



ACS (INTERNATIONAL) NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents, Students and Friends

Welcome back to school for 2020! We trust that everyone had an enjoyable and relaxing break and that you are all looking forward to the year ahead. A special welcome to new students, new parents and new staff. We have over 250 new students join us so far this year from 18 different countries and they were all thoroughly welcomed to the school community in Orientation I this week by our student leaders. We wish them all a successful and enjoyable time with us. Our new staff are introduced in a later section.

To accommodate the significantly increased demand for places, we have had to adjust our timetable and create extra classes. Most year levels are full with places available on a waiting list only, and some senior option subjects have now been closed. We have saved places for 'O' level graduates applying to this year's IBDP and we look forward to interviewing applicants next week.

Last Friday, we received the November 2019 IB Diploma results. We are pleased with the overall results with 91% of students scoring above the world average and our former Head Boy, Gautam Ramasamy, gaining a perfect score of 45 points. More details elsewhere. IGCSE results will be released on 16 January.

At this week's first school assembly of the year, the students were encouraged to make the most of the opportunities on offer and to contribute positively to the ACS (International) school family. They were shown the image of Janus, the Roman god of doors, beginnings, transitions and endings, with his two faces looking both forwards and backwards; were reminded that the first month of the year, January, is derived from his name; and that they should take time to firstly look back and reflect on their achievements and progress of the previous year then look forward to the future with optimism, determination and planning to make the most of every opportunity available. A second image of a door slightly open was used to encourage them to actively and fully open the door of 2020 and step confidently into the year ahead.

Students were also shown the passage from Revelation 3:8 "Behold, I have set before you an open door..." which reminds us that there is always an open door of invitation to have or confirm a personal relationship with Jesus. There is no need to firstly wait or actively push the door open.

We are looking forward to a great year ahead, working hard in partnership with students and parents to realise hopes, dreams and potential so that 2020 is a most successful year. The Best Is Yet To Be.

Rob Burrough Principal

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For comments and feedback, please email acsinternational.communications@acsinternational.edu.sg



IBDP Examination 2019 Results

For the fourth year out of five years, the top ACS (International) student scored the perfect 45 points in the International Baccalaureate (IB) examination results released on Friday, 3 January.

However, this is the first year that one of our students has gained the 45 points on "release day". The previous recipients had to wait for a recount to confirm their status – which was rather unfortunate as these students were not able to receive their due recognition in front of their peers when the results were released.

The 91% of students who scored above the world average (29.8 approximately) was our best result in recent years, exceeding last year's 90%. The overall pass rate was 97%. The students who did not pass did all score at least the minimum 24 points pass mark, but unfortunately scored less than 12 points in their three Higher Level subjects.

The average score of 35.3 points was slightly lower than last year's 35.5, but is expected to top 36 points when recounts and successful appeals are factored in.

41% of students passed the IB Diploma with English as their second language. This is particularly impressive as students firstly have to learn English, then think in English then write in an English academic style. Research usually suggests that it takes 7 years to become fully proficient in a second language, and most of these students achieved this in 3 to 6 years.

Four students were accepted on to the IBDP at ACS (International) with 'O' Level L1R5 scores of 21 to 23 points. They achieved an exceptional value added average score of 31 points in the IBDP — above the world average and now with many university options.

The perfect scorer was Gautam Ramasamy, a Singaporean, who has been offered an A*Star National Science Scholarship, and was our Head Boy in 2018/19. He plans to study Physics after completing National Service.

Top-performing subjects producing the most grade 7s included Chinese B SL (54/82 students), Business Management HL (12/31), Mathematics HL (20/66), English B HL (13/45), and Chinese B HL (4/5). Subjects scoring the most A grades in the Extended Essay included Mathematics (7/16 students), English (5/19), Psychology (4/7), Business Management (4/11), Sports Science (3/8), and Chinese B (2/2).

Our congratulations to both students and staff on the fine results and hard work.











