



ermitage
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF FRANCE



Ermitage International School of France

**Lower School
Information Packet
2012-2013**



Welcome to the Lower School at Ermitage

Ermitage International School of France attracts students and staff from around the world; they are 26 nationalities present in the Lower School alone, and up to 70 represented throughout the entire school, creating a diverse and exciting learning environment for our students. At Ermitage, we offer an education that stimulates the mind, engages the child's intellectual curiosity and fosters mutual comprehension, empathy, cooperation, integrity and an open mind. We strive to provide each child with the guidance and inspiration to develop into a healthy, well-adjusted and successful student.

A child who enters our school will follow a curriculum tuned to his or her own strengths and weaknesses, talents and interests. At Ermitage, we focus on enabling our students to:

- Pursue academic excellence;
- Develop their unique talents and potential;
- Become bilingual in English and French before 6th grade in order to join the Middle School's international section.

Becoming bilingual depends on a child's age when entering Ermitage, and each student follows a program tailored to his or her ability.

Ermitage teachers are devoted to their mission and gently guide each child on the path to knowledge. They provide assistance during difficult moments, and the encouragement necessary for children to accomplish important learning milestones with confidence, develop social skills and discover their own talents and interests.

At Ermitage, we believe that teachers and parents are a team; together we can give your child his or her best start in life. In addition to regular pedagogical meetings, teachers at Ermitage encourage parents to reach out to them regularly with any questions or concerns.

Our wish is for your child to find his or her place in our community, where he or she will learn the foundations to grow and flourish.

As the Director of the Lower School at Ermitage, I very much look forward to meeting you; I am available to answer any questions you may have concerning your child's development at our school.

Welcome, and see you soon!

Caroline Forgues
LOWER SCHOOL DIRECTOR



Mission Statement

Ermitage International School of France is a cosmopolitan community of lifelong learners committed to developing individuals who are aware and compassionate, knowledgeable and responsible, and able to act in their own lives and in their world.

We strive to provide an education that stimulates the mind and develops critical thinking while imparting the values of respect and mutual understanding, honesty and cooperation, empathy and open-mindedness.

We work to create a learning environment in which our students can be creative and reflective and where they can find opportunities to demonstrate initiative, leadership and a sense of responsibility.

Objectives

As a Round Square and IB World School set within a French educational context, Ermitage strives to reach the following objectives:

- To enable our students to become bilingual in English and French and to acquire at least one other foreign language to the highest degree to which the student can aspire;
- To build the ‘international classroom’ where our students can learn in different contexts, from the academic to the experiential, and benefit from academic crossovers between the various diploma programs;
- To encourage our students to participate in our many international projects: exchanges, trips and link-ups with partner schools, international service projects, international conferences, Model United Nations ... thereby opening up their horizons to different ideas and cultures;
- To build a community of learners, no matter their nationality, in which each individual is a valued member and participant;
- To help our students develop the means – cognitive, affective, and experiential - to become young adults who are capable of establishing bridges of understanding between peoples regardless of nationality, religion, socio-economic group, culture, age, and gender.

Who We Are

Ermitage is an international day and boarding school dedicated to offering academic excellence from pre-school through Grade 12. Nestled in the historic town of Maisons-Laffitte, just outside Paris, it is a community of lifelong learners committed to developing responsible, informed and respectful global citizens of tomorrow.

Opening its doors in 1941, Ermitage started by teaching its students to be prepared to address the issues of their day. This tradition grounded the school, but Ermitage was resolutely “turned toward the future.” Over the years, Ermitage has grown from a small French school



into a cosmopolitan learning environment with over 70 nationalities represented in both the faculty and student body. Languages, such as Chinese, Spanish, German, and Italian are offered throughout the school.

Today, Ermitage is at the forefront of international learning. The culmination of a French / English bilingual education that starts in Kindergarten, two diplomas are now offered:

- the French Baccalaureate with an additional “*option internationale*,” and
- the International Baccalaureate with subjects taught and assessed in English.

In addition to work inside the classroom, Ermitage prepares its students for the challenges they may face outside the school’s walls. As a member of leadership programs, such as Round Square in particular, Ermitage promotes the values of internationalism, democracy, environment, adventure, leadership and service.

THE LOWER SCHOOL

Pre-school (*Maternelle*)

The primary objective of *Maternelle* is to help children become students, introducing them to the challenges and pleasures of learning. Through class activities, children learn to evolve in the world around them and become conscious of their bodies, learning to hold a crayon, and then a pen, correctly, all in a stress free environment. Teachers provide reassurance and encouragement as each child experiences and develops his or her skills through play and small tasks.



