



## E-Newsletter

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## Message from the Principal

Dear friends of RIS Swiss Section – Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok,

You are reading the third edition of our newsletter. This publication is more and more establishing itself, and we realize in the meetings of the editorial team that we are far from running out of topics. Once again, a colourful selection of articles awaits you.

How do we co-operate with our partner school RIS (Ruamrudee International School) on whose campus we are located and whose name is part of ours? On this topic, you will not find a dry article about administrative processes, but rather a lively text by Kevin Staub of Grade 12 about a tournament in Malaysia in which he as part of RIS' football team has taken part. Co-operation also consists in playing sports and celebrating victories together.

"Same procedure as last year", one is inclined to say every time when Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

(HFMD) makes another unwelcome appearance. In most cases, the disease is not actually dangerous, but it is highly contagious. Time and again, schools are forced to close due to HFMD. Several schools in the Minburi area, where we are located, had to take this measure in the month of August. RIS Swiss Section – Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok was closed for some days before the summer holidays due to an outbreak of the disease. Peter Hufschmid-Hirschbühl, a medical doctor by training, is giving you the facts about HFMD and about ways of coping with it.

Hendrik Schuhmacher's contribution is about the many tasks of a homeroom teacher at our school. What exactly does this role entail? What are the expectations and demands vis-à-vis a homeroom teacher? And how does she or he help you as parents? Read the article to learn more about this important job.

And how exactly does our school

recruit new teachers? What procedures are involved in the hiring process? You will find answers to these questions in my own text, dedicated to this topic because "hiring season" is now in full swing and makes up a large part of our current work.

I hope you will enjoy reading our newsletter!

Dominique Tellenbach  
Principal



## School Management

## How do we find the right teachers for our school?

Perhaps you ask yourself this question as well: How is it that new teachers come every year from Switzerland and Germany to our school in Bangkok? How do we come across them, and how do we choose the most qualified teachers to come? What are the difficulties in finding them? This article will provide an insight into the recruitment process.

Our goal is to set a high standard of learning for students so that they can achieve their best success. Good teachers play a critical role in this success. This is where the recruitment process comes into play, of which a new round has just begun. Teachers whose contracts will expire at the end of this year must inform the administration by the end of October if they wish to continue at our school. In the November board meeting, the contract extensions for interested teachers at our school are considered. By this time of the year, we have an overview of what positions will be needed in the coming academic year.

Vacancies for positions at our school are advertised through various channels. Job openings are listed on the school homepage, the central office for schools abroad in Germany, the office of schools abroad in Switzerland, the Ministry of education of our patron canton of Lucerne, and on various online job portals.

The application process varies from this point. Some positions receive a flood of applications, whereas others receive very few. Not only does the number for each position vary, the quality of applications also shows a range. Because Thailand is such an attractive place to work as a teacher abroad, many candidates become interested. The next step is to sort

out the applicants who can be deleted immediately against those with whom one would like to continue to the next step of the hiring process. This next step for interested candidates who would like to join our faculty is a Skype interview. The principal as well as the head of department for the candidate are both involved in this interview. It is a basically standardized, structured discussion that is adapted to the candidate's resume. One of the critical areas is to see the candidate's motivations for joining our faculty. Furthermore, it is also an opportunity for the school to showcase what makes it unique. Important questions arise not only about teaching, but also about the special situation of a private school in a foreign country. Not every candidate with a public school background is fit for our private institution. Ideal candidates for our school need to be service-minded, able to work closely with parents, willing to differentiate, have the right attitude and extensive teaching experience. Whether or not a candidate possesses these qualities is one of the things we look for in this interview process.

Candidates who pique our interest in the initial interview are then invited to a second, personal interview. These advanced interviews take place in Lucerne in January. In coming to Lucerne, interested candidates further prove their dedication to want to work at our school. Together with representatives of the administration of education of Lucerne, the principal then conducts one and a half hour long, competency-oriented interviews. This second interview is more in-depth than the first, and its goal is to get a picture of the candidate's pedagogical personality. Where applicable, partners and families of candidates are invited. It is important

to get a sense of whether the whole family is on board with the decision to move to Thailand.