STAFF NEWS

New Staff

This year, we welcome the following new staff:

- Ms Yap Lin Lin, Career Specialist, Singapore
- Ms Emma Harris, Teacher of English, New Zealand
- Ms Cody Edgcombe, Teacher of English, New Zealand

We are pleased with their appointments and wish them a fulfilling and rewarding career with us.

New Staff Responsibilities

We congratulate the following staff on their appointments to the roles as shown below:

Ms Goh Wei Li	Assistant IPC
Mr Francis Bell	Acting HsM TCT House
Ms Jasmine Lee	Service Coordinator/Learning Support
Ms Laura Blunt	Activities Weeks & NYAA Coordinator

Back to School for the Teachers!

The teachers returned from their November/December break to attend two full days of professional development (PD) on 6 and 7 January. The theme of the PD was Inquiry Based Learning. All teaching staff attended either the IB Category 3 workshop on "Investigating Inquiry" or "Inquiry Learning" workshop conducted by Malcolm Nicolson (former IBO Curriculum Head).

The participants were actively engaged in the process of learning via various collaborative tasks and activities. They explored characteristics of inquiry and how to develop inquiry with prescribed syllabus, and created interesting inquiries using conceptual, contextual and collaborative approaches to teach key subject specific and generic skills. They came out feeling assured that inquiry does not have to be multi-lesson nor take "time away from the course". Teachers should identify the level of inquiry – e.g. structured, guided and free/student initiated – that best suits the context – student profile, unit/topic, etc.



Comments from participants

The Investigating Inquiry workshop offered fantastic opportunities to further develop skills in understanding the pedagogy behind teaching inquiry as well as strategies to assist in unpacking tasks within the planned curriculum. What is equally important is helping students to understand and appreciate the benefits of inquiry based learning.

Ms Mattie Jackson, ESOL teacher

Experiencing Inquiry is about harnessing student curiosity to enable them to think about their thinking in order to reach learning objectives." — a definition created by our group during the workshop. From the pyramid building activity (using marshmallow and spaghetti), we recognised that the process of construction opened up opportunities for teamwork and understanding among group members. The ATL skills of thinking, communication, self-management and social skills were essential skills that came into play in this activity. This activity has taught us that asking each other the right kind of questions, scaffolding our structure or activities and exploring possibilities are all important elements of Inquiry.

Ms Michelle Liew, Assistant HoF of English





NOTICES

2019 IGCSE Results and Important Dates for Second Intake of Year 5 Students

All 2019 IGCSE students should access their results after 5:00pm on 16 January using the access code provided by the Examinations Officer, Mr Gregory Goh. Please contact Mr Goh for assistance at gregory.goh@acsinternational.edu.sg

Please note the criteria for entry to the IB Diploma Programme at ACS (International) as follows:

- Minimum of 2A, 2B, 2C grades in subjects to be studied in IB
- Minimum of grade B for all HL subjects
- Exemplary academic and behavioural record
- Must be able to put a subject package together

The second intake of Year 5 students approved for entry, from the 'O' levels track and our own students who did not qualify for entry via DSA, will report to school on Friday, 17 January.

Date	Programme	Duration	Venue
Friday, 17 January	Subject consultation based on IGCSE results	9:00am onwards	Conference Room, General Office
	Introduction to IBDP	2:00pm- 3:00pm	Chapel (Note: Parents are welcome to attend)
	Higher Education Seminar and Q&A session	3:15pm– 4:00pm	Chapel
Monday, 20 January	Tutor Time	8:00am	
	Period 1 begins, followed by regular timetable	8:45am	

Uniform Sale and Formal Wear Orders

17 January: Sale of Uniform, 10:00am–4:00pm, outside School Bookshop

[Note: The shop at Far East Shopping Centre will be closed from 24 to 27 January for Lunar New Year break. Business resumes on 28 January.]

