

Chinese Speaking Children in Hampshire Schools

Overview

Population

China's estimated population is approx. 1.4 billion. Nearly 1.2 billion people speak some form of Chinese as their first language. The word 'Chinese' is a catchall for the many language dialects spoken in China. (Mandarin and Cantonese are the two most widely spoken; Cantonese is more prevalent in Hong Kong and the Southeast regions). Generally people are educated in Mandarin at school as this is the official language of the country. Mandarin is also spoken in Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. Written Chinese has modern simplified characters that are used in China, but the original more complex characters are still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Climate

The climate in China varies from region to region due to the country's size (hot and dry summers in the Northeast - temperatures can reach 30-38°C; very cold winters, minus 15-30°C; North and central regions have frequent bouts of rain coupled with hot summers and cold winters; the Southeast has plenty of rainfall, semi-tropical summers and cool winters).

Education System (for children from China)

Age 3-7 Kindergarten (Optional)

Age 7-12 Primary School

From 12 Secondary Education:

- 12-15 Junior Secondary School (Middle School)
- 15-18 High School, completes Secondary education

SEN: Children with special needs of any kind are educated in a main stream school but disabled children attend a special school.

EAL: In China most school children are taught their first English lesson at the age of 10.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

Usually 6 or 7 years old (admission criteria is the date of birth).

Implications

- New arrivals in Year R, Year 1 and sometimes Year 2 may not have experienced formal schooling yet and may require a gentler introduction to school life.
- Emphasis in Kindergarten is on play rather than learning. Chinese children in Year R and Year 1 will often not recognize any letters or numbers yet.
- Older new arrivals will have had fewer years in school than their English peers and will therefore not have covered as many concepts.
- Students appear to have 'jumped' a year (a child who was in Year 1 in China will suddenly be in Year 2 in England) – parents often find this disturbing and think their child should be placed in a lower year group. Parents need re-assurance that their child was placed in the correct year group and that special attention will be given to his/her individual needs.

School day

- The school day is usually much longer; especially at secondary school (normal finish time is 5pm). Children are given a lot of homework.
- Children in China are usually brought up by grandparents as normally both parents work; they are often not very independent when younger.
- All subjects are taught in the students' own classroom, even at secondary school; the students stay in their room while the teachers move from class to class.
- In China most of the learning is done through whole class teaching rather than through group work.

Curriculum

- Primary school: children are mainly taught Mandarin, Numeracy, PE, Geography, History, Music and English. Science does not start until secondary school. Maths is taught at a much higher level. Chinese new arrivals may therefore find Maths very easy and would benefit from being put in a higher set. They may also not yet be familiar with subjects like Science, Geography and History.
- Children have to pass middle and high school admission tests and can only attend the best schools if they can get high grades.

- Most schools use blackboards or whiteboards in class; interactive whiteboards are extremely rare. Most schools do not have a computer for every child and computer skills tend to be lower.

Literacy

- Independent writing starts later than in England. Year 1 children (age 6 or 7) can write Pinyin (the official phonetic system for transcribing the Mandarin pronunciations of Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet) and some words. Children in the lower years of primary school therefore might need extra support with independent writing (e.g. writing frames, partially completed sentences etc.). Normally they are expected to write stories independently at the age of 9 or 10.
- Primary school children are used to line guides and square grid guides for their writing.

Maths

- Numbers are read in a different way, e.g. '26' is read as '20+6' so Chinese children may require longer thinking time when working with numbers orally.
- Many concepts in numeracy are taught at a much earlier stage, e.g. a child in Year 3 will be quite good at multiplication and division.
- Methods taught for multiplication and division are different from those taught in English schools.
- In Maths, Chinese children are given very hard exercises and expectations are very high.

Cultural sensitivities

- Chinese children are used to following the teachers'/school's instructions in terms of learning and feel lost when not given any. They are not used to using their own initiative at school.

Parental involvement and attendance in China

- Chinese children have to repeat a school year if they do not achieve the expected minimum grade; the responsibility to achieve lies mostly with the parents. Often parents have to pay for private tuition to ensure their child achieves the expected grades.
- Children sit individual subject tests almost on a weekly or monthly basis, with regular feedback to the parents.
- Parents are used to regular feedback through frequent whole class and individual parents' evenings.
- Children bring all their school text and exercise books home every day for homework so parents can see what they have been learning. Here, parents often feel 'left out' or poorly informed about their child's progress and what they are learning at school - a home-school diary is very effective to put parents' minds at rest. With younger children, parents could be invited to help in school, e.g. with reading.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Spellings

- Chinese use Pinyin to spell. Although Pinyin looks the same as English letters, the letters sound different, so new arrivals might get confused.
- There is no distinction between singular and plural nouns in Chinese.
- There are no articles in Chinese, so Chinese children may use sentences like 'he gave me book'.

