

Banana Mom's Guide To **Preparing For Chinese School**

For Non-Chinese Speaking Families

By Mimi Koay



Including Tips On Orientation & Starting School
Dealing with teachers, spouse & others
Managing Homework, Exams & Activities

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Banana Mom's
Guide To
Preparing For
Chinese School

For Non-Chinese Speaking Families
(Sample Chapter 4)

By Mimi Koay

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my other half, the Banana Dad and our two kids who are no longer bananas.

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4 EENY, MEENY, MINY, MOE
SJK, SJKC, PTE, INT'L OR HOME SCHOOL?



Four Kindergarten concerts later, the kids were ready for big school. Of course the decision on which school to choose is a bigger headache then choosing a kindergarten. It should also be made much earlier.

Some parents planned ahead very early. They knew exactly what they wanted.

However, we were undecided. Like many families, we speak English at home but we have to send our kids to either a Malay medium or a Chinese medium school.. We felt that since our child was going to be spending a lot of time in their formative years in school, half a day or more for six years in primary school, we had to give the school choice a lot of careful thought.

We were allowed to register our child for school at the age of 5 but we didn't until she was 6 because of this indecision. Some of those who wanted to get in the popular Chinese schools, those with over 10 classes and 50 students to a class type, made sure they registered early at the age of 5 to have a better chance of securing a place.

By elimination, Private and International schools were out for us because we didn't have the funds. Home school was out too because we didn't have the know how, the contacts nor the patience. So that left us with Chinese school or Kebangsaan school. (Public National school).We decided to visit both types of schools.

When shopping for schools we visited many schools but some of them were more "memorable" than the others.

The first Chinese School we visited was the nearest one to our home. It was rather popular, not the most popular but well established and in high demand with 50 students to a class ratio. I went on a Saturday. I saw some students having brass band practice. They had good facilities, a nice big field with a basketball court, a big school hall which housed 8 badminton courts and a

nice airy canteen.

School hours were from 7.25am till 1.25pm and the school offers optional after school tuition up to 3.30pm. We asked to speak to the headmaster. He looked like an old school typical Chinese school headmaster to me. Strict and unsmiling, he told us that the school registration for Standard One for my daughter's year was almost full up but we could still try if we wanted to.

The second Chinese school we visited was in another neighbourhood. It looked rather nice and cozy. We went on a weekend. There was no one around at the time except the guards. So we just looked around and left. It looked like a nice school but it was slightly out of our way.

The third Chinese school we saw was smaller, looked untidy and generally did not give us a good feeling so we left after a short walkabout.

Then we visited the nearest Kebangsaan school near our house. We went during a school day during recess. We observed the children during recess and were surprised to see them running out and settling down on the floor to eat. The school canteen wasn't big enough for the school. We returned another day to speak to the teachers. I was taken aback when one Chinese teacher asked why I wasn't sending my child to Chinese school.

Finally we visited a Kebangsaan school further from my house. We spoke to the headmaster as well. We were impressed by his vision and what he was doing for the school. The school looked clean and welcoming. I believe that the head of the school is very important in steering the way forward for the school and this head was a good one but even good heads come and go so

what will happen when he leaves? That was our worry.

Finally, it was time to fill up the form to register our child for standard one. We left it till the very last minute. At the time, we were allowed to fill in 3 choices for the school. At the time of writing, friends tell me that only one choice is allowed now and if you are in the state of Selangor, registration must be done online followed by submission to the school one picks. Typically, registration is done in March when your child is 5 or 6 years old with results out by August on the year before your child is due to start standard one.

During our time when 3 choices were allowed on the form, we filled in the nearest Chinese school as 1st choice, followed by the Chinese school in our neighbourhood as our 2nd choice and the Kebangsaan school that we liked as our third choice. That was how undecided we were. Then we had to go to the first school to get our daughter's birth certificate stamped at the back.

After that, we waited anxiously for our school application results. Finally the results came and we were sent to another Chinese school that was not in our list of school choices! It was further away from my home and we heard that traffic was bad.

