



La Escuela de Lancaster

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES 2019-20

SCHOOL HISTORY

The Lancaster School is a non-profit, private school founded in 1979 and is located in the south of Mexico City. From small beginnings the school has grown in size and quality, while keeping a strong sense of its individualism and identity, in line with the School's Mission and Philosophy. From the start school has offered all our students integrated programmes combining the Mexican and British education systems, taught through both English and Spanish.



The school was founded by a group of parents who sought a truly bicultural education for their children and who wanted to be able to participate fully in the life of the school. As such, the school is constituted as a Civil Association in which every parent has a vote in the Annual General Meeting, which elects the Board of Governors and approves the plans and budget for the following year. The Headteacher reports to the Board of Governors and has overall responsibility for all aspects of the running of the school. There is close cooperation between Mexican and overseas staff and a strong sense of community in school.

Biculturalism, which over the years has moved towards multiculturalism, has always been a fundamental principle of the school. Lancaster is not an international school, nor is it a British school overseas. Lancaster School continually seeks to find a balance between the different cultures that influence our community in ways that respect and celebrate differences without being judgemental, enriching the community and the school.

The Lancaster Community is predominantly made up of middle class, professional families from a diverse range of backgrounds, with the biggest groups being university academics, doctors and other

healthcare professionals, and artists from all branches of the arts. The diversity and richness of the community has always been a great strength of the school and a resource in its development.

Recent years have seen the development of a new Secondary School site at Diligencias (one mile from the Primary site at Rey Yupanqui) and the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years (PYP) and Diploma programmes and the International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC). During 2014 the School created a strategic plan, Lancaster 2020, which is being implemented currently.

THE SCHOOL TODAY

“There is more in us than we know if we could be made to see it; perhaps, for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less.”

Kurt Hahn

Lancaster School is located on two sites, one mile apart; Rey Yupanqui, housing the Primary School (3 - 12 years old), and Diligencias, housing the Secondary School (12 – 19 years old). The school currently educates approximately 830 students, with a maximum capacity of 860. More than 90% of the students are Mexican nationals. Most of our graduating students chose to attend university in Mexico, while the United States, Canada and Europe are regular overseas destinations. Our 2019 graduating class numbered 65 students, who went on to study 35 different courses at college across the whole spectrum of disciplines, which is testament to our continuing commitment to giving students as wide a variety of opportunities as we can, given our size and resources.



We believe that there is much more to education than training students to pass exams. We place a strong emphasis on the importance of the individual and developing skills and values which will serve students long after they leave school. Classes are reasonably sized with a maximum 25, with smaller classes in preschool years and in the final years of secondary. Teachers are encouraged to use innovative and varied teaching methods in order to support effective learning for all our students. The School has a well-established learning support programme which supports the inclusion of students with intellectual and physical disabilities, and a scholarship programme that goes beyond legal requirements. A range of extracurricular activities are offered throughout the year on both sites.

Lancaster does not have a rigid disciplinary code or a school uniform. Instead the school fosters a climate of respect and responsibility between and amongst students, staff and the community, treating breaches of this respect on their merits. Relations between students and staff are positive and students are always given the opportunity to express their points of view.

