



# A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

The Li Po Chun United World College is, in many ways, Hong Kong's most international school, writes **Ben Young**



**The college likes to see itself as a local international school**

ARNETT EDWARDS



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**T**he Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong (LPC) is unique among schools in Hong Kong. Schools here are usually described as "local" or "international", but the LPC straddles the two definitions. It's the most international school in Hong Kong, but it's also technically a local school.

According to the Education Bureau, an international school must be privately owned and have 70 per cent of its school places allocated to foreign passport holders. LPC has only 60 per cent of its students coming from overseas compared to 40 per cent local students. The school, founded in 1992, is also part of the government's Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS). That means it's a "local" school.

However, LPC's student body holds, incredibly, 81 passports from around the world, making it the most culturally diverse school in the city even if international schools are included.

"The college likes to see itself as a local international school," says LPC principal Arnett Edwards. "International in outlook and having students of over 80 different nationalities. However, the college is also local in the sense that it has students from a diverse range of backgrounds within Hong Kong."

The school is open to Year 12/Year 13 students who, over the course of two years, study the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. As a full boarding school, all 250 students reside at the beautiful and spacious campus in Wu Kai Sha, New Territories.

Another unique feature of LPC is that the entire teaching faculty, as well as Edwards, also live on site. This arrangement generates a strong sense of togetherness within the small and vibrant community. "We live together and learn together," explains Kate Kam, admissions director.



Group activities are a big part of the LPC experience.

LPC is part of a global educational organisation called United World Colleges (UWC). UWC has 17 schools, each located in unique countries scattered across four continents worldwide. UWC schools are, for the most part, boarding schools that accept a large percentage of their students from overseas. The idea is to foster a diverse, inclusive and forward-thinking learning atmosphere.

Kam believes the prestige of the UWC brand makes LPC's admissions process highly competitive. "Our school has, relatively speaking, a far more complicated admissions process than most schools in Hong Kong," she says. "The overseas students fly in from their home countries; they don't come from expatriate families who live in the city."

Anyone wishing to apply to LPC must do so through UWC's Hong Kong committee and undergo a

rigorous selection process. The committee, after looking at all the initial applications, decides which applicants will go through to the next phase of LPC admissions, as well as which applicants may be selected to attend a UWC school overseas.

During the second phase of admission, known as the "on-campus challenge day", potential students spend a day at the LPC campus, and participate in a variety of activities. This allows applicants to become more familiar with the school, and vice versa. "It's like a day camp," explains Kam. "Everything is organised by alumni and current students. They design a programme featuring different tasks, so that applicants can get a taste of the UWC experience."

Candidates are selected strictly on merit and fit. Students whose families can't afford admission fees are often granted partial or full



We live together and learn together

KATE KAM



## DIRECT SUBSIDY SCHEME



LPC has a strong alumni network.

scholarships. "We don't ask Hong Kong applicants about their financial situation," Kam says. "We go through the entire process without knowing if the candidate will be able to pay or not. When we give an offer, we ask for the family's financial documents to see how much sponsorship they need."

May Yuk Lee, assistant fundraising and communications manager, works diligently with the school's development office to raise scholarship money and ensure that places

are given to the most deserving applicants.

"We spend a lot of time raising funds for student scholarships through different means," Lee says. "For example, we work with partnering foundations and donors. Also, we get a lot of support from alumni, who may have received scholarships when they studied here and want to give something back."

Despite LPC's status as an elite academic school, Edwards makes a point

of letting parents and applicants know that the UWC experience is about more than achieving a high IB score. "LPC focuses on the all-round development of a young person, not only academics," he says.

To this end, to fulfil the IB Diploma's Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) requirement, LPC students must participate in a minimum of four Quan Cai (QC) activities each term. QC means "all-round development" in Chinese.

The programme has five components: community service, creativity, action, campus support, and global concern. Activities range from different forms of charity work, to coral monitoring and deep sea diving in Hoi Ha Wan.

"Second-year students take leadership positions for many of the QCs, instead of the staff," says Kam. "Teachers are mostly there to supervise. It's different from most local schools, where teachers tell students what to do and when to do it. Students make their own schedules and plan their own activities."

Pupils will get the chance to travel abroad during project week, a key component of the QC programme. The school also organises "cultural evenings" every couple of months, which further emphasises LPC's appreciation of global thought and diversity.

Whether you call LPC local or international, it undoubtedly lives up to the UWC mantra of "education like no other".