20 January: Last day for formal wear orders. Contact Sandy/Pauline 6271 9248.

[Note: It is compulsory to wear the formal attire on Founder's Day, which will be celebrated on Friday, 28 February].

Planner/Handbook for Students

Often, we as adults forget that planning and organising is a learned skill and habit. We further forget that this skill needs to be taught and reinforced for the developing adolescent brain.

Organisation Skills are part of the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) framework that we work to build into our House Tutor time along with class. This is specifically important for our Junior Division students who are learning about a new school and preparing to undertake the IGCSE and IB course work in the coming years. A solid foundation in learning to self-manage and organise often leads to future success in these demanding programmes.



As part of these efforts, a Planner/Handbook has been distributed to all junior students in their tutor class. Parents and teachers can help in these efforts by checking the student's planner and encouraging them to write down important dates in class.

Middle or Senior students who could benefit from a planner or Junior students who lose their planner can purchase one at the Reception for \$\$5.00.

PEAKS Assessment 2020

To all parents of Year 1, 1B, Year 4 and new Year 5 students:

An email regarding arrangements for this year's PEAKS assessments will be sent to you by the end of January. Please note that Year 1 and 1B students will be required to complete the assessment in school (by class basis) during school hours from 11 to 14 February. Year 4 and new Year 5 students may complete the assessment in their own time outside of curriculum time, starting from 11 February – the closing date will be announced at a later date.

If you have any queries relating to PEAKS, please contact Ms Magdalene Ng at magdalene.ng@acsinternational.edu.sg



New School Publicity Video

The school has released a new video, available on the school website and Facebook page – click here for the direct link. Special thanks to our three (2019) featured students, Damien Tay (3 TKK), Faye Setiwan (2 TCT) and Megan Man (5 TKK), alongside other students and staff who participated in various ways, during the production of the video.

2019 School Yearbook

Many thanks to Miss Emma Murray plus the Student and Staff Editorial Team for a wonderful summary of 2019 which will be available from Friday, 10 January, for all students to collect from the Library.

Lunar New Year 2020

To reduce disruption to curriculum time during the Lunar New Year period, the events/activities on the following dates are organised:

Wednesday, 22 January	• Normal classes (Periods 1 to 5)	
Thursday, 23 January to Tuesday, 28 January	 Lunar New Year break (SCHOOL CLOSED) 	
Wednesday, 29 January	Normal classes resume	
Friday, 31 January	Chapel Normal classes (Periods 1 and 2) Lunar New Year Assembly Staff Lunch	

Meet the Tutor Gathering

The annual initial Tutor/Parent meetings will be held as follows:

- Monday, 3 February Parents of students in CKS, GHK, LSG, Oldham Houses
- Wednesday, 5 February Parents of students in SVM, TCT, TKK, Thoburn Houses
- Time: 5:30pm to 7:00pm
- Venue: School Chapel then to the respective tutor's rooms

PSP Coffee Morning 2020

The first PSP Coffee Morning of the year will be held on Thursday, 6 February from 9:00am in Wesley Hall on the 6th floor of the Sports Block. All parents are welcome.

The programme will include a talk by the Principal on current happenings at school, plus a Q&A session, followed by an update on PSP activities and morning tea.

ACS (International) Merchandise for Sale

Suitable as gifts and for everyday use, the following merchandise are available for sale. Samples can be viewed at the Reception, General Office.

Please proceed to the Reception during office hours to purchase any of these items. Only cash or cheque payments are accepted.





Cap - S\$5.00

3-Folded Umbrella - S\$12.00

Ball Pen - S\$12.00





Long Umbrella - S\$20.00

64GB Flash Drive - S\$20.00







Travel Pouch - S\$10.00



Drawstring Sport Bag - S\$10.00



Travel Adaptor - S\$15.00

STUDENT SUCCESS

Year 6 Students Received 2019 National Youth Achievement Gold Award

On 4 October, along with participants from other schools around Singapore, we each received the National Youth Achievement Gold Award in a presentation ceremony graced by Mdm President Halimah Yacob. The ceremony was imbued with driven awardees from all walks of life and their elaborate, sustainable projects to serve the country and community in the most consequential ways possible.

