

# Mwanza International School

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**Mwanza International School Curriculum & Assessments:**

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The school follows the Cambridge curriculum, modified to meet the needs of expatriate and Tanzanian children in Mwanza. The Cambridge Curriculum gives clear objectives for English, Mathematics and Science with external examinations to assess progress.

The curriculum is skills based with emphasis on the ability to use English, Mathematical, Scientific and IT skills. A lot of the work is cross curricular, especially in younger classes.

It also seeks to develop 'the whole child', with many extra-curricular activities taking place outside the classroom, especially for older children.

The classrooms are set up in the same way as a UK primary classroom, with carpet areas, water/sinks and projectors.

## English

The school uses the Oxford Reading Tree as its central reading scheme. This scheme is used in most UK schools. It is tried and tested and instills a love of books in the children. Once they have started on the scheme the children take home a reading book every day. In addition the school has a well-stocked library which children are able to borrow from.

All children are expected to read every day at home, for a length of time appropriate to their age. This is essential if they are to make good progress with English.

The children are taught skills of grammar and spelling etc, but more importantly, they have daily opportunities to practise these skills in their reading and writing.

There are also daily opportunities to develop the skills of speaking and listening, with discussion, debate and drama.

## Mathematics

The school uses the Cambridge Mathematics scheme. Skills are taught systematically with the children learning the processes of number and the basic number facts. However, there is also plenty of opportunity for practical activities to make the subject concrete and meaningful and to promote understanding.

## Science

Science is part of the core curriculum. We use the Cambridge Science scheme. It is taught in a practical way with children learning how to channel their natural inquisitiveness into scientific inquiry. As students move into Secondary, we utilise our wide range of equipment to ensure that children learn through doing.

## ICT

The children are taught basic ICT skills which they have regular opportunities to practise. Tablets are in all year groups. We focus on a range of skills including programming, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and safe searching. All secondary students are issued with their own school tablet ,which they utilise across the curriculum.

## **Kiswahili**

Kiswahili is taught by teachers who are native speakers. The children learn and develop the language at their own level, whether they are expatriates or Tanzanian citizens, who follow the Tanzanian Kiswahili curriculum.

## **French**

The older children learn French. There is an emphasis on speaking and listening with opportunities to develop vocabulary through role-play.

## **History**

History generally follows international topics such as the Age of Exploration, Slavery, the Industrial Revolution, and the study of civilizations, rather than subjects which are only relevant to one part of the world. There is an emphasis on understanding what life was like in different periods of history and how events from long ago have affected life today.

## **Geography**

Human Geography is also taught through international themes such as development and climate change. The local area and region are studied and compared with places in areas at different stages of development. The children also learn about physical geography, vegetation and climate.

The school seeks to take advantage of local phenomenon to help the understanding of nature and geography. The children have had field-studies to the Serengeti, Geita gold mine, and Bukoba.

## **Religious Education**

R.E. is not geared to any one faith. The school endeavours to give the children an understanding of all the major faiths and traditions of members of the community.

The school also seeks to promote high moral and ethical standards with regular discussion of moral issues at an appropriate level for the children.

## **Art**

Art is an important part of the curriculum. As well as learning basic skills of observation and drawing, art enables children to explore ways of expressing themselves. All classrooms are equipped with art materials and water on tap.

## **Music & Drama**

Regular singing and music making is a key element in the school week. Drama gives the children an opportunity to use their English and to explore issues beyond their normal experience. In the younger classes drama is about role play and areas of the classroom are set up for an activity e.g. a shop.

## **Physical Education**

We regard PE as an important part of the curriculum: a fit and healthy body promotes a fit and healthy mind, and team games help the children to develop skills of perseverance, co-operation and leadership.

The children develop basic ball skills and, as they grow older, learn to play team games. Most PE activity takes place outside where we have football pitches, a netball court, basketball court, climbing frame and playground.

Our 20m swimming pool enables all the children to have regular swimming lessons, with a professional swimming teacher/life guard; swimming in the school is at a high standard. Being next to a major lake, we regard swimming as a vital skill.

