

**School Advisory Board Meeting**  
**Accredited Italian Embassy School in Beijing**  
**Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup> 2020**  
**4:30 – 6:20 p.m.**

*Participants, via Zoom:*

- *School Holder & President, Franco Cutrupia*
- *School Treasurer, Sergio Bertasi*
- *School Administrator, Giulia Ziggiotti*
- *Educational Coordinator, Annalisa Torrero*
- *Teachers' Representative – Kindergarten, Celeste Grassi*
- *Teachers' Representative – Primary, Marco Pasciuti*
- *Parents' Representative – Paola Caciolli*
- *Parents' Representative – Valentina Liberatore*
- *Head of Consular Office, School Superintendent, Luca Fraticelli*

*The President opens the meeting at 4:30 p.m.*

**A) Introduction by the President**

**1) Update on the situation of the school (children and staff)**

• *Children:*

*Out of the 84 children enrolled and attending the School, 45 are in Beijing and 39 abroad.*

• *Employees:*

*Out of the 26 employees of the School, 22 are in Beijing and 4 abroad.*

***Everyone is - fortunately - in good health.***

*Latest information on re-opening by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission: amongst them those of interest to our School are the following, highlighted in yellow.*

**April 12**

Students in their final year at junior high and senior high schools in Beijing are scheduled to return to school on the May 11 and April 27, respectively, as in-school education for the spring semester has been suspended due to the novel coronavirus epidemic.

Li Yi, spokesperson of Beijing's education authority, announced at a press conference on Sunday afternoon (April 12), adding that the college entrance examination in Beijing will be held from July 7-10.

Li Yi also stated that the entrance examination for high school in Beijing will be held from July 17 to 19.

There are a number of specific requirements students and teachers must meet to be able to return to school.

Those who have not left the city or those who have stayed in Beijing for 14 successive days without symptoms can return to school.

Students who have left Beijing should be back in the city two weeks before the resumption of school and finish the 14-day home or integrated quarantine with a negative result in nucleic acid testing.

School staff members and teachers should be on duty 10 days before the resumption of classes to get prepared.

The decision for class resumption for the students in other grades, as well as kindergartens and special education schools, will be decided at a later date. **The school dates of students of kindergartens, primary schools and colleges will be determined later after mid-May.**

### **April 13**

When the new semester starts, school teachers and students will be required to wear masks at all times. This rule was issued by the capital's education authorities on Monday.

The Beijing Municipal Education Commission said in a circular that surgical masks are must-have items for teachers when giving lessons at school. It added that the disinfection of classroom floors, study lounges and labs should be conducted twice a day, and used tissues and face masks should be disposed of in special trash cans with people assigned for clean-up.

If the novel coronavirus is confirmed or suspected in a school, an emergency response plan must be launched and measures such as a suspension of classes or even closing the school would be taken to guarantee the safety and health of students and teachers.

A relatively closed class management method will be adopted at the start of the new semester. All classes will set different times for breaks, meals or leaving school to reduce interaction as much as possible between students.

Parents must leave the school immediately after picking up their children to avoid clustering. **A specific designated area for parents to wait for their children to finish class is to be maintained in front of each school gate,** ensuring the safety of every parent and student.

## April 14

During a press conference, Li Yi, deputy secretary of the Education and Work Committee of the Municipal Party Committee and spokesperson of the Municipal Education Committee announced that **when students return to school, their school day will start at 9.30am and end at 3.30pm to minimize the contact between students and society.**

*The school is preparing a hygiene and safety protocol in collaboration with the Beijing Families Hospital (BFH), with which the school has an ongoing assistance agreement for health services, which includes the presence of a nurse.*

### **2) Organisational and financial consequences of the state of crisis caused by COVID-19**

*The new situation has forced us to take decisions to safeguard the structure and organisation of the school.*

*In line with our social approach, we have decided not to lay off any employees and we have not reduced the salaries of the employees, who remained in the place of employment according to the contract (Beijing). Obviously - faithful to our social vision - we have applied the same policy with both the teaching and the non-teaching staff.*