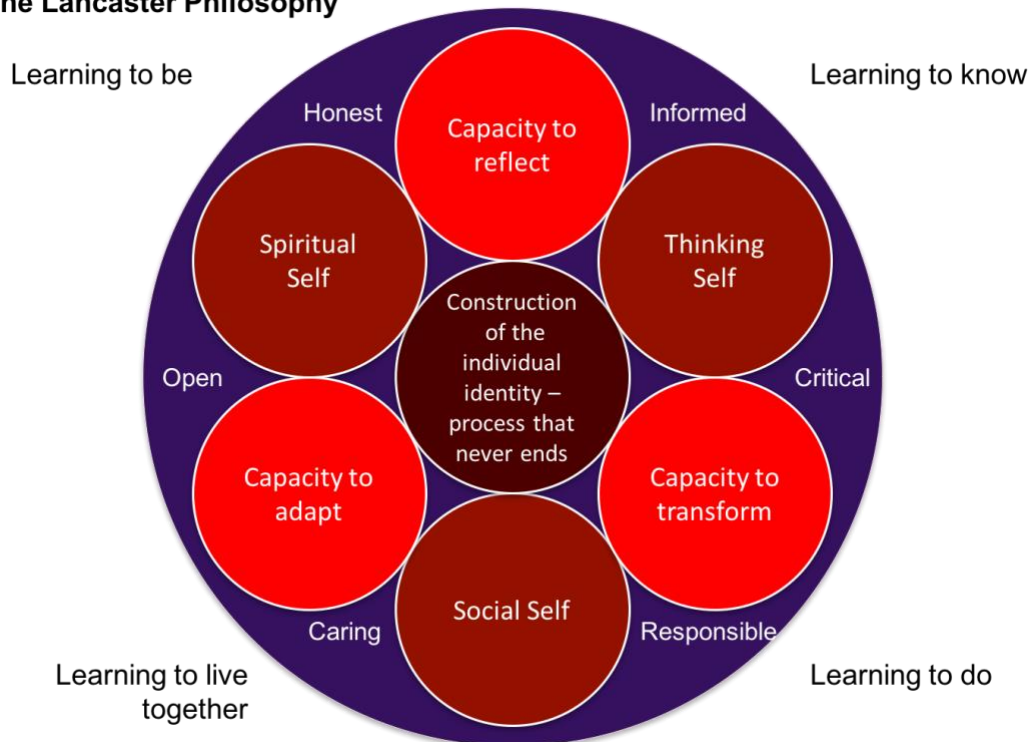
We are committed to the principles of education for sustainable development. There are thriving environmental and sustainability committees on both sites. The school runs an optional bus service and encourages the use of carpooling ('rondas'). In June 2017, at the Annual General Meeting, students

presented a plan to install solar panels at the secondary site over the next five years. The first stage was completed in the summer of 2017. Additionally, Lancaster has developed a strong social action programme within local and regional communities, and continually seeks to develop service-learning opportunities for our students.

Lancaster has a reputation as a serious, forward-thinking and innovative educational establishment which puts the individual at the centre of the educational process. The school offers a wide range of professional development opportunities. Annually a large number of staff attend PYP and IB Diploma subject training and in recent years a some staff have completed the University of Buckingham IPGCE qualifications through a partnership with Churchill School. The school is an active member of the Latin American Heads Conference (LAHC) and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), while enjoying a long-standing collaborative relationship with schools of a similar nature in Mexico City.



The Lancaster Philosophy



FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In October 2017 the school completed a joint LAHC-IB School Review, which involved a visiting team of 16 professional colleagues from across Latin America spending a week at Lancaster, observing teaching and learning and meeting all sectors of the community (students, staff, parents, board, alumni). The conclusion of this evaluation was three reports; PYP and Diploma reports as required by the IBO every five years and a 10-year LAHC report that covers the whole school. The commendations and recommendations gathered in these reports will have a significant influence on the development of the school in the next few years.

In addition, during 2017-18 the school is completing a Master Plan project with the support of the architectural firm EMEDE. The goal of this project is to identify how the school can further develop its facilities over the next decade, in line with the school's philosophy and mission. The first part of this project, improving the entrance area at Diligencias, was completed in the summer of 2019.

HOW STUDENTS VIEW LANCASTER

We ask our graduating class to sum up their views about Lancaster each year with the question, 'What does Lancaster mean to you?'

'It means 16 years of my life - no regrets.'

'It means a lot; it made me a better person and open-minded.'

'It has given me lots of skills that I believe will be useful throughout my entire life. I have met a lot of amazing people that have had an important influence not only in my education but my life.'

'I feel very experienced about how to deal with different things thanks to some problems and leadership I had to deal with during L6 and U6. Lancaster gave me the human sensitivity I have. That's why I am still a volunteer in Techo [a service learning project to build houses] even though I finished CAS. Lancaster gave me freedom of who I wanted to be. It is a different school and we have a particular spirit.'

We also ask graduates to describe the school in three words:

'Diversity, freedom, thinkers.'

'Artistic, free, stressful. The amount of work is really heavy!'