The Gold award comprised service, outdoor, skill and sports components that we had to partake in for a period of 18 consecutive months. We were able to choose an activity that we were interested in, to satisfy each of the required components. For the service component, Sarah volunteered at the Toa Payoh Polyclinic for a total of 60 hours, assisting elderly patients entering the clinic. The highlight of our programme was the Residential Project that we independently carried out with a minimum of 60 service hours. It helped us maximise our contributions to the community around us as we independently designed our means of helping out. Varun devised a custommade curriculum to teach computer science and informatics across three schools in the slums of Ahmedabad, India, while partnering with an non-governmental organisation (NGO) to help his cause.

The award encouraged us to be well-rounded individuals while being able to learn, grow and serve. We built upon our leadership skills by serving the needs of our community, developed stewardship for the environment and physical and mental wellness through healthy living.

We would highly recommend all students to partake in the NYAA programme to develop leadership, hone valuable skills and serve the country, community and society to the fullest.

Sarah Darmawan, 6 GHK (2019) and Varun Shah, 6 Oldham (2019)

If you would like to know more about the NYAA programme, look out for information coming your way soon and/or see Ms Laura Blunt, Activities Week & NYAA Coordinator.









ACS (International) Chamber Orchestra: Trip to Austria and Czechia

From 24 November to 1 December 2019, the ACS (International)'s very own Chamber Orchestra embarked on their annual trip to visit three locations: Vienna and Salzburg in Austria, and Prague in the Czech Republic.



The ensemble gave public performances at various churches in Austria and Prague, such as The Votivkirche, Pfarrkirche St. Vitalis, and Korunni Chapel. This allowed both senior and new musicians of the group to hone their skills. After hours of hard work put in to master each piece of our repertoire, we were rewarded with outstanding applause from the audiences, which motivated us to perform better and improve each time. We were also very fortunate to have a workshop with one of the members of the famed Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. This opportunity gave us a chance to learn new skills and techniques that improved our performances.

Other than the musical aspect of the tour, we also visited several tourist hotspots such as the Haus Der Musik, Salzburg Fortress, the Salt Mines of Berchtesgaden and The Mirabell Palace, to name a few. Visiting various Christmas markets in each country was also a highlight as we got to admire each Christmas market's beautiful decorations, as well as appreciate the unique cultures of each country.





In my opinion, the best part of the trip was the opportunity to spend time with fellow orchestra musicians. It was especially memorable to spend time with the Year 6 graduates as it was their last time performing with the chamber orchestra as students. The trip allowed us to get to know each other better, leading us to be better friends and thus improving together in our performances as well. Special thanks to our conductor, Mr Lim Soon Lee, and teachers Ms Carol Ling and Ms Josephine Teo for their guidance and support during the trip.

Lauren Chye, 2 Thoburn (2019)



Student Reflections

Being able to perform in such beautiful churches was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will never forget.

Larissa Chan, 2 SVM (2019)

Exploring two new countries, performing to foreign audiences, riding the local railways were some of the best experiences of this trip!

Koh Shan Chun, 5 Oldham (2019)

The Austrian and Czech cultures are diverse and enlightening for not just those are interested in musical history but for everyone. *Fahim Mohammed, 4 GHK (2019)*



EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Orientation I



7 January was a memorable day for students who have just joined the warm ACS (International) family in 2020. They started their life with the school with a wonderful orientation programme, themed around the ACS IGNITE Values. This year, young juniors from Year 1 and Year 2 form 80% of the new students. Over 250 of them were divided into 14 groups, led by our senior orientation game leaders.