*Wages were reduced only in the case of teachers who, although engaged in home learning, did not remain in the place of employment (Beijing), also in consideration of the fact that, being in a different time zone area, they could not have contact with the pupils and therefore did not fully perform their role as teachers (as noted by the families).*

*We have noticed that families agree that wages are paid. I quote, as examples, the letter written by the parents of kindergarten children on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2020:*

*"nobody wants to jeopardize the financial stability of the institution, nor deny the rights of the staff"*

*and messages sent by Mr. Mackenzie:*

*"we would prefer that they [the teachers] continue to be paid in full"*

*"I hope the teachers are receiving their full pay during this period"*

*It has also to be noted that the DRC did not grant us the reimbursement of February rental.*

*What has been said has precise consequences on the financial situation of the school, which relies on*

*1) fees;*

*2) donations; and*

*3) contribution from the Ministry (MAECI).*

*I refer in this regard to the presentation of our Treasurer.*

### 3) *Relations with families: refund of lunch fees and school fees*

*The present period is difficult for everyone and it is therefore understandable that disagreements occur. As we know, we have received letters, messages and even phone calls from Parents on the above-mentioned subjects. We are all informed about the contents of the letters.*

*We have already promised in writing the refund of the lunch fees and we will refund 100% of them for the periods in which the school, after the holidays of the Chinese New Year (extended until February 9th) could not reopen.*

*On the possibility of refunding school fees, I refer to the report of our Treasurer and to what will be said at point E) of our agenda.*

*Let me just mention a few points:*

- Our accounts are audited by the Embassy of Italy in China and are approved by the MAECI. The cash flow situation of our school is published and therefore known to families.
- As mentioned above, the families agree on the fact the school will pay the staff their salaries.
- To meet these payments, the school must obviously also have school fees. I say "also" because - as you know - school fees are so low that they do not cover the overall costs of the school year. In the scenario of refunding the fees for the canteen service in the February – June period, the **average annual financial loss per child is equal to CNY 14,208 (of which 11,307 for tuition fee and 2,901 for lunch fee). This amount is reduced to CNY 7,593 thanks to the donation of the School Holder and thanks to two scholarships received from third parties.**
- As we will see, in this period of school closure, expenses (except for those related to the school canteen) have not decreased. Indeed, more expenses are being added because of the prolonged closure of the school premises, while additional expenses are also required to purchase new equipment for hygiene and safety protocols.

*Finally, with regard to the home learning, without going into details on the topic, which is the province of our Educational Coordinator as per the point D) of our agenda, I just want to mention the following:*

- *In my letter to the Parents of 17/02/20 I stressed "Hereby, I would like to join the team in asking you to fully help your children in the accomplishment of the above-mentioned assignments."*
- *There was no adequate response to what was requested and indeed in the Parents' letter of March 6th 2020 I read "there is a consensus among all the parents that e-learning is not a formula that works well for pre-school kids and, for as much as it is accepted by the MIUR, it is far from the*

*Reggio pedagogical approach that we all subscribed to." With other notations certainly not pleasant for our Team.*

- *In fact, we understand that nursery schools run by Reggio Children also carry out home learning and there, as well as everywhere, since these are new processes for everyone (children, parents and teachers) there are difficulties.*
- *Having said that, the commitment of teachers has to be acknowledged, even if, as they deal with a new subject, their action is certainly susceptible of improvement. Their right to be remunerated - regardless of our social vision - is therefore undeniable.*

#### **4) Recovery of classes missed because of the closure of the school**

*We have already stated several times that we will implement this make up. I reconfirm that the teachers are all in agreement and available in this regard. Defining further details on how it will be done and what the schedule will be appears to be difficult as we have not yet had any official indication from the Beijing Municipal Education Commission on the reopening date of the school.*

*I refer to what will be agreed when dealing with point E) of the agenda.*

#### **5) 2020-21 enrollment: school fees unchanged**

*Our School, as repeatedly said, has a cultural and social setting. Therefore - despite having school fees which are decidedly lower than other comparable international schools and, as mentioned before, do not cover the running costs - it will keep them unchanged also for the next year.*

*We hope that the families, who enjoy the advantages of this approach, will appreciate it and - by examining the report with the forecast of the accounting closure at the end of the present school year – will understand the importance of the financial support given in their favour.*