Whenever possible, the principal then tries to see the candidate "live in action" at their current school. A lesson visit gives substance to the observations that we've made in the interviews and allows us to see how the candidates actually interact with students in real life situations. In addition, the principal generally seeks to have a meeting with the school administration of the candidate to get a further picture of the candidate's work habits and experience.

If all of the successive observations, interviews, and meetings continue to show the strength of the candidate, then a contract discussion is held. However, not everyone fully goes through with the final decision: for some, Bangkok is just one of many options that they may have applied for. Such candidates may make a last-minute decision to work for another school abroad. Still others get cold feet at the last moment, as was the case during the most recent recruiting phase. After the coup on 22nd May 2014, we received written notices of candidates who had retracted their interest in the school even though they had already signed a contract. This then necessitates a second recruiting phase over the summer holidays, as well as a talent for improvisational recruitment. Luckily though, this is the exception. Usually, our intensive recruitment process finds the most engaged, most motivated, and most well-trained teachers that use their full energy to the most worthwhile cause we have: the well-being of your children.



# Teachers

## The role of a homeroom teacher at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok

Regardless of being enrolled in the primary section or the secondary section,

for students at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok, the homeroom teacher plays a significant role. In the primary school this is evidenced by the fact that the homeroom teacher is also the instructor for most subjects. However, the homeroom teacher also plays an important role for students in seventh to twelfth

grades. The seventh grade homeroom teacher has the important task of orienting students to secondary level. Furthermore, the teachers in grades 9, 10, and 12 have an important role as giving guidance through major tests; namely the Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss, and Matura/ university preparation exams.

The role of a homeroom teacher also has interesting extra facets in the context of working at an international school. The following are the general roles of the homeroom teacher outside of the work of teaching.

### 1. Directing the class and student life

This domain entails the following tasks:

- Integrating and connecting the students in the class (for example

during the integration day at the beginning of the school year)



*Social project in Khon Kaen with the homeroom teacher*

- Serving as a mentor for students when they need to speak with someone (in most cases the homeroom teacher is the first person students should go to with any kind of problem)

- Extracurricular activity planning and management (for example the class trips such as the social project to Khon Kaen, project days, and supervision of the work experience internship in grade 9)

- Setting up the classroom (for example during the integration day)

- Manage and help in the selection of classroom leadership positions (for example the class representative or the class treasurer)

- Set expectations (for example, setting classroom rules together with student input)

- Act as a conflict mediator when there are problems (this could be conflicts within a class or with students from other classes)

### 2. Administrative duties

This domain entails the following tasks:

- Managing students in various settings such as during fire drills

- Running and leading classroom discussions and conferences, for example when there are issues with behavior

- Preparing and executing grading conferences

- Preparing report cards

- Guiding students on their school paths, informing students and parents of progress. For example, when it is noticed that students are experiencing difficulty they are offered support instruction.

### 3. Cooperation with parents

This domain entails the following tasks:

- Maintaining contact with parents and parent representatives about issues in the class. Usually at our school this happens via email or meetings.

- Planning and leading parents' evenings

- Leading parent conferences towards understanding of the students progress and development in their education (for example, the



## Teachers

## The role of a homeroom teacher at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok

parents-teacher days held twice a year)

4. Networking with colleagues and the school administration

This domain entails the following tasks:

- Holding meetings with other teachers about a class or individual students, this can take place in the context of regularly held conferences or informal meetings in the teachers' room

- Trying to resolve conflicts between classes and subject teachers

- Serving as a contact person for questions the school administration might have about a class

In addition to these tasks, work at an international school abroad also entails these competencies: maintaining a classroom environment that can welcome new students who may additionally also be new to the country, so that they can quickly integrate into the classroom. Students come to the school from all around the world, and parents often ask homeroom teachers for special support during these transition times.

Moreover, there are other ways that the homeroom teacher is involved in school life. Each class supports an orphan child with 4000 Baht per year.

This money is supposed to be raised by the students in the class, which also entails the necessary support of a teacher. Teachers also help organize other workshops during the year, such as the Christmas party held at

them. In addition, teachers have the freedom to explore pedagogical development, whether it be through suggestions for change, ideas for structuring different activities, or their own innovative impulses.



*Individual classroom design on integration day*

the school. Another noteworthy day is the integration day at the beginning of the school year. This serves as a day where the teacher can work to expand the spirit of the classroom through cooperation amongst students.