Maternelle plays an important role in the socialization of children; it is a time of discovery, of the self and of the other, of the importance of sharing, of learning to manage difficult moments... All these social interactions and experiences are crucial to building a solid foundation for a successful education.

***Petite Section* (3 years old)**

Ermitage welcomes children into *Petite Section* each fall who are or will be three years old that year (their birthday falls between January 1 and December 31 of that year; they must also be potty-trained). Children who enter Ermitage at this level will spend three years in *Maternelle*, unless teachers recommend differently.

It is essential for this first year of school to proceed as smoothly as possible; indeed, this is the child’s first contact with school and lays the foundations for his or her academic future. When



possible, we recommend that children who begin in *Petite Section* wait to attend school full time until the end of the academic year to give them the time they need to adapt to their new schedule. Children entering *Petite Section* often begin by attending school a few half-days each week, then one or two full days, until they are able and comfortable attending school a full week at a time.

In *Petite Section*, each class benefits from the presence of two teachers: in the morning children are led by a Francophone *and* an Anglophone teacher; in the afternoon, after their nap, they remain with the Francophone teacher only. Each teacher speaks in her native tongue but fully understands the other language so that each child may feel confident to speak to and be understood by either teacher. Depending on the day, children will participate in activities that are led either in English or French; they listen to stories, sing songs, and play in both languages throughout the school day, becoming accustomed to French and English simultaneously, and increasing their proficiency in both each day.

***Moyenne Section* (4 years old) and *Grande Section* (5 years old)**

Beginning in *Moyenne Section* (MS) and continuing into *Grande Section* (GS), children are grouped according to their dominant language, in French or in English. Indeed, experience has shown that children need to develop an extensive vocabulary of words and expressions in their first language in order to learn their second language with ease later.

Regarding children's socialization, it has also been shown that children usually tend to associate with others who speak the same language (with the exception of perfectly bilingual children, who tend to associate according to their interests rather than language). Children in each language group mingle with the others during recess and other joint activities.

Children spend the morning with a teacher who speaks their first language, and spend the afternoon learning in their second language. Preschool activities are usually offered in the child's first language; activities taught in the child's second language will usually be centered around play, and focused on specifically developing the child's second language skills. The fifth morning is usually dedicated to physical education, which means each child spends four half days learning in his or her first language, and four half days learning in his or her second language.

In GS, children who show an aptitude for or an interest in reading are led through a variety of activities and phonetic methods destined to initiate them gently to the written word (Ermitage uses the Borel Maisonnay method for reading in French, and the Jolly Phonics method for reading in English, both long established and successful methods). Children who do not show aptitude or interest in reading are not obligated to begin the development of their reading skills.

After three years in *Maternelle*, children have developed key skills in speech, language, pre-mathematics and motility. These building blocks create the foundation for a successful academic experience in elementary school, where each child will continue to deepen his or her knowledge and grow into a confident student.



Elementary School

At Ermitage, we believe that each child has within him or her the potential to succeed. Teachers help students uncover and develop their unique capabilities, bearing in mind each child's interests, creativity and curiosity.

Our goals are both simple and ambitious: to grow students in an international context who have solid academic foundations in both English and French, and who are mature, self-aware, open to others and responsible.

Programs Offered

Ermitage is contractually part of the French national education system and follows the official French programs [<http://eduscol.education.fr/pid23391/programmes-de-l-ecole-et-du-college.html>] as well as the Cambridge curriculum for English as a first language.

National evaluations allow us to closely monitor the quality of the education we provide.

For the year 2010/2011, 86% of students in 5th grade earned over 50% correct answers in French (compared to 75% in the Yvelines district and 74% nationally) and 78% earned over 50% correct answers in mathematics (compared to 70% in the Yvelines district and 70% nationally).

In 2nd grade, 86% of students earned over 50% percent correct answers (compared to 80% in the Yvelines district and 79% nationally) and 89% of students earned over 50% correct answers in mathematics (compared to 80% in the Yvelines district and 79% nationally).

The quality of our English language education is also reflected by the acceptance of Ermitage students who transfer into renowned English schools.

Our French language education follows the official state programs rigorously with the added benefit of providing students an extra 6-10 hours of English each week.

Learning in English

Depending on the child's language background, s/he will be placed into one of the following three groups:

B1: This group is mainly for students from Francophone families (non-Anglophone) and English is taught as a second language. In 1st and 2nd grade, children focus primarily on developing their oral skills, and wait until their reading comprehension is firmly established before moving on to writing. Beginning in 3rd grade, children develop their writing skills as they continue to perfect their oral skills.