#### **B) Report of the Treasurer on the financial situation in the current school year and in 2020-21**

*The forecast of the closure of the school accounts for the period 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020 is attached herewith.*

*It is a draft version: the final accounts will be submitted to the Italian Embassy in China with all the supporting documents. They will be audited and then sent to the Foreign Ministry in Rome for approval.*

*I feel I can say that the final numbers of the operating result will differ very little from those we have indicated in the draft and will not affect the final operating result.*

*As you can see, the expected operating result (PROFIT / LOSS) is also negative in this fifth year of school. This is no surprise as the school fees are set at a "social" level to widen the possibility for families to choose the school. As long as this "social" approach persists, the school will be structurally loss-making and will have to rely on donations. In fact, so far the donor is only one. **Donations received by the school since its establishment amount to RMB 7,435,305.***

*The president has already explained the remuneration policy followed by the school and has also promised the refund of the "lunch fees" from February onwards.*

*We see that, after the refund, the result worsens even more. If we did not refund the "lunch fees" from February onwards, the final result would be almost in balance, thanks to the Foreign Ministry contribution of RMB 343.982. Besides let's not forget that the sum of RMB 569,762 at point 1.c) "All scholarships" comes from donations.*

***In conclusion, considering:***

- 1) the remuneration policy implemented (also in accordance with the social approach of the school);*
- 2) the refund of lunch fees;*
- 3) the expected negative result;*

***As the Treasurer I don't feel like endorsing the refund of the school fees in order not to be too "unbalanced" in our social mission, also in comparison with other schools.***

*As to the 2020-21 school year, we inform that, while waiting for closing the 2019-20 financial year, the school is making various forecasts in a trusting-the-future approach.*

***The current uncertainty did not allow us to finalise a budget and the school reserves the right to present it by the beginning of June. However, we can guarantee following points:***

- The continuation and strengthening of primary education, for which the school is in contact with the Cambridge Assessment International Education;*
- The expansion of the kindergarten school;*
- The continuation of the financial support of the current school holder.*

***C) Closing forecast @ 30 June 2020 and Budget 2020-21 (School Administrator)***

*The School Administrator acknowledges that there are no questions.*

***D) Relazione del Coordinatore Didattico sullo home learning  
Report of the Educational Coordinator on home learning***

*We are in the 12<sup>th</sup> week of home-learning. The school staff, after an online training course with an online teaching expert, and the experience gained in the first few weeks, reached a good level of organisation and logistics for the exchange with the parents.*

*The school-family communication system and the use of the activities is accessible to everyone: use of WeChat (as other schools use other applications) in which we share multimedia material, activities, teaching cards, videos, teachers' conversations and class video conferences for the primary levels. We are also experimenting, in collaboration with Reggio Children, the 'assembly' methods via ZOOM for the kindergarten section.*

*Reflections on the sections.*

***Kindergarten:*** *Taking into account the needs and requests of the parents, the teachers have more in-depth and exhaustive proposals for the course, which they propose weekly with a series of activities that involve the children independently and in some cases, shall require the support of the parents. The activities are designed to include fields of experience to achieve the goals of developing skills (the self and the other, the body and movement independently, images, sounds and colours-languages, creativity and expression, knowledge of the world - objects, numbers and space). For these reasons, children of infancy shall follow home learning, to keep up with the school curriculum and all their peers/classmates with a view at returning to school.*

***Primary:*** *The Primary offer (in line with curriculum and skills development goals) involves activities at different levels to provide the proposed disciplines: explanation of the topics in video conferences or video recordings, online exercises or with didactic cards, introductory thematic videos created by teachers, research with the idea of peer-education and exchange of skills. The curriculum and programme in the various disciplines is actually followed in its entirety. The week from 13 to 17 April was dedicated to the mid-term review of skills for a realistic comparison with students and teachers. This week (April 20-24) we have scheduled online meetings with families and all teachers.*

### ***E) Final considerations on reimbursements to families (ref. A.3) and make up of lost lessons (ref. A.4)***

*As mentioned, there is still no communication from the local authorities on the reopening of the school. This leaves an element of uncertainty as to the programs.*

