

# How to get a school place

Malvern College Hong Kong's Headmaster, Dr Robin Lister, shares his advice on Hong Kong's international school system



## Could you tell us about the application process?

Hong Kong's international school landscape is not only highly competitive but also quite complex with over 50 international primary, secondary and through-schools (primary-cum-secondary). In addition, there is also a handful of Private Independent Schools which are technically not international schools but are often appealing to the international community due to their non-local curriculum and profile. All have their own applications and admissions policy with different application timelines, age cut-off dates and admissions priority criteria. Most of Hong Kong's international and Private Independent Schools are selective and interview applicants prior to making an offer.

## What should parents consider before applying?

First, they should enquire as to the educational programme that is on offer

and find out as much as possible about, for example, the differences between an IB approach and other curriculums. For the IB, something that Malvern offers, the emphasis is on inquiry and learning by experience; it is as much skills based as it is content driven. This is true for all levels of the IB: PYP, MYP and DP.

Secondly, parents should find out more about the school's offering beyond the core curriculum: does the school offer an after-school activities programme, are there sports clubs, music, arts and drama activities? Tuition fees and debenture structure (if any) are important decision making factors, too.

## What advice would you give to parents starting the application process?

Prior to an application it would be best to try to take advantage of any information sessions a school has on offer (such as Malvern's so-called Malvern Meets where the Headmaster

introduces the school, its history, ethos and offering). Whilst facilities are important, they should not be the top of the list in a parent's decision making; it is the feeling of a school, the ambience, the way in which the children behave. Generally, I always think you can know what a school is like within the first ten minutes.

## Could you share some tips for the interview process?

The most important advice is not to prime your child. Rehearsed answers do not do you, your child or the school justice. Children and young people need to gain the confidence to be themselves and demonstrate their personality. Those that interview have years of experience engaging with children of all ages and can see through rehearsed answers. The need is to see the genuine child.

Some tips for children and young people would be to dress smart, smile and try to give the impression that you are enjoying the process (not easy). If a question is difficult to answer, say so. Do a little online research on the school to demonstrate the seriousness of your application.

## What would you suggest for pupils wanting to change during the academic year?

Speak to the school that you would like to transfer to; discuss the implications (if any) of a mid-year intake at particular times. Usually this is not so difficult and generally reflects a transient, international community such as Hong Kong where there is movement all the time.

