons and learning. This ongoing process of checking in between teachers and students, helps both teachers and students find out what they already know, in order to plan for the next stage of learning. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked; effective learning cannot take place without one or the other.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process. This is the time that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and application of what has been learned.



❖ **Explain to me a little more about how specific learning areas are explored through the PYP?**

Language in the PYP

Language is fundamental to our need to communicate. It supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. It is a means to access information, enhance our intellectual growth, nurture communication, develop our social skills and values, maintain culture and know who we are. Language needs to be learned within meaningful contexts, versus isolation, and in the PYP we do this through inquiry. Language learning needs to be relevant, engaging, challenging and significant. The influence of mother-tongue development is significant for all learners. As research and best practice shows, we encourage our parents and students to speak in their mother tongue at home. This strengthens their child's language skills and gives them a strong sense of cultural identity. RGS Vietnam also offers Vietnamese and French three times a week from K2 to grade 5.

In Language our strands are: listening and speaking, reading and writing, viewing and presenting.

Math in the PYP

Math in the PYP is used as a tool to support inquiry. As much as possible, Math needs to be taught in relevant and realistic contexts. An emphasis is placed on application, real-life problem solving and the Programme of Inquiry being used as the context for learning. In Math our strands are: Number, Shape and Space, Measurement, Pattern and Function and Data Handling.

Social Studies in the PYP

Our social studies curriculum guides students towards a deeper understanding of themselves and others, as well as their place in an increasingly global society. We believe that the learning must be relevant and in context. One of the aims of our social studies curriculum is to promote intercultural understanding and respect for individuals and their values and traditions. Our social studies strands include: Human Systems and Economic Studies, Social Organization and Culture, Continuity and Change through Time, Human and Natural Environments, and Resources and the Environment.

Science in the PYP

Science is the exploration of the biological, chemical and physical aspects of the natural world. We want our students to develop an appreciation and awareness of the world from a scientific perspective. We emphasize hands-on activities so students would be able to experience and learn science process skills. We aim to have a concept-driven curriculum that uses a wide variety of materials and manipulatives. Our strands are: Living Things, Earth and Space, Materials and Matter, and Forces and Energy.



❖ **Explain to me a little more about how specific learning areas are explored through the PYP?**

Arts in the PYP

We believe that art is a form of expression that exists in all cultures. Besides language, art can be used as a medium of inquiry that provides opportunities for learning, communication and expression. In the PYP, the visual arts, drama, music and dance are part of the arts. These subjects help students gain confidence and competence in self-expression.

Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE) in the PYP

PSPE is divided into two parts: Personal and Social Education and Physical Education. Personal and Social Education helps students manage and communicate their feelings, build relationships and develop and appreciation of what we have in common as well as our differences, and develop strategies to resolve conflict. In Physical Education, students learn about movement. They also learn through movement. They develop an understanding of the role of physical activity in a healthy lifestyle in order to make informed choices. They learn about the cultural significance of physical activities for communities and individuals.



❖ **What is the homework load like? How much homework should a child have outside of school?**

This is not a program that just loads on a lot of homework. This is a big misconception that many people have of the IB program. When setting homework, we keep in mind that each child is different. The homework assigned is not overwhelming and kids still have time for a variety of after school activities. Long-term and large projects are given ample time to complete. However, please keep in mind that the amount of homework will increase as your child progresses through the grades. Students of grade 5 will see a marked increase in homework to ensure readiness for the expectations of the middle years.

❖ **How can you, as a PARENT, get involved?**

- Volunteer in your child's classroom, the library, and special events
- Provide communication between yourself and school that is regular, 2-way, and meaningful
- Participate as a full partner in decisions that impact your child and family
- Portfolios are a part of documenting student growth and reflections over the course of the students' elementary career. Ask your child to see his/hers often when visiting the school
- Collaboration with the community, through partnerships, which are mutually beneficial to our school and the community
- Ensure development to strengthen your child's mother tongue as this in turn will strengthen a child's English acquisition



❖ In the end, here is a summary of what the IB PYP is:

“The whole art of teaching is only the awakening of the natural curiosity of young minds.”

Anatole France

“I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think.”

Socrates

❖ And this sums up what the IB PYP is NOT:

“It is possible to store the mind with a million facts and still be entirely uneducated.”

Alec Bourne

“Passive acceptance of a teacher’s wisdom is easy for most boys and girls. It involves no effort of independent thought.”

Bertrand Russell

This means that at RGS Vietnam, with the IB PYP, our students in all grades have the opportunity to own their learning. Our teachers do not “cover” a subject or “give” a lesson. At RGS Vietnam, our students take the lesson or learning process—they do it, make it, and experience it. Our students ask questions and learn how to find the answers to those questions and apply them to their lives and the world around them. With the IB PYP, RGS Vietnam students see how things are connected in a real way, rather than simply being fragmented into school subjects.

❖ So, in the end, what makes the IB PYP so effective at RGS Vietnam?

We are a truly international community and we are committed to the IB philosophy that students need to be at the center of real life learning by using their natural curiosity. The IB PYP model fits well with our goals, at RGS Vietnam, to guide our students to be internationally minded with a passion for life-long learning.

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