

Overseas School of Colombo

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An aerial view of the magnificent Overseas School of Colombo

‘Knowledge for Life’; this is the driving principle behind the Overseas School of Colombo, where students are not limited to the classroom.

Words Keshini de Silva | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda



Phil Joslin, Head of School

The Overseas School of Colombo (OSC) provides a holistic learning experience within a diverse cultural setting. An ideology reflected in the well-facilitated establishment conceived to enable learning beyond the classroom.

Established in 1957, OSC is the only school in Sri Lanka that delivers the

International Baccalaureate (IB), a programme of study specifically focused on challenging the student based on their strengths and talents. The US and European accredited academic programme introduces children to physical and aesthetic activities and social service; students must take part in all three areas of learning.

“Education is not just about getting the right answer. We teach students to learn through inquiry and apply that knowledge in a real-life scenario,” says Phil Joslin, Head of School. Catering to 47 different nationalities, OSC accepts that each student absorbs information differently. Therefore, visual, auditory and kinesthetic teaching methods are used in the classroom. To provide equal opportunities to all, a Special Needs programme has been designed to assist children with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

As we crossed over to the Primary Section, students splashed in the pool, while another class tangled off the jungle gym. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) delivered at OSC, prepares students for a life of learning and to effectively participate in the world.

Jason Grandbois, Primary School Principal, explains, “Teachers challenge the student according to their level of performance. We do not assess students using traditional letter grades or percentages, but instead assign an Assessment Descriptor of Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching or Below Expectations. To ensure we are preparing students of high quality, each year students from Grades two to ten undergo an international on-line adaptive assessment in the areas of Reading and Mathematics. These results continually indicate that our programme is strong, rigorous and well above the world average.”

A transdisciplinary curriculum PYP takes students beyond the school to engage practically and are prepared for learning through technology. The Middle Years Programme (11y – 16y) and Diploma Programme (16y – 19y) encourage students to make real world connections with their education while developing a depth of knowledge.

All three International Baccalaureate programmes encourage both personal and academic achievement. They are based upon the concept of inquiry where students are required to research problems, critically analyse different perspectives and construct meaning.



Auditorium

“Students love to come to school. They are actively engaged in their education and know that what they think matters,” says Claire McQuillan, Secondary School Principal. She explained that exploring and understanding Sri Lanka is an integral part of the academic year, especially during the Week Without Walls. Students are challenged throughout the year both academically and physically to take risks and move beyond their comfort zones, this year already the Diploma Level students took on the rapids in Kitulgala and interviewed residents to try understand their lives.

The school is teeming with activity on weekends, from scuba-diving lessons in the pool to rock-climbing at the gym. Headquarters of the OSC Geckos, the entrance to the school gym displays the many accolades won at the South Asia Inter-School Association (SAISA) and International Schools Athletic Championships (ISAC) levels. Students also showcase their talents at art and science shows and theatre productions. A hallmark event of the Secondary Section is the Colombo Model United Nations.

The innovative delivery of education at OSC during the Diploma years includes the study of the 'Theory of Knowledge'; a unique subject, which motivates students to reflect on the very existence of knowledge and question universal truths. In addition, students in their final year complete a 4,000 word academic thesis, which enables them to delve deeply into an area of particular academic interest.

Thus, students develop a thirst for knowledge and a desire for continuous learning. Students who complete their education at the Overseas School in Colombo graduate with the International Baccalaureate Diploma, a highly regarded certification that opens doors to top universities worldwide.

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