THE IRIS SCHOOLS

Early Years Education System - “IRIS EYE” SYSTEM

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Academic Year 2013-2014

Age groups : 1 ½ years to 8 ½ years

Preschool, Kindergarten and Elementary school

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The IRIS EYE Curriculum – Curriculum makes IRIS different:

IRIS EYE curriculum has been specially developed by a very prominent Pakistani educationist having his PhD in early education from the UK. IRIS EYE has its own curriculum, offering what is best about Collaborative Learning, blended to a certain extent with Montessori guidelines providing an educational experience enhancing the inquisitive senses in its students to develop them into competent learners. In the Elementary school (grades 1-3) IRIS advances with the same approach. In this introduction, both sections of the curriculums are highlighted briefly. IRIS EYE Curriculum is a child based program where focus is on ‘child’s learning’ and not on ‘school’s teaching’. Unique feature of the curriculum is that it starts for each individual child on the day the child joins the Early Years Center i.e. it is student specific rather than being class specific. Curriculum is designed to be presented to a mixed age group learning centers and is based on the latest proven Collaborative Learning (cooperative learning) methodology blended to a certain extent with Montessori guidelines to perform as a dynamic, deep and productive system of learning, focusing on building a very strong academic foundation. Parents are updated every week through a weekly works summary. Parents are encouraged to see the detailed written curriculum and observe its implementation in the learning centers. Curriculum is thoroughly researched and is documented to the last detail with one target of maximum academic progress in mind. Its individual implementation on each student is observed and recorded on daily basis to ensure that each student build a very strong academic base. Curriculum is sub-divided age wise and precisely caters the challenges faced by students of particular age in Pakistan. Highlights of the complete curriculum with its major areas of focus are as follows:

Preschool and KGs curriculum:

Communication, Language and Literacy

Listening, reading, speaking and writing correct English are keys to help synthesize child’s knowledge of all other subjects. Collaborative Learning methodology stresses on competence in speaking, listening, being read to and beginning to read correct English. The Montessori Method is used extensively with the phonic approach to teach the child the basics of reading and writing. As the child gains more confidence he/she is introduced to sight words, high frequency words and is taught to form letters correctly using detailed Montessori techniques in addition to Collaborative learning methodology. At IRIS EYE, children will have an opportunity to:

- Speak English language clearly, audibly with confidence and control
- Interact with others, convey their ideas, negotiating plans and activities
- Learn to take turns in conversation and to listen to others
- Make up their own small stories, songs, rhymes and poems
- Extend their vocabulary by exploring the meanings and sounds of new words
- Listen to the alphabets and to differentiate between actual alphabets and their phonics
- Use this phonetic knowledge to write simple regular words
- Make phonetically plausible attempts at building complex words
- Trace alphabets shapes, relate to objects associated with these letters
- Hold a pencil and use it effectively to form recognizable letters
- Write in a prescribed handwriting as prescribed and defined in the curriculum
Mathematics and numbers skills development:
Children learn to perform counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division exercises. Most of the material used for teaching Mathematics is from the tried and tested Montessori mathematical materials such as rods, beads, spindles, cubes, cards and counters, etc. which also teaches them to visualize the whole structure of our numerical system. The child is taught to recognize quantities and then the numerals. IRIS encourages parents to observe the use of advanced Montessori mathematics equipment available in the learning centers. As always, concepts are taught through the carefully designed Montessori materials which ensure that the child has a thorough understanding. Children will have the opportunity to:

- Learn numeracy, reasoning, logic and mathematical problem solving in a play environment
- Use advanced Montessori mathematics equipment to build concepts in counting, decimals, addition, multiplication and division
- Examine, recognize, remember and build basic geometrical patterns
- Use shape in play and with puzzles, and be aware of shape in the environment
- Enjoy joining in with number rhymes and songs
- Have awareness of time, space, order and sequencing

Learn basic concept of money and currency

Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Children are provided with experiences and support which will help them to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others; respect for others; social skills; and a positive disposition to learn. With adult help, children will have an opportunity to:

- Develop muscular movements by exploring physical exercises equipment installed indoors and outdoors in the school premises
- Learn practical use and advantages of personal daily use items
- Learn to be independent in small daily activities such as button their shirt, tie their shoes
- Learn to safely store their play equipment and clear floor as part of social exercise
- Develop good manners such as to say “please” and “thank you.”
- Grace and courtesy such as greeting a new person, saying thank you and appreciating others through interaction lessons
- Show interest in illustrations, printed books and in the environment
- Learn how to handle books carefully and appropriately
- Listen to and act upon nursery rhymes building sense of group belonging
- Use crayons, pencils and thick chalk and learn to hold in correct pencil grip
- Freely engage in sand and water play learning to measure and pour

Knowledge and Understanding of the World
Children are supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding in science and geography to help them make sense of the world around them. This learning provides opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely, encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical ‘experiments’; and work with a range of materials. Teachers focus the child’s attention on the globe, maps, environment, and climate. All children will experience the growing of seeds in transparent equipment and on soil, which helps children understand the basics of plant and their growing. IRIS Children Botanical Garden allows
every child to grow and take care of one plant in a season to observe the complete growth cycle. This forms the foundation for later work in science, design, technology, geography and history. Children will have the opportunity to:

- Show curiosity in the globe with its basic components - land and water
- Observe the basics of climate and different living environments around the globe
- Investigate construction materials and small world equipment
- Observe changes in the environment, weather and living creatures
- Have opportunity to be involved in long term growing projects i.e., seeds/plants/vegetables
- Explore and distinguish between healthy nutritious food and junk food
- Gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others
- Investigate objects and materials by using all of their senses as appropriate.
- Find out about, and identify, some features of living things, objects and events they observe.