## Pre-School

The Pre-school class follows the British Early Years Foundation Curriculum. This activity-based programme provides children with a broad range of skills and knowledge that gives a solid foundation for sound progress throughout their school life.

By way of planned activities and purposeful play, children develop an enthusiasm for learning and have the opportunity to practise and broaden their English in a safe and friendly environment.

The children are divided into Butterflies, who will reach 4 years of age during the school year, and Caterpillars, who will be 3 during the year.

The younger children have their own play area, where they can be closely supervised during their outdoor activities.

The children are treated as individuals and they have activities which are appropriate for their stage of development.

Children learn pre-reading skills and, when they are ready, are introduced to letter sounds. Likewise they learn to count and identify numbers, when they are able to understand these concepts.

The children normally start the pre-school at the age of three, but in practice we take children who are two and a half years old provided they are ready. This means that they are toilet trained and are emotionally ready to spend three and a half hours away from their parents. As well as the regular morning session we have introduced an optional afternoon session for Butterflies who are ready.

## Key Stage 1

There are three key stage one classes: Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. The classes are small, with an average of around 20 children, and for much of the day classes have the benefit of a classroom assistant. This means the children get a lot of individual attention, which keeps them focused and on task.

We have high expectations but the children are treated as individuals and develop at their own speed. If they find a concept easy they can quickly move on, if they are struggling they can spend more time making sure they have mastered it.

During Key Stage 1 the children learn lots of basic literacy and numeracy. Our main thrust is to get the children to read and to understand what they are reading.

## Key Stage 2

This year there are four Key Stage 2 classes: Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6.

Our classes are small and the children are treated as individuals, progressing at their own speed. Children are grouped according to ability in mathematics and languages. If they find concepts easy they are given extension work. If they find concepts difficult they have extra basic work to consolidate.

All students complete external examinations at the end of Year Six. These examinations are set by Cambridge International Examinations and give a clear unbiased view of student progress.

## Secondary

This year there are three secondary classes. We started with Year Seven in 2021 and will then add one class each year until we reach Year Eleven in the academic year 2025/2026.

The secondary classes will follow the Cambridge curriculum. The first students will sit their Key Stage 3 exams in 2024, then the IGCSE's (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) in 2026.

The school has three plots next to our swimming pool, and these are the basis of our secondary department. There are currently four classrooms. There is a basketball court, beautiful gardens and a 40m playing field.

The Secondary curriculum includes English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, ICT, French, Kiswahili, Art, Music, PE, Swimming and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education).

In the British system, secondary classes start in Year Seven. Our year 7 and 8 classes are taught by a team of nine dedicated teachers.

There is an increasing emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the international curriculum, both as a subject and as a means of on-line learning. It is going to be increasingly important that the students have the means to access on-line learning.

The school provides each Secondary student with a tablet, which will have subject programs and information, as well as access to the internet. The students will continue to use textbooks and library books, however the tablets will give the flexibility to study a variety of topics, with learning materials on screen.

This tablet will be an essential part of the children's learning and will stay with them during Key Stage 3. It will be the school's property, and should only be used for school purposes. If the tablet is broken then it will be the responsibility of the parents to replace it. This approach to ICT will enable all students to make full use of on-line and digital learning, making communication easier.

## Assessments

In the Cambridge curriculum children are regularly assessed.

Our formal assessments are set by the Cambridge Board of Examinations. These formal assessments are in English, Mathematics and Science at the end of Year Six and Nine. They are called the Checkpoint Examinations. Both Primary and Secondary Checkpoint Examination results are recognized within Tanzania, and internationally.

In all classes, internal assessment takes place twice yearly and is used for the reports, which are given to parents in December and July.

Assessments and examinations help us a lot by highlighting weaknesses and showing where we need to focus our teaching.

In addition to formal examinations, the children are continually assessed on the work they do in class. We have high expectations of our children. Most of them speak English as a second or third language but still they achieve at levels that compare well with first language English learners. Of course we have some children with special educational needs who struggle, but we also have students who are ahead of the level expected for their age.