Should we appeal? We decided to pay the school a visit before making a decision on whether to appeal to get in the school near my house.

As usual, we asked politely to speak to the headmaster. We told him that we speak English at home and asked him whether he thinks our child will survive in the school.

The headmaster told us that most of the students in the school came from English speaking families. He

said that one or two years preschool preparation by learning some Mandarin would be good if you were thinking of sending your child to a Chinese primary school. He also said that most children can adapt easily.

We toured the schools premise and facilities and were happy with what we found so we decided not to appeal. We have no regrets.

Banana Mom feels that not every two schools are the same. and every school has its pros and cons. The choice of school should be a personal one based on each family's needs, views and finances.

Do What Is Best For Your Child, Your Circumstances And Your Family. Only You Know What Is The Best. Do Not Be Steered By What Others Do Or Say.”

Banana Mom's Mini Guide For Parents Who Are Choosing A Primary School For Their Kids..

- **Visit The School** - Do an actual physical visit to several possible schools in your area before deciding. It really gives a better perspective and is a valuable aid in the difficult decision making process. Visiting the school premise will give you a chance to visualize whether you will be happy sending your child to the school. Walk around the classrooms, school halls, canteen and picture your child there. Try to imagine yourself sending your child to and from school if that is what you plan to do. These field trips are very helpful in helping you to pick the right school for your child. It will give you a better understanding and feel on which school is more suitable for your child.
- **Check The Facilities** - Don't pick a school due to its popularity without making a trip there first. These field trips though time consuming are necessary for you to pick the right school.. Check the school facilities during your school visits. You may find that some of the schools are run down and badly in need of a paint job for example. Some are fully air conditioned with many modern facilities, almost like a private school minus the pool and the fees. Some may be small with no proper school hall or sharing

facilities with another school.

- **Speak To The Teachers And Head Of School** - Do speak to the teachers and the head of the school if possible. Call up for an appointment if you can or politely ask to speak to one if you can. Most of the time, they are kind enough to oblige and they will be able to tell you a lot about the school and its culture.
- **School Hours** - Do check the school hours, whether it is morning or afternoon session and see if this fits your schedule.
- **Number Of Students** - Do find out the number of classes and the number of students in each class. Do they have a lot of classes with many pupils to a class?
- **Distance** - Do consider the proximity of the school to your house and the traveling time that is required to and from school.
- **Fees (For Private or International Schools)** - Do check out the fees, not only annual school fees but for any extras if you are planning to send your child to a private school.
- **Speak To Other Parents** - Do speak to other parents in the school. Like teachers and the head of the school, other parents can tell you a great deal about the school. You can do this

when you are visiting the school and if you happen to see one. Alternatively you can speak to other parents you know who have sent their children to the school you are planning to send your child to

- **Observe Students** - Do your visits during school hours if possible. This will give you the opportunity for you to observe the school in session. Do observe the students too to get an idea of the student population. What language to they speak to one another out of the classroom?

Registering For Standard One

Registration For Standard One is usually done in the month of March/April one or two years before actual standard one admission. This means you can register your child from as early as 5 years old. This also means that when your child is in kindergarten, it is not too early for you to start planning and thinking of your school choices.

Documents Required for Standard One Registration

You may be required to visit the school of your choice together with the following documents:

1. Birth certificate and MyKid card
2. Parent's or caregiver's IC or MyKad
3. Parent's Marriage Certificate
4. Utility bill to proof your address on the application form
5. Child's health and vaccination records
6. Return envelope with address and stamp
7. Printed online registration form if online registration is required (e.g.: following online registration, the printed online registration form must be submitted to the school of choice within 14 days in Selangor. Go to <http://apps.moe.gov.my/esppsel/> for more details)

The results of your application will usually be made known around July/August in the year before admission. This means that if you register your 5 year

old in March/April 2014 for admission into standard one in 2016, you will know the results in July/August 2015. After that you have to visit the school to confirm your placement (in August) or you may prefer to make an appeal on the decision (in September).

