

Peponi House Preparatory School

PEPONI HOUSE

The school is in Lower Kabete, a lovely green suburb to the north west of Nairobi. We have 11 acres of grounds, so there is plenty of room for the 395 children to play and to grow. Classes are kept to a maximum of 20 across the school, with three classes in all year groups.

The school began 30 years ago with a handful of children and a few teachers.

There are now 39 full time teachers, together with 7 classroom assistants and 4 part-time games coaches. The school is well equipped with good resources in all areas. The site is fully networked with good wireless access. There are interactive whiteboards in all classrooms and dual-user boards in the junior classrooms. The school library is very well stocked and we use the Accelerated Reader programme. Art and Design is very well catered for, as is music, and we have excellent sports facilities.

We follow the British National Curriculum and the Common Entrance syllabus, but there is a distinctly Kenyan feel to what we do. The children are taught Kiswahili from Year 2 and there are field trips to the Rift Valley, Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Mountains. All members of staff are actively encouraged to experience as much of the country as possible. Sport plays a major role in the lives of the children and of the teachers, as is the case in any good prep school.

The children play cricket, rounders, hockey, rugby and netball as major sports, along with athletics, cross-country, tennis and football as minor sports. We also swim all year round, although the January term is our main swimming term, and we have a flourishing swimming club before and after school.

The school is a happy, vibrant place full of polite and friendly children who work hard and play hard. We encourage respect for each other and there is a wonderful mix of children from different cultures and backgrounds. There is a 50/50 gender balance within the school and we also have a very good mix of cultures, faiths and ethnic backgrounds. There are currently over thirty different nationalities within the school.



Peponi House is a member of IAPS and the ten Kenyan IAPS schools now constitute their own District, with a representative on Council. This considerable achievement reflects the excellence of the schools in Kenya and the high standards, both in and out of the classroom, which we attain.

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CURRICULUM

The children start in Year 2, when they are 6 years old. In the Junior School (Years 2, 3 and 4) most lessons are taught by class teachers. Specialist teachers teach ICT, Music, French (from Year 3), Kiswahili, Games, PE, Tennis and Swimming.

In Year 5, class teachers are responsible for delivering English, PSE and Humanities; from Year 6 the children are all taught by subject specialists.

The curriculum is broad and well

balanced, as one would expect to find in any good prep school. The children in Year 6 spend one term learning each of Latin, Kiswahili and Spanish, with the option to pursue one of these subjects in Years 7 and 8. Computing is taught at least once a week and ICT is also embedded in the curriculum. We have excellent facilities and we are constantly looking to improve the teaching and learning in the school.

We like to make the most of our location, so the children spend a lot of time out of doors - certainly more than would be the case in UK. Kenya features heavily in the Humanities curriculum and we like to use this wonderful country as much as possible to enhance the children's learning.

KENYA

One of the obvious attractions of teaching at Peponi House is the opportunity to explore Kenya, a country of amazing beauty and variety: game parks, mountains, deserts, the Rift Valley and its lakes, the Indian Ocean Coast. It is possible to go from snow-capped Mount Kenya, through alpine scenery and montane forest, down through savannah, across arid plains, to end up on the coral-fringed Indian Ocean coast in the space of a couple of days.

School field trips go all over the country and there are, of course, the school holidays in which to explore this magical country.

CLIMATE

Though only a hundred miles or so from the equator, the school is at an altitude of about 1,700 m (circa 5,900 feet), so it can be decidedly cool after dark. The daytime temperatures in Nairobi vary between about 20°C in July/August and 26°C in February/March. The climate is therefore about as near perfect as it is possible to get. Rain is normally confined to the two wet seasons: October / November and March / April; when in Africa, expect the unexpected!



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The sun is, of course, very powerful. It is a strict school rule that children always wear sunhats during break/games times, and members of staff are advised to follow suit. The altitude and the cool nights mean that Nairobi is not regarded as a malarial area.



ACCOMMODATION

Peponi House is unable to offer on-site accommodation. The school does, however, have a number of excellent properties that are available to full time members of the teaching staff at a subsidised rent. These properties are all within a few minutes' drive from the school.