Children in this group spend two half days of three hours each learning in English. In addition, those who display strong English language skills can take science and geography in English, which provides them an additional four hours of English weekly. Students who display a more beginner level take their science and geography classes in French.



B2: This group is for bilingual students who study English as their first language. These children may be bilingual for a number of reasons: they grew up in a bilingual family, they lived in an Anglophone country or attended an Anglophone school, they have been at Ermitage for several years and show strong aptitude in both languages, they are Anglophone but live in France and have a strong level in French, etc.

Children in this group spend two half days of three hours each learning in English, and take science and geography in English as well.

B3: This group is primarily geared toward Anglophone students, or French students who have done most of their education in Anglophone schools.

Children in this group spend two half days of three hours each learning in English (like the children in group B2) and an additional two hours of French (primarily written French) to improve their French language skills. They join the B1 group for science and geography in French.

Round Square

In addition to honing their bilingual skills, students at Ermitage are able to experience internationalism and grow into global citizens through our affiliation with Round Square.

Round Square is a unique educational philosophy, spearheaded by a world-wide association of schools who come together to enrich the student experience through international learning and exchanges.

As the only Round Square school in France, Ermitage's academic curricula reflect the **IDEALS** of Round Square. These principals are an integral part of the Lower School experience at Ermitage:

Internationalism: Our diverse community brings together teachers and students from 26 different countries, and encourages children to grow up with an open mind to cultural diversity.

Democracy: From delegate elections to school assemblies, democracy is ever present at Ermitage. Teachers and parents are encouraged to meet with each other and with the Director of the Lower School, and students' ideas often guide the creation of school projects.

Environment: Children are taught and encouraged to treat the environment they learn and live in with respect.

Adventure: Participating in daily activities, learning to work as a group, discovering the challenges and pleasures of athletics, taking field trips... Each day at school is an adventure!

Leadership: Students are highly encouraged to experience leadership through school presentations and projects, or to act as Ermitage ambassadors during open house days.



Service: Helping the younger children through the lunch line, collecting donations to benefit the poor, selling cookies at a bake sale...these are a few of the many ways Ermitage students learn the value of serving others.

For more information on Round Square, please visit www.roundsquare.org

Additional Programs

Music

At Ermitage, children have the opportunity to discover music throughout their schooling. In 1st and 2nd grade, an Anglophone teacher visits students during English class and teaches popular English melodies and plays the guitar.

Beginning in 3rd grade, a Francophone teacher helps student learn to read music and develop an understanding of rhythm using primarily classical melodies (Peter and the Wolf, for example). In addition, every other year children participate in a musical created especially for Ermitage (*Le Royaume des Deux Mondes* in 2008, and *Les Couleurs du Temps* in 2010).

Athletics/Physical Education (PE)

From 1st to 3rd grade students play sports twice a week for 45 minutes in the school gymnasium. They are supervised by our professional gym teachers who help children develop their physical abilities and coach them in group sports (basketball, volleyball, etc).

In 4th and 5th grade, students play sports once a week for 1 ½ hours at the gymnasium under the supervision of our gym teachers. They are introduced to track and field sports, and other group sports such as soccer, rugby, field hockey and softball.

Visual Arts

Under the supervision of their teacher, children become familiar with basic drawing techniques and learn about classical and contemporary artists. After observation and discussion, children are encouraged to create their own works of art.

Lunchtime Workshops

At lunchtime, children are invited to take part in a variety of short workshops organized by teachers, and sometimes parents! These workshops cover a wide range of activities that further enrich your child's education: soccer, introduction to Chinese or German, Irish dance, weaving, yoga, reading club, choir, drama, Legos, badminton, rollerblading...and a very popular science club! Each child can choose to join at least one workshop that meets once a week, and can switch to a different workshop every semester.



Evaluations

At Ermitage, children's progress is evaluated continuously throughout the school year. Students bring their day planners home at the end of each day for parents to sign and bring their evaluation notebooks home at each break. Report cards are distributed at the end of each semester, one in late January and one in late June, allowing more time for progress to occur. Parents are kept up to date on their child's development regularly throughout the semester, especially if the child displays any immediate or recurring difficulties.

In January, teachers plan individual meetings with parents to discuss each child's academic development. However, teachers are available by appointment year round to discuss your child's progress.

Applying

We accept applications throughout the school year and they are reviewed on a rolling basis. Current students have priority during the enrollment process for the following year, which usually begins in February/March.

You will find application materials, application procedures and school fees on our website: www.ermitage.fr

For more information and to schedule a meeting, please contact the Admissions Coordinator for the Lower School who will be glad to assist you: admissions@ermitage.fr