***As illustrated by the Treasurer, the loss-making result of the 2019-20 school year does not allow us to make refunds, even if partial, of the school fees relating to the period from February 2020 onwards.***

*We understand that, ultimately, there might be families who consider the social setting of the school as irrelevant. Although, in spite of the fact that they receive material advantages, and expect in any case at least partial fee refunds.*

*In regards to this, we wish to draw the attention to the following facts:*

- *the school is located not on the outskirts of the city, but in an excellent residential area that is easily accessible and therefore it pays high rental fees;*
- *has a trilingual teaching and **has a pupil ratio of 5.63 per teacher**. It has 26 employees, including 18 teachers. It obviously pays market salaries, so the overall staff costs are very high;*
- *has not benefited from reduced costs if not minimal (even the February rental has not been refunded);*
- *has continued paying salaries to staff, as recommended by Parents (and the cost of staff constitutes about 70% of the total costs);*
- *has, last but not least, fees significantly lower than those of international schools in Beijing, while providing at least a comparable service;*
- *is structurally loss-making: it was created and is surviving thanks to donations.*

*What has been said is the pure representation of the facts, which, like the numbers presented by the Treasurer, are irrefutable and cannot be forgotten and diminished, perhaps by writing, as someone stated:*

*"I didn't sign my daughter up to the school to make a charitable donation."*

*However, the school is not made up of insensitive people and is aware of the economic difficulties encountered by everyone in this period. **We therefore wish, within the limits of our possibilities, to meet the requests of the families and confirm that we will refund the lunch fees to 100% (from February and for the entire duration of the closure of the School) and will organise the recovery of the missed lessons. **We have therefore undertaken the following procedures:*****

- *to issue by early May, credit notes relating to the lunch fees for the months of **February, March and April (RMB 3,546 per child)**. The credit notes for the months of **May and June (overall RMB 2,364 per child for both months)**, if they need to be issued, they will be issued by June. These credit notes will be claimed against the payment of the fees for the 2020-21 school year or will be reimbursed by August 2020 to families who will not re-enroll their children;*
- *to continue, until the school can resume lessons in the classroom, the home learning for all pupils and then only for those pupils who have not been able to return to Beijing;*
- *to agree with the parents' representatives on the ways and times of the extension of the lessons in the summer, assuming that this is made*

*possible by the provisions of the Chinese Authorities and in any case bearing in mind the need for the teaching staff to prepare for the next school year; If this is not deemed achievable, lesson recoveries will be agreed in the following year.*

*The representative of the parents Paola Caciolli points out that it is necessary that the pupils of the fifth grade of primary school are taught English and mathematics support lessons for the transition to first grade secondary school. The Teaching Coordinator Annalisa Torrero confirms and reports that the teachers have already agreed on a support program for the children of the fifth class.*

*In response to the question of the representative of the parents Valentina Liberatore, the President confirms that, in the case of school lesson recovery in the summer, the "lunch fees" will be deducted from the credit notes.*

#### **F) Promotion of the School for the 2020-21 school year (School Administrator and Educational Coordinator)**

*As known, the School acquired a fifth apartment (Apt. 8-12) inside the DRC compound in January 2020. It was foreseen to use it for the opening of a section of the infancy of 'very young' (2.5 years) soon after returning from the holidays of the Chinese New Year. Therefore a 'conversion' of the use of spaces agreed with the teachers on the basis of the confirmed enrolments for the 2020-21 school year.*

*In accordance with the provisions of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission, schools are closed and all events are cancelled. To allow the meetings of families with teachers, we are planning two online Open Days. We currently have around 40 new families in our database.*

*Despite the suspension of the school, we are continuing the dialogue with Cambridge Assessment International Education to become part of the network of schools offering the "Cambridge Primary Curriculum".*