SALARY

You will be paid in Kenya shillings and the amounts, if you convert them to pounds or dollars, may not seem very high but are commensurate with UK. Peponi House has the (deserved) reputation of paying very well and Kenya shillings go a long way. Basics such as food, drink and petrol are a considerably less than their UK equivalents. Start-up costs can seem quite high, especially if you insist on having a lot of freight, renting a smart house and buying a new car. What I can guarantee is that a teacher here has a much better standard of living than one in UK.

SECURITY

Careful attention to security is very much a feature of life in Kenya, especially in Nairobi. The vast majority of Kenyans are delightful people but, as is the case in every country in the world, there are a few unpleasant ones. Most accommodation is provided with an alarm and an 'askari' (security guard). The gates, fences and armed police can be disconcerting to begin with, but it very soon becomes an accepted part of everyday life. After recent events around the world, we all know that security is not an issue that is confined to Kenya. I certainly feel less threatened here than I would when walking through parts of urban UK.



Mobile phone coverage is excellent and this has made a huge difference to many aspects of life, of which security is the most obvious. It is a straightforward process to put a local SIM card in your phone, although some will need to be unlocked first. Kenya leads the world in the way in which we pay with our phones – Google M-Pesa to find out more.

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TRANSPORT

Public transport is haphazard in Kenya and is not recommended for safety reasons. Therefore, most people find it essential to buy a car. The school offers an interest-free car loan of up to KShs 1,000,000. Road surfaces in Kenya leave a lot to be desired, and it is much better to spend most or all of this amount on a reliable vehicle that won't let you down on safari. In the absence of MOT tests, you are also advised to have it serviced regularly. The



school will help new teachers by recommending reputable garages and suppliers, but it is often best to ask your new colleagues, as they will have been through the process and will know what to avoid.

FLIGHTS etc

Any member of the teaching staff who is recruited as an expatriate is entitled to a return flight at the end of their first two years and annually thereafter. Spouses and dependants under the age of 18 are also included if the family has moved into Kenya from abroad. There is a baggage allowance that can be claimed against expenses at the beginning and end of the contract.

MEDICAL MATTERS

The school runs an excellent medical scheme for its teachers. All teachers are covered for visits to the GP and the dentist, up to an annual maximum amount. Serious illnesses and accidents requiring hospitalisation are fully insured. Nairobi has excellent hospitals, including a world-class children's hospital.

IMMIGRATION

Government regulations are strict, and entry permits will only be issued to teachers with recognised teaching qualifications. You **must** be able to provide the **originals** of all relevant certificates (including GCSE and A Level) to support your application, which the school will make on your behalf. The sooner we get all the necessary documents, the sooner we can get the application process under way.

PEPONI SCHOOLS

Peponi House has a sister school, Peponi School, a secondary school that is in Ruiru, about 30 minutes' drive from Nairobi towards Thika. The prep school is known as P1 and the



senior school is P2. We also have a recently-formed partnership with a local Kindergarten. There are good links between the three school and opportunities exist for teachers to socialise and to share best practice. The schools hold a joint schools concert in November and some year groups go to P2 for camping weekends or fieldwork. P2 also hosts the Hog Charge, a cross-country mountain bike event that involves about 400 children.

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From an article entitled “Why Teach in Kenya?”

“It is so refreshing to come here and find the kind of openness that is so sadly lacking in other countries. Here, children have a childhood and are not constantly bombarded with media and peer pressure to wear the “right” clothes and have the latest mobile phone. Education is not seen as a necessary evil as it is in some places that I can think of, but as a gift to be treasured and an opportunity not to be missed. The curriculum that we teach in my school is very close to that which is taught in an independent prep school in UK, but there is a Kenyan influence as well. We offer the chance for children to learn Kiswahili and there is no need for a sports hall in Nairobi’s perfect climate.

Teaching here is just as challenging and as rewarding as it is elsewhere, but to my mind the challenges are more exciting and the rewards more satisfying than anywhere else. Teachers often come here for a two year contract and stay for much longer as they find that the children, the schools, the country, the social life and, of course, the weather are just too good to give up. It is not everyone’s cup of tea and there are down sides, of course, but ask anyone who is teaching out here now if they’d go back “home” and I know that the majority would say no. We work hard and we play hard and we love it”.

Robert Blake

And finally....

If there is anything else that you’d like to know, please visit the school’s website:

www.peponihouseschool.co.ke

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