*'**A Safe Heaven** - In this school I found a place where all types of people are accepted and valued, including myself. **Different** - When I tell people I'm a Lancaster student the first thing that pops into their mind is that we are a bunch of very peculiar people. And we are, we live up to the expectations and I wouldn't change that for the world. **Home** - This is indeed my second home, I feel truly appreciated, loved and cherished by the people that are around me, and I have for now 16 years.'*

PRIMARY YEARS - REY YUPANQUI SITE

At Lancaster School the primary years are split in two phases: Kinder and Primary. There are just over 400 students and 36 educational staff on the site. The curriculum is based around the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and is aligned with the local Mexican SEP requirements. Students in the Kinder Years are predominantly taught in English, while from First Grade students spend roughly equal time studying in English and Spanish. Roughly 75% of the staff are Mexican, while the rest come mainly from the other nations. There are specialist teachers for Physical Education, Music, Drama, Art, Chess and Computing.



The sites facilities include a library, large outdoor sports areas and playground space, a small cafeteria (which is open to the community every morning), a dance studio, an IT classroom, a garden space and learning support space. Extra-curricular activities are open Monday to Thursday and additionally the school organises after-school community activities, which give children from the local community the chance to come into school and benefit from the facilities.



SECONDARY YEARS - DILIGENCIAS SITE

Students from Form 1 upwards study on the Diligencias site, the first phase of which was opened in 2010. In the 2016-17 academic year there are approximately 410 students across seven years groups, with 58 teaching staff, including a large learning support team.

The curriculum integrates local requirements and international curricula. Recently the school adopted the International Middle Years Programme (IMYC) for Forms 1 to 3. This leads into the IGCSE years (Form 4 and 5) where students have a range of subjects to choose from, beyond the core. In the final two years of school (Lower and Upper Sixth) the school has integrated the IB Diploma with the UNAM local qualifications. All students aim towards the completion of the locally recognised school diploma, while they may also choose to either complete the full IB Diploma or individual IB Certificates. This breadth of choice is an important part of the school's character and there is a rich and wide range of subjects students can elect to study in their final two years. This selection that includes (beyond the regular disciplines) Film Studies, Anthropology, Design Technology, French, History, Geography, Business, Psychology, Music, Art and Drama. All students are required to complete the core CAS requirements, Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and the Extended Essay. In total Lancaster offers 24 IB Diploma courses currently, which is remarkable given the size of the school.



The first phase of the Diligencias site development included all the necessary classroom and administrative spaces. Plans for further additions to the facilities are already being considered. In the future the wish is to increase the number of classrooms available, create flexible learning spaces, relocate the library, expand the provision for the Arts, and improve staff facilities.

In line with the school's philosophy regarding the process of developing individual identity the secondary tutorial system is a central component. All secondary teachers are tutors and groups are

small. In the final years tutors keep their students for two years so that relationships are strong and students well supported. Additionally, we offer a large number of opportunities for students to develop their talents outside of the academic. There are a number of clubs, including the Debate Club, Model United Nations and instrumental music lessons. Service learning is also encouraged and the school has a Saturday School programme (PEC) for children from the local community, staffed by Lancaster students in the role of teachers. In July 2019 we ran a three week residential trip to Florence, Italy.

TEACHING AT LANCASTER SCHOOL

Why are you a teacher? What do you find most satisfying in teaching? Answering this question should help in deciding whether you would enjoy working at Lancaster School.

Teaching at Lancaster School can be tremendously rewarding but is also a challenge. While we are rightly proud that many of our graduates go on to university we do not measure the school's success through academic performance. Central to the school's philosophy and practice is the recognition that our educational project focuses on helping our students discover who they are and who they want to be. As a community we welcome diversity in all its forms and the complexity that goes with this.

We encourage teachers to build positive relationships with their students and to always model the school's values: *respect, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, cooperation* and *community spirit*. In practice this means that we are committed to the idea of personalized attention - knowing students as individuals, helping them find where their talents lie, and giving them a voice in their own learning.

Lancaster has a reputation for being an unconventional school and this is, in ways large and small, indeed true. This stems from the Lancaster philosophy and the reality that we are, as our mission states, *a community of learners*. The central idea expressed in the philosophy, that we are engaged in the development of our individual identity, applies to the adults in our community as much as our students. Each of us who takes up the challenge of working at Lancaster (including myself!) finds that we have to examine some of our most cherished beliefs about education. It is our aim that during their time at Lancaster all our staff grow as people, in ways planned and perhaps unplanned.

To be happy and successful at Lancaster teachers need to be: passionate about what they teach, be open minded, and be reflective. They also need to be adaptable and believe that learning is a process, not a task for our students and ourselves.

Tom Gething
Headteacher
August 2019

For more information please go to the school's website: <http://www.lancaster.edu.mx/>