Despite the wide range of activities teachers are responsible for, especially at our school, they remain ready to take on classroom leadership. This great motivation to be a strong classroom leader shows in their dedication to their work. One of the main reasons for this is that the homeroom teacher spends a lot of time with students, and therefore has time to build strong relationships with

At our school, there is also a deputy homeroom teacher. The person with this role supports the homeroom teacher and jumps into action on short notice if needed. At a relatively small school such as ours here at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok, the teachers often meet in informal ways between periods in the teachers' room or in short-notice meetings to talk about problems

that might be occurring in a classroom.

The homeroom teacher is an especially important person at an international school abroad to support and guide students in both good and challenging times. The work of a classroom teacher is varied and yields many positive experiences and opportunities. For this reason it is crucial for homeroom teachers to have a supportive relationship with parents, as this is the only way that a positive learning environment can be established for the children.

Hendrik Schuhmacher



# SMV

# Athletic Connections to Ruamrudee International School



"RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok" - this long name makes our connection to RIS very clear. Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok is a part of Ruamrudee International School. Cooperative work is an important facet of the connection of these two schools. It is readily apparent, especially at the administrative level. However, students might not be as cognizant of other connections. Do they end at the shared usage of the same canteen? Or are our similarities reduced to the same uniform, with ours having the Swiss Section Bangkok logo to differentiate?

Luckily, the relationship between the two schools isn't only as "dry" as it might seem at first appearance. In fact, it can even get to emotional interactions between students of both schools. The situations in which this usually happens is through sports. Where else could better friendships be made than by the cooperative practicing of sports, that shared drive to succeed athletically? For example, football, as it is so eloquently known, is much more than just a sport. On the field there's more than a team, there is the building of relationships between players. For

this reason, it's especially important to emphasize the great variety of athletic opportunities offered by RIS.

In addition to football, several other sports are offered: basketball, badminton, cross country, golf, tennis, softball, swimming, and volleyball. Even water polo and cheerleading are part of the extracurricular offerings. Beyond the wide spectrum of activities you could join, there are more reasons to participate. On the one hand, all sports are free. Secondly, RIS participates in two well-known competitions that include most sports. These are BISAC and SEASAC. BISAC is a league in which various international schools of Bangkok compete against each other. SEASAC is comparable to our Southeast Asian Games. Schools from across the region compete against each other at a host school, which rotates each time. Five RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok students participated alongside RIS student athletes at the SEASAC football games in Kuala Lumpur. Both the boys' and the girls' teams reached third place at this competition.

Yet even more important than athletic

success are the connections that are made with students from RIS. This athletic cooperation leads not only to new friendships, but also to a more harmonious coexistence on our shared campus. This should serve as a call for Swiss Section students to go forth and interact with RIS students, instead of isolating yourself from the other students.

Students should take the opportunity to engage themselves both athletically and socially in the wide array of activities offered by RIS.



## Parents

# Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

HFMD is very common in Thailand. According to the Bureau of Epidemiology, Ministry of Public Health, a total of about 60'000 cases were reported from Jan. 1st to November 14th of this year in 77 Provinces. The disease is easy to diagnose and it runs in most cases harmless and uneventful. It is extremely contagious though. Therefore, its presence often leads to school closures.

Find a few questions and answers about HFMD, an unwelcome, but regular visitor at our school.

### What is Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD)?

Hand-foot-mouth disease is a common viral infection that most often begins in the throat. Children under age 10 are most often affected.



It is an illness that causes sores in or on the mouth and on the hands, feet, and sometimes may also involve the buttocks, knees or elbows, particularly in younger children and infants. It is characterized by a brief febrile illness in children and typical skin rash, with or without mouth ulcers. The sores may be painful. The illness usually doesn't last more than a week or so.

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is common in children but can also occur in adults. It can occur at any time of year but is most common in the summer and fall.



Hand, foot and mouth disease is characterized by a brief febrile illness in children and typical skin rash, with or without mouth ulcers. Typically,



the rash is red and with blisters affecting the palms or soles of the feet, or both. In some cases the rash may be without blisters, and may also involve the buttocks, knees or elbows, particularly in younger children and infants.

### What about other diseases with similar names?

It is **not** the same as other diseases that have similar names: foot-and-mouth disease (sometimes called hoof-and-mouth disease) or mad cow disease.

