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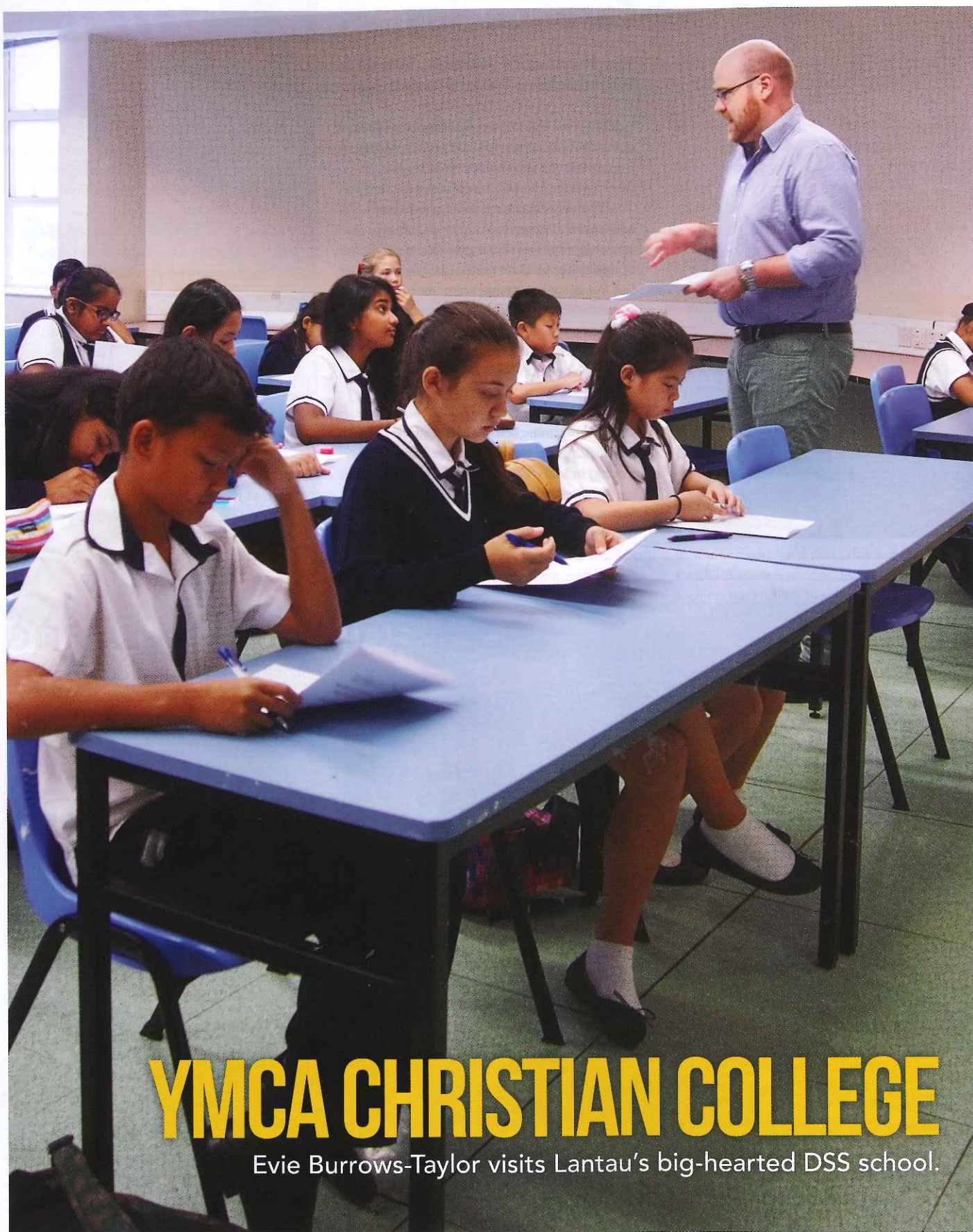
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cosy things
to do

Coochy coo

Hot chocolate, onesies,
beanies and mittens





YMCA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Evie Burrows-Taylor visits Lantau's big-hearted DSS school.



YHKCC encourages a balance of sports and studies.

YMCA Christian College (YHKCC) is a Lantau secondary school that was founded in 2003 on strong Christian principles and continues to prioritise the values of education, kindness and self-improvement. Located amid beautiful scenery, near Tung Chung MTR station, its serene setting is reflected in a positive, happy atmosphere among both teachers and students.

Its five core values are based on the Bible, encouraging pupils to build a community that cares, act with integrity, be responsible, respect themselves and others and to serve one another in love. Principal

Dion Chen believes these lessons play an important part in every child's development, Christian or otherwise.