*Choosing the Cambridge Curriculum:*

- Strengthens the teaching of the disciplines Mathematics, Sciences, ICT, Digital Literacy, Physical Education, Music and Global Perspective, and becomes a pillar*
- in our bilingualism - parallel to the pillar of education of the Italian curriculum in the subjects Italian - History - Geography - Citizenship and Constitution;*
- Accompanies the pupils of the primary "in continuity" for the entrance to the first grade secondary school;*
- By requesting careful and scrupulous screening by Cambridge examiners, it is an opportunity for the school's self-assessment and improvement plan, as well as proof of the quality of teaching offered for families.*

## G) Additional questions

**We received some questions in the morning before the meeting. As Paola Caciolli said, they summed up some Parents' questions submitted to both Parents' representatives in the past months. The answers to these questions are stated below:**

### **Q1. Is everyone safe?**

*All the staff of the School are in good health. Nobody has been infected by COVID-19 and there is no news of the infection in any of the families in our personnel.*

### **Q2. Is it possible for the school to make up part of the lost school hours during summer break?**

Please refer to the statement above, where this has been discussed.

### **Q3. Is the school entitled to access to any Italian and/or China government program to support companies and private people affected by the COVID emergency (tax deduction, rent freezing, other)?**

*We have sent a letter requesting information on this point to MAECI. In this regard, the School Superintendent Luca Fraticelli informs that MIUR is in charge of the final decision.*

### **Q4. Can the school grant a credit for the service not provided, to be enjoyed in the next semester (such as discount on the tuition fee)?**

*Please refer to the statement above, where this has been discussed.*

### **Q5. Regarding school year 2020-2021, what is expected in terms of enrolment/invoicing calendar?**

*Unchanged compared to those of the current year, that is, November 15 and June 20 (errata corrige of what was said at the meeting).*

- **Are they looking at preferential options for returning students, and what about those who will finally not come back?**

*The School will keep the fees unchanged, which are already - as per attachment - insufficient to cover the costs.*

- **What learnings and what actions in case of similar situation? (regarding e-learning, fees, etc.)**

---

*We have already planned to purchase a remote learning platform. The straight lines, we repeat, remain unchanged.*

**Q6. To understand better the framework in which the school operates, which policies and regulations needs to abide to, what special treatments or exemptions can enjoy, etc.. what is the formal status of the school and its position in respect to Chinese and Italian regulations?**

*The "Embassy School permit" was issued by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission on 11 May 2015 and it recognises Franco Cutrupia as the legal representative and "holder" and Giulia Ziggiotti as the principal. The school is therefore subject to control the above said Commission, to which reports and documents are sent periodically and whenever they are requested (the latter case has recently become more frequent and pressing).*

*As an Embassy school, the school is exempt from profit taxes (which, however - we believe it is now known - has never been there) and its foreign staff (teachers) are exempt from income tax. The annual visa of said staff is requested directly by our Embassy.*

*The school obtained the accreditation from MIUR on September 1, 2016 on the basis of implementation decree 4716 of July 23, 2009 jointly issued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education, University and Research.*

*This decree states, among other things, that:*

*- Italian public and private schools abroad contribute to the pursuit of the promotion of the Italian language and culture according to the guidelines of the foreign policy, as well as to the realisation of the educational offer, also considering the foreign context in which they operate. The resources assigned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to these institutes are used for these purposes (art. 1.1);*

*- supervision of the recognised school is exercised by the diplomatic-consular representative (art. 1.6) The competent consul therefore has the position of the School Superintendent;*

*- "Accredited schools" are defined as educational institutions which, starting from kindergarten, are consistent with the general educational systems and meet the requirements established by law 10 March 2000, n. 62, as well as by Legislative Decree of February 24, 2003, n. 267/2752. (art.2.1);*

*- The educational project has to meet the educational principles of the Italian school (art.2.2);*

*- the School holder is the guarantor of the cultural identity and educational project of the school and the person in charge of running the educational institution (art.2.8).*

*Our school can request a ministerial subsidy. The amount of the same is limited in size (this year it is equal to RMB 343.982). As already mentioned, the school accounts are subject to auditing by the Embassy of Italy in China and are then approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

*The School Superintendent Luca Fraticelli specifies that there are two moments for the administrative fulfilment's by the School: at the end of the year, the presentation of the budget for the following financial year and, in the first months of the year, the presentation of the final balance of the previous financial year. The School Superintendent informs also that he has sent the final documentation and related clarification for the 2019 financial year to MAECI.*