The 15th Student Council oriented the new students on the school's history and core values before the programme continued with exciting icebreakers and games. The students particularly enjoyed themselves in the wet game, where everyone battled for the top position amid slippery benches and water fights. They were introduced to the batch dance which was in sync with uplifting music, and performed it together with individual team cheers during the highlight of the orientation, The Bonfire, which was opened officially by our principal, Mr Rob Burrough. It was a heartwarming and memorable event, enjoyed by all parents, guardians, teachers and the students.

We keep the new students in our prayers and may they be blessed in their ACS (International) journey, and practise the IGNITE values throughout their time with the school.

15th Student Council











ALUMNI NEWS

Catching up with Gautam Ramasamy



On 3 January, the 2019 IB results release day, Gautam Ramasamy (former 6 GHK), dressed neatly in a light blue long sleeve shirt and black pants appeared calm but confident when he walked into the Library with two of his friends. He was pleasantly surprised when our Principal, Mr Burrough, called out his name as the school's sole perfect scorer at the Library packed with anxious former Year 6 students awaiting to collect their results.

We caught up with the newly minted fourth ACS (International)'s IB 45 pointer who agreed to an email interview with the Communications Department. Have a read.

You joined the school in April 2016. How did the school prepare you for IGCSE and for IBDP?

I was privileged to be taught by experienced teachers with years of experience in IGCSE and IB. Many of them were (and are) even official IB examiners and markers, so I received the best feedback to improve my answering techniques and coursework.

The small class sizes allowed to me to actively ask questions and clarify my doubts. Through this, I ensured never to leave a gap in the concepts taught to me. Learning here is a two-way street; the student must first have the passion to learn if the teacher is to be successful in imparting the knowledge.

I liked the culture of enforcing independence; I was never pressured to do the coursework in a particular way or answer questions in a standard format just because it was proven to get more marks. I had the freedom to explore my own interests and curiosities in my coursework and cultivate my own answering style.

Further, I had access to copious resources in the library for Theory of Knowledge among other subjects, which came in handy in the research stages of my IB coursework.

Tell us about your IB journey. What are the ups and downs? What did you do to keep the ups going? How did you overcome the downs?

Personally, I felt that mastering subject content for pen and paper exams was quite manageable. However, it was difficult to juggle alongside the added load of coursework because one really doesn't know when to stop perfecting it. As a result, I exceeded the point of diminishing returns for most of my coursework, which ended up eating into the time I could have spent studying subject content. Then again, the coursework was the most fun part of IB, so I don't regret it.

I did have one massive setback in the first half of IB year 2 when I lost a sense of purpose, but I managed to regain it after reading some self-help books, and consulting some teachers.







2018/19 was a busy year for you...Head Boy role, the ICMAT, A*STAR National Science scholarship, poster award, journal publication, etc. How did you juggle these commitments/achievements with regards to the IB course, family and leisure?

Confucius once said: "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life" Similarly, I loved my daily challenges, so I never saw it as work or felt pressured by "commitments" because I never saw them as such.

I made sure never to have emotional attachments with my achievements and never to confuse my identity with them. If I achieved something, it was fine, and if I had failed, I just learned from the mistakes and made sure never to repeat them.

I didn't especially designate time in my schedule for leisure or studies. In fact, they were one and the same. I enjoyed reading beyond syllabus and found that I remembered those things better than what was in-syllabus. I also read philosophy to keep sane, went running to keep fit, and meditated for mental focus.



In three single adjectives or phrases, describe the school and elaborate on each of them.

Fun

My teachers always had ways to make classes fun with interesting anecdotes or jokes, which made the sometimes dry content more palatable. I looked forward to meeting them in general because they were more like friends than formal instructors.

Supportive

Whether I just needed to clarify subject doubts or someone to discuss the deep questions of life, my teachers were always there for me. Moreover, they responded to my countless emails with detailed explanations to clarify my doubts or if I was stuck with a certain problem.

Rigorous

The teachers stretched us to our limits and set the standards high. They set the common tests and prelim exams much harder than the finals, so when the real exams came around, they seemed easier than what we had practised and we all fared pretty well. Additionally, they made special effort to hone skills that were not directly tested – like presentation skills and public speaking skills – through interactive classroom activities to develop all-rounders.

