

Hong Kong Adventist Academy

Charmaine Ng visits the non-profit school in Clearwater Bay



Set amidst the greenery of dense forests in Clearwater Bay, Hong Kong Adventist Academy (HKAA) is a Christian through-train school that emphasises a healthy, balanced education with a goal to develop compassion and integrity in its students. The school's strategic location enjoys all the benefits of nature, looking out over the South China Sea and the islands that

rise from it, at the same time being only 15 minutes from the bustling city of Tseung Kwan O and Sai Kung.

As a holistic Seventh-day Adventist Christian school, HKAA is part of the second-largest private educational system in the world, with over 8,500 schools, 100,000 teachers and two million students. The global network has been in service

since 1853, and in 2011, HKAA was established as a locally licensed English private school in Hong Kong.

Non-profit approach to education

Upon our visit to HKAA, the first thing that jumps out at us is the warmth of its community. We are greeted like family



which are recognised worldwide and prepares students to begin their university studies.

Diverse community

Whilst HKAA is a Christian school, its student body is a melting pot of religions. We are told that aside from Christianity, individuals with varying beliefs from Buddhism to Hinduism are brought together here. And this diversity is not just limited to religion – the community is also diverse in terms of ethnicity and family background, with people coming in from all walks of life. For example, teachers at HKAA come from 17 different countries, all speak fluent English and half are multilingual.

What the school does take from Christianity, though, is its values. Most teachers are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and are happy to instil in students compassion, thankfulness and service. Regular morning meetings and assembly time are held to bring togetherness to the school. Students participate in food drives to help those in need and develop empathy on the way. And, every year, those

by the teaching staff and surrounded by smiling faces all around. The atmosphere is comfortable, humble and a breath of fresh air after countless visits to bigger schools in the city. Perhaps it's the school's small size (in terms of population – its spacious campus is something else altogether), or perhaps it's the fact that its values stem from Christian teachings, but every interaction feels more genuine at HKAA.

Later on, we learn that the school is part of a global private non-profit organisation, which explains the warmth that is so rarely felt at other institutions. Here, the focus isn't on recruiting as many students as possible for financial gain. Instead, every staff member, from teachers to the administration team, has a sincere love of educating and helping students.

Flexible curriculum

HKAA's primary curriculum meets local Hong Kong Education Bureau standards, emphasising Hong Kong objectives in subjects like Chinese and Maths while simultaneously challenging students to meet international standards in courses like English and Science. This way, HKAA enjoys the benefits of both systems and students are taught to perform at high levels of academic excellence.

Meanwhile, the school's secondary students follow the US Common Core and have a choice between the College Preparatory Diploma or the Standard High School Diploma. They will go on to take the ACT, SAT or PSAT,






in high school are taken on service-learning trips to countries such as Cambodia and India to widen their horizons.

Campus

One of the highlights of HKAA is its large campus, which we had a chance to enjoy in person on a lovely autumn afternoon. Rather

than being enclosed to a limited amount of space, students at HKAA have access to a vast, open green site dotted with Grade III historic buildings. These buildings are low-rise red brick structures in Art Deco style, boasting intricate architectural details like archways and double-return staircases. Set against the backdrop of a tranquil lawn, HKAA reminds us of a university campus elsewhere in the world where square footage comes unrestricted.

Of the multiple red brick blocks at HKAA, two are reserved for staff accommodation and one is designated as a student dormitory. Students in Grade 7 and above who wish to live on campus can choose between a five-day programme and a seven-day programme. The former is popular with local students who reside far from the school and the latter is attractive to international students.

Last, but definitely not least, the school emphasises healthy eating and is fully vegetarian. Both HKAA's canteen and outsourced catering services are wholly plant-based, with a strict 'no meat on campus' rule. This refreshing approach to eating is embraced by teachers, students and even parents, showing that the community here is forward-thinking and receptive to change. 



Meet Ms Rachel Rudisaile, Elementary Vice Principal



Can you tell us about your career? What brought you to Hong Kong?

I was born in the US and grew up in a military family. I've loved travelling since I was young, so before I finished college, I flew over to

Czech Republic to teach. Then, I returned to the US to pursue a degree in education. After obtaining my degree, I moved to China, where I taught for seven years in private international schools. Eventually, I decided I wanted a change of scenery and arrived in Hong Kong.

What attracted you to HKAA?

I'm a parent, so the first thing I look for in a school is a community that is safe for my own child. I wanted somewhere that was good for my son, with a warm and safe environment and no bullying. As a non-profit school with a small community, HKAA ticked all the boxes.

What's your favourite part about what you do?

The best part about HKAA is the people – we've got a great group of students, a supportive parent community and a collaborative team of staff. You can tell the heart of education here is in the right place,

all the stakeholders are on board and rowing the boat.

Tell us about a memorable experience at school?

Our Christmas programme last year really stood out to me. We had students perform in an orchestra and a choir to showcase their talents. It was one of the last times we gathered face-to-face as one big family before the pandemic and it was so heartening to see students take pride in the work they had prepared.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to spend time with my family and enjoy the different sides of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Adventist Academy has rolling admissions and welcomes prospective students to register for a campus tour at hkaa.edu.hk

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