Placement of schools is usually decided based on

- Distance of your house to the school
- Whether there is a sibling studying at the same school
- Whether your child has attended preschool in the same school

It is always a good idea to keep your child's health and vaccination records up to date and handy. You may be required to give this information to the school from time to time. You will also need to make a decision on whether you prefer to allow your child to be vaccinated outside by your own pediatrician or by the school authorities.

Vaccination is usually done in standard one and standard six. Do check with your pediatrician on the types of vaccination due for your child and whether it is up to date. You will also have to make the same decision regarding dental treatment. Parental consent is required usually in the form to be filled in at the beginning of the year in standard one.

One additional thing to note. If you are as Chinese illiterate as Banana Mom, you should practice writing your child's name in Chinese since you will be required to fill in this information in the forms in school. Do not be caught like Banana Mom. She had to

stammer and ask for the teacher's help when it came to writing down her child's name. Even the Malay clerk at the Chinese school knew more Chinese than her.

After you have got the school placement results, it is time to do a little shopping. Here is a mini shopping guide for kids just starting school.

Banana Mom's Mini Shopping Guide For Starting School

1. School Uniforms – 3 pairs so you have time to wash, dry and iron them
2. School Socks – 2-3 pairs
3. School Shoes – 2-3 pairs (just enough for them to wash and dry in time but not too many because little feet grow very fast!)
4. Gym Shorts – 1-2 pairs (for girls)
5. School Bag – (Read the chapter on school bags before buying)
6. Water Tumbler (don't get those with straws, they tend to get dirty and it is hard to wash them)
7. Food Container (if you plan to let them bring food from home)
8. Pencil Box with pencil, eraser, sharpener and ruler (normal pencils are better for the younger ones compared to mechanical ones which are more expensive and they always end up either broken or lost)
9. Colour Pencils
10. Crayons
11. Wallet (if you plan to give pocket money)
12. Watch (optional but good for teaching kids)

to be aware of time and to tell time if they don't know how yet)

Banana Mom says you may also find it useful to get either name stickers or a marker pen to label all their stuff.

In addition to these, be prepared to spend or pay for the following on the first few days of school or during school orientation.

1. School Books. Even though school text books are now free, you will still be required to pay for exercise books and workbooks
2. School Fees. These include PIBG fees and any other fees you may be required to pay for; computer classes, electricity or other things depending on the school
3. School Badge and name badge (Order extra if you can, as some name badges have to be sewn and preordered. You can keep them for the new school uniforms your child will need as he grows)
4. School Tie
5. School Gym Tee Shirt

“Some may say. It is only a Primary School. Why worry so much?

Banana Mom says it is the foundation that you are going to set for your child during their formative years.

A school plays an important part in what kind of person your child turns out to be.

Your child will be spending half of his day there every week day for 6 years. Shouldn't you at least spend a few weeks of your time pondering?”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mimi Koay is the author of *Mother, Wife, Myself a collection of poems about How To Find Yourself After Becoming A Mother and Wife and I Didn't Know Breastfeeding Would Be So Hard* which she wrote to share her difficulties with breastfeeding her children..

She is a blogger for 10 years and a Squidoo Lensmaster. She writes and maintains 5 blogs regularly and is an active member at Squidoo. She blogs on parenting issues, motherhood, kids crafts, house and home and health.

She also runs a group Malaysian Primary School Parents On Facebook where she discusses parenting issues with parents on a daily basis.

She hopes that all parents will enjoy their child's primary school years because these are important growing years which shape their child. The primary school years is an exciting new parenting chapter for all parents.

Children grow up so fast. While we want to work hard to give them a better future, we must remember to be there for them now.

Dear Reader,

*This is a sample chapter from the book **Banana Mom's Guide To Preparing For Chinese School**. The sample chapter 4 from the book ends here. To purchase the book please visit the author's website for [MORE DETAILS](#) or to buy through [Maybank2u](#).*

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