Any advice for your juniors especially the Year 6 students?

Don't use any social media or play games. They are pernicious time sinks. They also break your train of thought when you're trying to be productive. Abstinence from social media and games shouldn't be something you feel uncomfortable with — it must come naturally out of your understanding that they are pointless. Otherwise, it won't stick.

Have fun learning. Live and breathe the subject. Make it your new lens to view the world, not information to memorise and regurgitate for marks. Marks come naturally if you have curiosity for the subject. Never ask whether something is in-syllabus or not. If you are interested, just learn it.

Don't overspend time on maintenance activities — like eating, sleeping, hygiene, socialising, transport, etc. — because there is the opportunity cost of the time you could have spent learning. Throughout IB, I met my human needs just enough to keep my mental faculties functioning at full capacity.



Understand that serving NS is next and then read Physics at varsity. Can you share with us your future plan, like potential career?

I will become a scientist, but first, I want to study pure physics at university, and do a PhD. Then, I aim to pursue research in quantum physics with applications in quantum computing.





PSP NEWS

Parent School Partners (PSP)

The Parent School Partners comprise the Exco that oversees a variety of events on behalf of the parents of ACS (International) students, which includes:

- Supporting various school events, e.g. Teachers' Day and ACSpirit de Corps
- Collaborating with student groups on PSP-sponsored events and student-initiative activities
- Organising parent-bonding activities and workshops, e.g. "Cyber wellness for your teen"
- Organising monthly prayer meeting for parents
- Attending a monthly meeting with the Principal and Vice-Principals to raise and discuss issues, and to act as a sound board for the school

Parent Volunteers (PV)

Join us in sharing your thoughts, experiences and concerns as your child journeys through their education. From involvement in school activities to engagement with the school, your participation makes our school family better and stronger. By volunteering with PV, you are able to put your skills and hobbies, as well as your ideas and experiences, to use for a worthy cause – for your child and all the students in the ACS (International) community. Activities with PV include:

- School events organised by the PSP
- Parent activities
- Parents' Prayer Club

To find out more about PSP or becoming a Parent Volunteer, or to raise an issue with the school's leadership on your behalf, email us at acspsp.net@gmail.com or psp@acsinternational.edu.sg

SPORTS NEWS

Year 2 Student at Skate Bangkok 2019 Competition

During the December holiday, Claire Chung (2 Thoburn, 2019) competed in Skate Bangkok 2019 – ISI Asia held at Sub-zero Ice Skate Club at Megabangna Bangkok from 5 to 8 December 2019 alongside 200 participants from around the world. Claire competed in two categories, Solo Freestyle 6 and Open Freestyle Gold in which she achieved second and third place respectively.

We are proud of Claire's achievements and development in the sport and wish her all the best in her sports endeavours.





UPCOMING EVENTS

January	Event
16	O 'level' results released (17:00)
17	 Programme for Second intake of Year 5 Senior staff available for admissions interviews (09:00am onwards) Introduction to IBDP (14:00–15:00) Higher Education Seminar and Q&A session (15:15–16:00)
18	Singapore Orientation for International Students
21	• CCA Fair (15:15–16:15)
23–28	Lunar New Year Break (SCHOOL CLOSED)
30	• IB Core — Year 6 EE/Year 5 Academic Integrity (08:00–08:35)
31	 Lunar New Year Assembly (08:00–08:40) Normal classes (Periods 1 and 2) (08:45–10:55) Staff Lunch (12:30–14:00)
February	Event
1	Oldham and Thoburn Houses Camp
3	• Tutor & Parent Meetings (CKS, GHK, LSG, Oldham) (17:30–19:00)
5	• Tutor & Parent Meetings (SVM, TCT, Thoburn, TKK) (17:30–19:00)
6	PSP Coffee Morning (08:45–09:30)
7	GHK House Camp



