



**International School  
Ho Chi Minh City**



**THE POWER OF A  
STRONG START: A  
PARENT'S GUIDE TO  
EARLY EDUCATION  
AND LIFELONG  
LEARNING**



# **THE ESSENTIAL PARENT GUIDE TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION IN VIETNAM**



# Why the First Years Shape a Lifetime

Early childhood is not just the beginning of learning, it is the blueprint for lifelong growth. Neuroscience tells us that 90% of brain development occurs by age five. What happens during these years shapes everything from literacy and emotional wellbeing to how a child will navigate challenges as an adult.

At the International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC), we don't just offer an Early Years program, we offer a foundation for life. Our approach is guided by global research, a deep respect for childhood, and decades of experience nurturing capable, compassionate learners.

This guide is here to help you:

- Understand why the Early Years matter
- Know what to look for in a quality Early Years program
- Discover how ISHCMC helps children thrive in these formative years





# Why the Early Years Matter More Than You Think

90% of brain development happens before the age of 5. This period is when your child is most receptive to learning, forming emotional bonds, and building foundational cognitive skills.

Research shows that children who attend high-quality Early Years programs are more likely to:

- Develop strong language and literacy skills
- Show confidence and emotional resilience
- Build lasting habits of curiosity, cooperation, and problem-solving
- Thrive academically and socially throughout life

This is why investing in the early years isn't just wise, it's essential.

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The experiences children have in the earliest years of life are deeply embedded in the architecture of the brain.

– Harvard Center on the Developing Child –

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# What Makes a Great Early Years Program?

Not all preschools are created equal. Here are key features of a strong Early Education program:

- 1. A Play-Based Approach:** Children learn best through meaningful, hands-on play. Look for environments that encourage exploration, creativity, and collaboration.
- 2. Skilled and Caring Educators:** Teachers should be trained in early childhood development and create warm, responsive relationships with every child.
- 3. Language-Rich Environment:** Exposure to storytelling, conversations, songs, and early writing builds literacy and communication skills.
- 4. Focus on Emotional Wellbeing:** Programs should help children develop empathy, confidence, and the ability to manage emotions.
- 5. Engaging, Purpose-Built Spaces:** Classrooms should be safe, inspiring, and tailored to young learners' developmental needs.



## Why Parents Choose ISHCMC

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As one of Vietnam's most established international schools, ISHCMC is proud to set the standard in Early Childhood Education in Ho Chi Minh City. Our program is modeled on the world's best practices and localized to support the needs of our diverse, international families.

**Research-Led Learning:** We use globally recognized assessments (DIBELS and WIDA) to support strong outcomes in literacy and English language development.

We also ensure that children meet key developmental benchmarks in symbolic expression whether through early writing, speech, gesture, mark-making, or mathematical thinking through ongoing observation and responsive teaching strategies

**Expert Educators:** Each class is led by internationally qualified teachers, supported by English as an Additional Language (EAL) and learning support specialists.

**Inspiring Environments:** Our purpose-built Early Years spaces are filled with natural light, room to move, and opportunities to create, wonder, and discover.

**Whole-Child Wellbeing:** Our POSISH framework ensures children feel seen, supported, and emotionally secure from day one.



## Voices from the Community

“

Our son went from shy and quiet to confident and curious in just a few months at ISHCMC. The care and attention from his teachers has made all the difference.

– ISHCMC Parent –

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“

What I love most is that my daughter comes home excited to tell me what she learned every day. She sees learning as fun, and that's priceless

– ISHCMC Parent –

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# Making the Right Choice, A Guided Checklist for Parents

Choosing an Early Years program is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a parent. This isn't just about finding a safe space, it's about finding the right environment to support your child's brain development, emotional wellbeing, and love of learning.

Use this checklist as a guide when visiting schools or evaluating programs:

- 1. Is the environment warm, safe, and engaging?**  
Children should feel secure, curious, and inspired. Look for natural light, age-appropriate materials, and spaces that invite movement, creativity, and discovery.
- 2. Are the teachers responsive and respectful?**  
Watch how teachers interact. Are they at the child's level? Do they listen actively, speak with warmth, and follow the child's interests to deepen learning?
- 3. Is play at the heart of learning?**  
High-quality programs use play and inquiry to drive exploration, imagination, and problem-solving, not just follow rigid instruction.
- 4. How are communication and emotional skills developed?**  
Look for language-rich environments with storytelling, conversations, and support for emotional growth, helping children express feelings, manage social situations, and build empathy.
- 5. Are families seen as partners, and is every child supported individually?**  
Great programs maintain open communication with parents and adapt to each child's needs, academically, socially, and emotionally.



# Discover ISHCMC's Early Years Program

At ISHCMC, we believe the earliest years should be a celebration of discovery, not a race. By combining play, purpose, and research-based practices, we help each child grow into a confident, curious, and compassionate learner.

Book a visit or join our upcoming **Early Education Day** to see our program in action.



Discover how ISHCMC builds a strong start for life. Hear from ISHCMC families.



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