**Q7. What closure is available for the children to say goodbye to their friends and teachers who have left /are leaving, if the school doesn't reopen this year?**

*The request will be considered on the basis of the security rules. We hope we can organise a party for the children possibly at the end of the present school year or at the beginning of the new school year..*

*Valentina Liberatore requests whether the parents can do something to help the School. The President thanks and replies that the actual state of the School and its objectives should be publicised. The School Administrator stresses the importance of school-family collaboration both for home learning in childhood (for which calls via Zoom will be used), and, at the possible reopening of the School, for the implementation of hygiene and safety protocols.*

*The meeting was held in Italian and was declared closed at 18:20. The Italian minutes will be translated into English and Chinese: in case of discrepancy, the Italian text will prevail.*

*Edited: School Administrator*

*Date: April 21, 2020*

**CASH FLOW 01/07/2019 - 30/06/2020**

	Refund LUNCH fees Feb - Apr on 30/06/20	Refund LUNCH fees Feb - May on 30/06/20	Refund LUNCH fees Feb - Jun on 30/06/20
1. RENTALS	¥1,201,241	¥1,201,241	¥1,201,241
<b>RENTAL DEDUCTION</b>	<b>¥0</b>	<b>¥0</b>	<b>¥0</b>
2. APT. REFURBISHMENT & FURNITURE	¥190,152	¥190,152	¥190,152
3. STAFF (all related exp)	¥5,037,641	¥5,037,641	¥5,037,641
<b>STAFF salary deduction (absent teachers)</b>	<b>¥79,899</b>	<b>¥102,154</b>	<b>¥124,409</b>
4. KITCHEN (all related exp) (*)	¥965,902	¥937,902	¥918,302
<b>KITCHEN STAFF salary deduction (absent teacher)</b>	<b>¥36,719</b>	<b>¥46,469</b>	<b>¥56,219</b>
5. EXTRAORDINARY exp for school reopening	¥60,000	¥60,000	¥60,000
6. G & A	¥391,111	¥391,111	¥391,111
<b>COSTS GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>¥7,729,431</b>	<b>¥7,669,426</b>	<b>¥7,617,821</b>
<b>1.TUITION FEES</b>	<b>¥6,159,852</b>	<b>¥6,159,852</b>	<b>¥6,159,852</b>
a) full fees	¥4,438,623	¥4,438,623	¥4,438,623
b) discounted fees	¥1,151,467	¥1,151,467	¥1,151,467
c) ALL scholarships	¥569,762	¥569,762	¥569,762
d) irrecoverable tuition fees	¥147,313	¥147,313	¥147,313
<b>2. MEAL FEES (*)</b>	<b>¥1,116,981</b>	<b>¥1,116,981</b>	<b>¥1,116,981</b>
irrecoverable meal fees	¥35,100	¥35,100	¥35,100
<b>3. AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>¥212,734</b>	<b>¥212,734</b>	<b>¥212,734</b>
<b>4. MISCELLANEOUS INCOME</b>	<b>¥100,680</b>	<b>¥100,680</b>	<b>¥100,680</b>
<b>5. other donation</b>	<b>¥15,073</b>	<b>¥15,073</b>	<b>¥15,073</b>
<b>REVENUES GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>¥7,422,906</b>	<b>¥7,422,906</b>	<b>¥7,422,906</b>
<b>PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>¥306,525</b>	<b>¥246,520</b>	<b>¥194,915</b>
<b>REFUND of 100% school lunch fees</b>	<b>¥286,355</b>	<b>¥380,901</b>	<b>¥476,273</b>
REFUND of school fees	¥0	¥0	¥0
<b>CASH FLOW BALANCE 1</b>	<b>¥592,880</b>	<b>¥627,421</b>	<b>¥671,189</b>
<b>MAECI CONTRIBUTION (financial year 2019)</b>	<b>¥343,982</b>	<b>¥343,982</b>	<b>¥343,982</b>
<b>CASH FLOW BALANCE 2</b>	<b>¥248,898</b>	<b>¥283,439</b>	<b>¥327,206</b>