Punctuation

- Commas are used more widely in Chinese.

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

- In Chinese, the words '*bu*, *meiyou*' (= 'not') are used in front of the verb to make the sentence negative.
- Chinese has question words which are used after the verb or at the end of the question, so Chinese children might get confused with the word order in English questions.
- Chinese has no verb form of the future and past tenses; the way to show tenses is to put a time word in front of the verb.

Verbs

- Chinese verbs are almost all regular and do not change tense to express the concept of time. In contrast to English, Chinese uses context, word order and adverbials to indicate time and space.
- Chinese verbs don't change in the 3rd person singular (e.g. *he goes* and *they go* - in Chinese, the word for "go" does not change).

Word order

- In Chinese, time comes before place and both come before action, e.g. '*Tomorrow afternoon 3 o'clock, bank outside see you.*' ('I will see you tomorrow afternoon outside the bank at 3 o'clock'.)
- Cantonese usually establishes the topic first, e.g. '*This restaurant, can seat how many people?*'

Gender

- The English gender words 'he', 'she', 'it' all sound the same in Chinese, but the actual Chinese word is different.

Vocabulary

- In Chinese, word case endings are not always distinguished and the same word can often serve several structural purposes in a sentence. Thus, the word case endings of related English words like '*excited*' and '*exciting*' are often confused as they do not exist in Chinese.
- There is no distinction between singular and plural nouns in Chinese.

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	huan-ying
Hello	ni-hao
Thank you	xie-xie
Please	qing
Goodbye (formal)	zai-jian
Bye (casual)	zai-jian
Morning	zao-shang-hao
Afternoon	xia-wu-hao
Are you OK?	Mi-hao-ma

School Routine

School playground	xue-xiao-cao-chang
School office	xiao-ban
Hall	li-tang
School	xue-xiao
Assembly	kai-hui
Toilets	ce-suo
School field	xue-xiao
Classroom	jiao-shi
Registration	ji-kao-qin
Computer suite	dian-jiao-shi
Tutor group (class)	ban-ji
Break time	xiu-xi-shi-jian
Outside	wai-mian
Inside	li-mian
Fire drill	jing-bao-yan-xi
Packed lunch	dai-fan
School dinner	xue-xiao-fan
School nurse	xue-xiao-hu-shi
First aid room	ji-jiu-shi
Staff room	jiao-shi-xiu-xi-shi
Lunchtime	wu-fan-shi-jian
School uniform	xiao-fu
Library	tu-shu-guan
Reading book	du-shu
Library book	tu-shu-guan-de-shu
Copy	fu-yin
Label	biao-qian
Colour	yan-se
Pen	gang-bi
Pencil	qian-bi
Yes	shi
No	bu

Days of the week

Monday	xing-qi-yi
Tuesday	xing-qi-er
Wednesday	xing-qi-san
Thursday	xing-qi-si
Friday	xing-qi-wu
Weekend	zhou-mo

Numbers

Zero	- ling
One	- yi
Two	- er
Three	- san
Four	- si
Five	- wu
Six	- liu
Seven	- qi
Eight	- ba
Nine	- jiu
Ten	- shi
How many?	Duo-shao

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner	He qi ta tong xue yi qi zuo
Use your dictionary	Yong ni de zi dian
Do you understand?	Ni ming bai ma?
Talk about this at home	Zai jia tan tan zhe ge
Translate these words at home	Zai ji ba zhe xie zi fan yi chu lai
You can write in Chinese	Ni ke yi yong zhong wen xie
Write in sentences	Xie cheng ju zi
Fill in the blanks	Tian kong
Annotate	Zhu-jiao
Highlight	Biao chu lai
Draft	Cao gao
Please be quiet	Qing an jing
Come here please	Qing guo lai
Sit on the carpet	Zuo zai di tan shang
Where does it hurt?	Na li teng?
Well done!	Gan de hao!