These diseases almost always occur in animals.

### What causes HFMD?

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is associated with two viruses commonly found in Thailand: Coxsackie A 16 and Enterovirus EV71. Many small and large outbreaks associated with EV71 infections have been reported throughout the world since the early 1970s. Some virus strains are more virulent than others.

The virus spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. It can also spread through infected stool, such as when you change a diaper or when a young child gets stool on his or her hands and then touches objects that other children put in their mouths. Often the disease breaks out within a community.

You can catch hand-foot-and-mouth disease if:

- A person with the infection sneezes, coughs, or blows their nose near you
- You touch your nose, eyes, or mouth after you have touched something contaminated by the virus, such as a toy or doorknob
- You touch the stools or the fluid from blisters of an infected person



## Parents

# Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

The virus is most easily spread the first week a person has the disease.

It usually takes 3 to 6 days for a person to get symptoms of hand-foot-and-mouth disease after being exposed to the virus. This is called the incubation period.

### What are the symptoms of HFMD?

At first your child may feel tired, get a sore throat, or have a fever of around 101°F (38°C) to 103°F (39°C). Then in a day or two, sores or blisters may appear in or on the mouth and on the hands, feet, and sometimes the buttocks.



In some cases a skin rash may appear before the blisters do. The blisters may break open and crust over.



The sores and blisters usually go away in a week or so.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Rash with very small blisters on the hands, feet, and diaper area that may be tender or painful when pressed
- Sore throat
- Painful ulcers in the throat (including tonsils), mouth, and tongue

In some cases there are no symptoms, or they are very mild. Parents may get the disease from their children and not even realize it.

### How is HFMD diagnosed?

A doctor can tell if your child has hand-foot-and-mouth disease by the symptoms you describe and by looking at the sores and blisters. Tests usually aren't needed.

### How is HFMD treated?



There is no specific treatment for the infection other than relief of symptoms.

Antibiotics do not work because the infection is caused by a virus. (Antibiotics treat infections caused by bacteria, not viruses.)

- Offer your child plenty of cool fluids to help with sore throat. Cold foods such as flavored ice pops and ice cream also may help.
- Don't give your child acidic or spicy foods and drinks, such as chili or orange juice. These foods can make mouth sores more painful.
- For pain and fever, give your child acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Advil).
- Do not give your child aspirin. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.



## Parents

# Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

Children are most likely to spread the disease during the first week of the illness. But the virus can stay in the stool for several months and may spread to others. To help prevent the disease from spreading:

- If your child goes to day care or school, talk to the staff about when your child can return.
- Wash your hands frequently. It is especially important to wash your hands after you touch a blister or change the diaper of an infected child.
- Teach all family members to wash their hands often. It is especially important to wash your hands after you change the diaper of an infected child.
- Don't let your child share toys or give kisses while he or she is infected.

### What about possible complications of HFMD?



In rare cases the Central Nervous System (CNS) can be involved. These are the warning signs:

- Loss of body fluids (dehydration)
- Seizures due to high fever (febrile seizures)
- More than 48 hours of fever
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Agitation / Irritability
- Limb weakness
- Loss of coordinated muscle movements for maintaining normal posture of the trunk
- Shortness of breath

If your child shows any of the above listed signs you should consult your doctor immediately.

### What about pregnant mothers getting in contact with HFMD?



There is no special risk for pregnant mothers. In a few very rare cases the fetus has been infected.

If a pregnant mother is in contact with an infected child she should regularly wash her hands. If she is changing diapers or providing other care rubber gloves are recommended.

### How is RIS Swiss Section – Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok dealing with HFMD?

- In case of any possible HFMD infections within the school community, we screen children in the affected age groups for symptoms in the morning prior to entering the classroom.

- All children displaying possible symptoms are immediately being sent to the School Clinic where the specially trained nurses decide how to proceed.

- If cases occur, we send out detailed information to all parents about HFMD.

- We generally ask parents not to send their children to school when they have fever - a child with fever recovers best resting at home. Students with fever will always be sent home.

- We strictly follow the orders of the Ministry of Public Health - if a certain number of HFMD cases occurs, a partial or whole school closure has to take place.



*Find additional material written in Thai and English on the website.*  
Peter H. Hufschmid-Hirschbuehl