

GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

GREEN PROJECTS



The Harbour School (THS) students taking part in an Ocean Park project.
Photos: Handout

COLLABORATING FOR CONSERVATION

The Harbour School and Ocean Park are working together to provide students with opportunities to expand their exposure to sustainability issues, writes **Jolene Otremba**

In an era of unprecedented environmental challenges, the concept of sustainability has assumed increasing importance as governments and organisations around the world look to prioritise positive developments that can help shape a better future for our planet. It is important to bring on board all stakeholders, in particular the young, who must live with the consequences of actions taken today.

It is for this reason that The Harbour School Hong Kong (THS) and Ocean Park recently joined hands and signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to promote marine science, ocean conservation and sustainable development to young pupils.

“We wanted to work together to innovate and collaborate on new ideas and projects, and bring Hong Kong to the forefront of marine conservation education, as well as support sustainable development,” said Dr Jadis Blurton, THS co-founder and head of school.

Through this collaboration, THS students will receive the invaluable opportunity to learn from Ocean Park professionals, gaining access to its facilities and school of actuaries and educators. Ocean Park will also assist THS with its conservation efforts. In return, the school will help Ocean Park with its own initiatives.

Blurton said the partnership is a match made in heaven, and that her school and the theme park adhere to similar values and belief when it comes to hands-on experiential learning.

“Ocean Park and The Harbour School share very similar missions and values – and even an approach to pedagogy. We both believe that the best way to learn something is to experience it, and the best way to learn

to love the ocean is to experience it and be exposed to it,” she said.

Arguably, one of the most important benefits for students is that this collaboration aims to help them understand that they can be agents of change and make a real impact.

“A lot of times these topics are taught in a very doom and gloom way. It’s very pessimistic about the future,” said Blurton. “But by bringing in all these people, like Ocean Park or other organisations that are doing different things, such as redressing and recycling – the kids know that they’re part of a huge network of like-minded people, and you’re not fighting this tide by yourself.”

Handrich Hernando, social impact and sustainability programme coordinator at THS, could not agree more. He noted that these collaborations actually

turn students from passive observers or learners into active participants in environmental stewardship. This is at the heart of the collaboration with Ocean Park.

“Just being able to go to Ocean Park directly is a huge benefit,” Hernando said. “We have a lot of students who are not just interested in ocean conservation, but also in wildlife conservation. Being able to talk to different actuaries at Ocean Park to receive their technical knowledge is a huge benefit.”

For example, to kick-start this collaboration, students will be given the opportunity to take part in structured programmes like Mission R, the conservation advocacy initiative launched by Ocean Park last year. Inspired by the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Reverse the Red movement and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Mission R aims to foster community collaboration, inspire public participation, and encourage behavioural change.

The partnership does not stop there. For its part, Ocean Park will support THS in its environmental and sustainability initiatives including its award-winning, student-led educational seaweed farming projects, which have seen students build seaweed farms along the Hong Kong coastline to improve water quality for marine life. Students will also gain the opportunity to conduct research, and gain insight and knowledge from Ocean Park’s exceptional facilities and expertise to invent and roll out new projects.

“That’s the real advantage of working together,” said Blurton. “We can draw on our expertise to collaborate and work on different projects like the seaweed project and Mission R. We both have different types of technical knowledge and strategies, but together we can mobilise our communities to promote their participation in those initiatives.”



Right: THS students at Ocean Park

Left: Dr Jadis Blurton (right) of THS, with representatives from Ocean Park

