**Island school shows its unique character**

Class act by teachers allows pupils to relish life and learning on the country’s southernmost outpost of education

BY LIU XIOLI and ZHANG YUNBI in Sansha, Hainan

Like many schools on the Chinese mainland, the small island school is decorated with class photographs.

But the images reveal a different tale of education. From tinted windows, through flickering fluorescent lights and to the dusty blackboard, the classroom is more like a small factory than a place of learning.

With only seven students in the class for three primary school classes, the classroom is the smallest among Sansha’s six island primary schools.

The pupils, aged 7 to 11, sit in three rows of desks facing a blackboard for half of the class period. For the rest, they are dispersed around two tables, with a doll and an apple as their working tools.

A door near the teacher’s desk leads to a toilet. The sound of children at play can be heard through the door.

"At first the pupils were very shy, and many of them cannot speak Mandarin. Now I’m happy to hear them say ‘hello’ on their own initiative every morning,” Wang Chun, a 36-year-old teacher at Yongxing Island, said.

Wang, who is also chairman of the island’s students’ association, added: “Sometimes we have to relay messages via radio equipment, because the teacher’s assistant is busy attending to other work. But they are so quick to learn, they will be taught as well.”

When he was seven, Wang moved from his home in Hainan’s Wuzhishan city to Sansha’s Yongxing Island.

"The parents are not sure if children here will follow in their footsteps,” Wang said. "I don’t know if I should let my son enter this school.”

But, I had to remind myself, I was a child, and a child often does not understand what the parents are doing. Perhaps they are all right. It’s a pity this island is so beautiful!"

The all-sea students of Yongxing Island, a city of 4,118, are surrounded by islands, and there is even a branch of a Chinese bank on the islet.

Wang and the islanders are responsible for within the committee building has a videoconferencing system. For the 10th meeting of the Committee, Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s call for peacefully resolving territorial disputes will be broadcast on the island.

And the US is increasing military presence in the seas by beefing up its naval and airpower. The Philippines’ warships have a new warship on patrols in the South China Sea.

Li said that in the future solvency and financial support for the island’s pupils will be transferred from the government.

The island school, which is the only school in Sansha Island group and the southernmost one of the Chinese mainland, is also the only place to provide education for as many as 1,200 pupils from 20 to 60 years old.

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