Recognize the two main components of globe namely water and land, through specially made globes for early education centers.

**Gross motor skills development**

Gross motor skills development or large muscles development is an intrinsic part of learning in everything children do. The physical development of young children is encouraged through the provision of opportunities to improve their skills of coordination, control, manipulation and movement. They must be supported in using all of their senses to learn about the world around them and to make connections between new information and what they already know. Climbing jungle gym, climbing rope tower, passing through wooden bridge and organizing the play farm or rolling out some play dough are all everyday examples of children’s growing physical skills and developing muscles. It helps children gain self confidence and enables them to feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active. An awareness of other cultures is presented through photographs, maps, videos and stories to illustrate the problems and needs of people in the world and to help the child appreciate talents, joy and beauty of different world cultures. Effective physical development helps children develop a positive sense of well-being. Children will have the opportunity to:

- Explore a range of outdoor and indoor large play equipment by traveling around, under, over and through climbing equipment in a range of ways such as climbing, jumping, balancing, crawling, sliding and rolling
- Develop an understanding of making healthy choices in and recognize the importance of keeping healthy by stress on things which contribute to healthy diet
- Construct with large materials such as planks, blocks, cartons and lengths of fabric
- Discover importance of safety check on play equipment.
- Operate large and small equipment by means of pushing, pulling and turning
- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination such as puzzles, threading, posting, play dough, pouring, stacking and small world equipment
- Explore the dress up clothes, hats, costumes, masks and develop independent dressing skills and observe self and others in mirrors
- Show an awareness of space, themselves and others through movement to music, songs, outdoor games, water play and ride on equipment
- Explore sensory materials such as shaving foam, slime, sand, mud, rice, textured paper/fabric
Fine motor skills and creative development:
Children’s creativity is extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and to extend their understanding. This area of learning includes art, music, dance and movement to music, role play and drama, and imaginative play. They are provided with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example, through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities, mathematics, and design and technology. Children will have the opportunity to:

- Explore different materials, color, shape, pattern, form and space
- Recognize the different color combination and formation of new colors by color mixing
- Develop sense of touch, feeling, taste and smell with various sensorial material
- Use imagination for idea development and to communicate these ideas to others
- Use their bodies to explore texture, consistency and space
- Use crayons, paper, color and art supplies to express their ideas
- Clay and sand area for an understanding of volume, weight, form and shape

Elementary School Curriculum Grade 1 to Grade 3:
IRIS Elementary school curriculum builds on our core curriculum and matches with the most advanced international curriculum. Following are the main subjects:

- English reading and speaking
- English writing
- Mathematics
- Islamiat
- Science & Social studies
- Urdu

Our methodology: At IRIS Elementary School, it is not only the subjects but our proprietary teaching methodology that brings out the best in the students. The curriculum stress less on form and more on substance. With minimum teachers paperwork, teacher has more time for teaching and examining the students learning. IRIS system monitors ‘learning’ rather than ‘teaching’ as in most of the schools. Weekly minutes for each subject are calculated to ensure maximum students interest and maximum learning.

English has the highest priority, similar to our preschool and kindergarten. Our curriculum stresses independently on phonics, vocabulary, fluent reading, comprehension of written text, writing, handwriting, listening skills and speaking skills. This is the basis for all subjects across the board.
Second most focused subject at this level is **Mathematics**. Maths concepts include numbers, patterns, word problems, telling time, monetary values, as well as simple addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. As the students' get older the elementary school curriculum will introduce equations, pre-algebra, and geometry.

Every grade level has **science and social studies** that introduce young minds to the world around them. Students the family aspect and their community, as well as the history involving their state and government. Human values are introduced as an independent subject. **Urdu** is a very difficult language when it comes to reading and writing. We do not live with the idea of considering Urdu an easy language till it is too late. With the base for Urdu reading and writing already built in the KGs, now it is time to read and write by comprehending.

**Islamiat** is in line with the national curriculum and is taught in English throughout these classes. The subject of ‘**Values**’ teaches them to be responsible citizens with principles of honesty, responsibility, courage, and respect for others.

**Other subjects** such as physical education, music, art, drawing and values education have their time allocation. Physical education gives our students a good basis for health and wellness that they will carry with them throughout life. Art will bring out their creative side where as drawing leads them to geometry. Any elementary school curriculum should make learning as exciting as possible. If the teachers are excited about their subjects, then they can better excite their students about the subject. The curriculum should be designed to use and enhance your students’ natural curiosity. It should emphasize the basic academic disciplines. The students need to be provided with a wide range of stimulating, challenging experiences and you can gear your activities to develop independence and academic, social, and physical skills they will need to succeed in life.