Although students are expected to take part in Christian religious activities, YHKCC welcomes students of all religions and backgrounds.

"We set up this school for everybody, as long as they meet our academic requirements, regardless of religion, race or gender," Chen says.

"We never set a quota for the number of international students, Christians and non-Christians. We are a multicultural, multi-faith school and believe a positive experience here could result in alumni

joining the Christian faith later in life."

International students from more than 40 countries make up more than 70 per cent of the YHKCC cohort and about 38 per cent of teachers are expats from Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Japan and India. Classes are taught in English and the campus is stunning – "not beautiful but functional", according to Chen – with plenty of greenery and surrounded by unspoiled hillsides. Outstanding sports facilities include an outdoor artificial turf pitch, multi-purpose sports field, a four-lane 100-metre running track and a long-jump sandpit.

YHKCC is not an independent



Students, who come from diverse backgrounds, can take advantage of the school's outstanding facilities.

international school, however, but part of the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), receiving funding from the Education Bureau as well as private funding. Its large international student population is largely a result of its location in Tung Chung, which is popular with international parents looking for the right environment for their children.

The school caters to its diverse intake by offering IGCSEs and British A-levels as well as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), giving students the opportunity to choose their own academic path. The teacher to student ratio is 1:10,

putting it among the upper echelons of the city's international schools, and its results have been steadily improving, with a large majority of students passing in most subjects at IGCSE and A-level.

Students are expected to reach a minimum academic requirement – a target that continually moves higher as pupils progress – and Chen is keen to highlight the school's extracurricular activities.

"We really want our children to be developed all-rounders, not just focused on one area," he says. "We believe students have their own talents; some are good at

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The teacher to student ratio is 1:10 and results are steadily improving

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free tickets to its annual funfair, which in 2013 attracted 3,500 visitors, and included performances, games and a bouncy castle.

Students are also encouraged to try to improve people's lives beyond their immediate environment, with annual community service trips to Thailand, Taiwan, Cambodia and China.

"Everytime we complete a programme, the reflections of the students are very touching, often they say they couldn't have

imagined what they saw," Chen says.

While operating a school as diverse as YHKCC isn't easy, Chen and his team welcome the challenge.

"As long as there are challenges in front of me I do my best to overcome them, enjoying the overwhelming sense of achievement that comes with it."

This generosity of spirit and determination to meet difficulties head on is what YHKCC is all about. ☺



The YHKCC campus and some of its students.

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PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE



DION CHEN

Evie Burrows-Taylor quizzes the principal of YMCA Christian College.

What did you want to be when you were a child?

My accounting teacher had a big impact on my career choice. I told her I wanted to be a teacher and she told me to study for an accounting degree first, that way I'd have more choices later on. I followed her advice.

Why did you become a teacher?

The main reason was because of my teachers. I love working and being part of a school, and part of that is sharing my experiences. When I moved back to Hong Kong in 2003, I found it hard to find a job and started as a teaching assistant in a special needs school, where I learned a lot about special needs and the difficulties that some children face in Hong Kong.

How long have you been a teacher?

About 12 years.

What are some of the challenges associated with being a principal?

I don't face too many challenges. We have set goals, so everybody knows what our mission is, and a very open culture – we try to discuss everything with colleagues and listen to their views – so once a policy comes out, everyone knows what they need to do.

What do you enjoy most about being a principal?

Teaching in the classroom is the happiest time. The face-to-face interaction with the students can't be replaced and the job of a principal is a bit different.



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What do you like most about being a principal in Hong Kong?

Hong Kong is a really multicultural city and this school is a mini Hong Kong. Being a principal in this city is not easy, but I enjoy challenges.

How do you spend your free time?

I spend it with my family and helping the community. I do sports as well – one of them is quite weird, canoe polo. It combines kayaking and basketball, so you need to paddle a kayak and get the ball at the same time. Every two years we have an international tournament, and I participate as a referee. It's quite an exciting game.

If you had to pick a talent what would you choose?

Something related to the arts. I can play sport and study, but I'm totally blind when it

comes to these areas. I can sing, but no one would like to hear me.

What quality do you value most in other people?

I value people who are serious about their life and work. If you do everything seriously, you can achieve anything. I don't appreciate people who lack focus.

When you were a child, who was your favourite teacher and why?

My accounting teacher. She told me off a lot, you know, in the traditional Hong Kong way, teasing students, scolding them. But I liked her style and she gave me a lot of inspiration.

What was your favourite subject?

Business and accounting – as a subject, not as a career. ☹



YMCA Christian College

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