

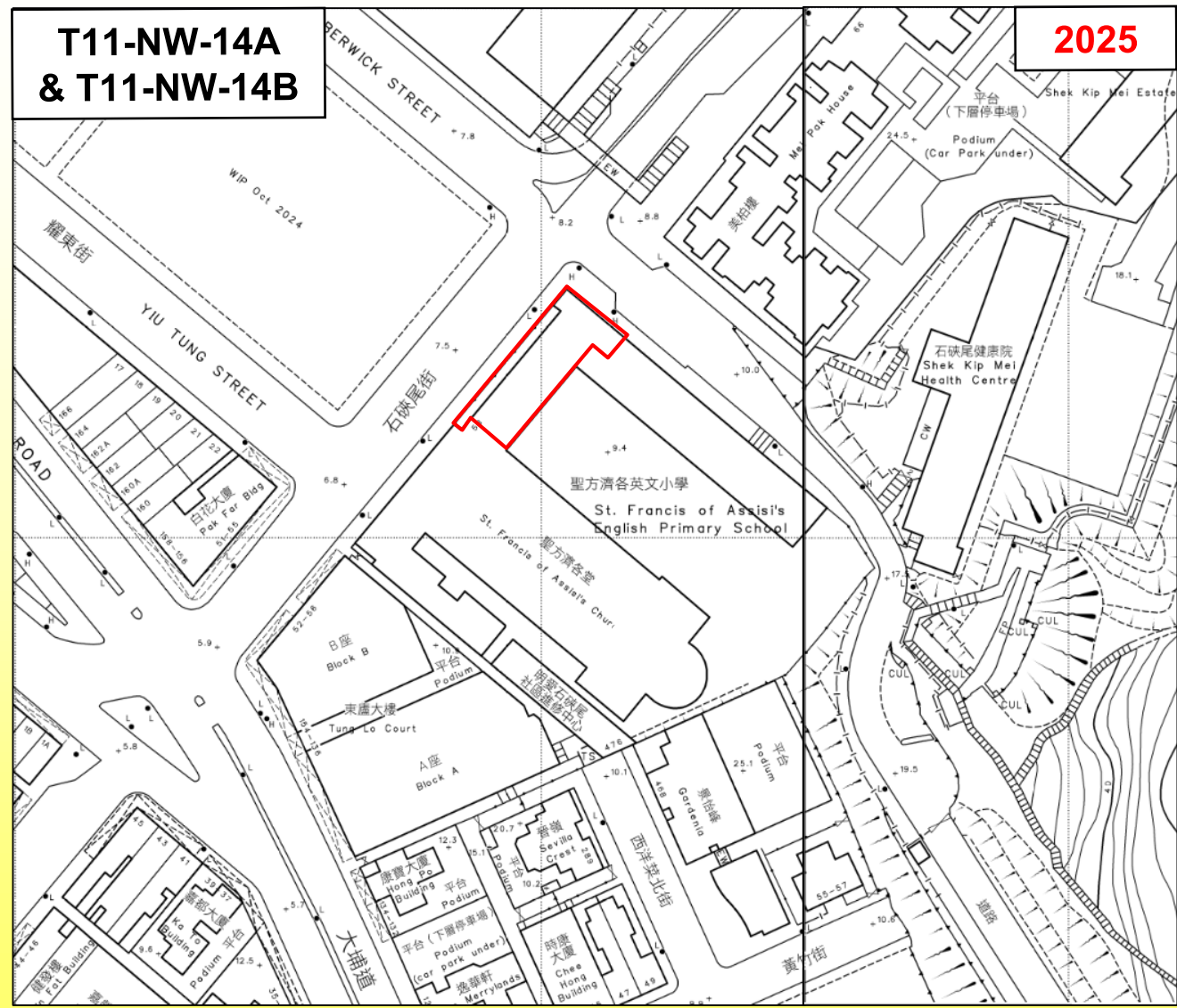
N444

九龍深水埗石硤尾街58號聖方濟各英文小學 (舊座)

**St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School (Old Block),
No. 58 Shek Kip Mei Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon**

擬議三級歷史建築
Proposed Grade 3

建於1955年
Built in 1955



擬議評級範圍
Proposed grading boundary

只用於識別位置，並非確實範圍 For identification of location only, not exact boundary

N444

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面向巴域街(左)及石硤尾街(右)的立面

Elevations facing Berwick Street (left) and Shek Kip Mei Street (right)



面向學校球場的立面

Elevation facing ball court of the school

Historic Building Appraisal

St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School (Old Block)

No. 58 Shek Kip Mei Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Located at No. 58 Shek Kip Mei Street, the site is home to St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School (聖方濟各英文小學) and St. Francis of Assisi Church (聖方濟各堂). The earliest building on the site, completed in 1955, was designed to integrate both the school and the church. **Historical Interest**

The establishment of the St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School is closely intertwined with the history of the St. Francis of Assisi Church. The current church is the third generation, which traces its origins back to St. Francis Xavier Church (聖方濟各沙勿略堂), built in the late 1860s near Kowloon City.¹ The original site on which the first church stood was dedicated exclusively to religious functions but was resumed by the government in 1930 to make way for the expansion of the airport at Kai Tak. In 1937, a new church, The Five Wounds of St. Francis of Assisi Church (聖五傷方濟各堂), was subsequently built at No. 10 Kak Hang Tsun Road (隔坑村道 10 號) in Kowloon City. This new building served not only as a place for worship but also housed a school named Da Tung School (大同學校),² illustrating the fact that the practice of integrating a church and a school on the same site had already begun at that time. In 1943, however, both the church and the school were demolished by the Japanese army to facilitate further expansion of the Kai Tak aerodrome during the Japanese occupation.³ In 1953, thanks to the tireless efforts of

¹ Ayako Fukushima, "Building St. Francis of Assisi Church and School in Hong Kong: Emergence of Church and School Complex in the 1950s", *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, Vol.85, No.768 (2020), p. 455; "St. Francis of Assisi Church: Introduction", *Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong*, uploaded on 2012, https://heritage.catholic.org.hk/en/catholic_building/st_francis_of_assisi_church/index.html (8 August 2025 accessed).

² Da Tung School is frequently referred to as Dai Tung School or Tai Tung School in historical records. The building had four levels: the ground floor served as a hall for school activities; the first floor contained classrooms; the second floor functioned as a church; and the third floor housed the residence of the priest in charge. See Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/09A/03, "Vicar Apostolic of Hong Kong Henry Valtorta to Foreign Section Department Imperial Nipponese Government", 23 September 1943; Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/09A/03, "Vicar Apostolic of Hong Kong Henry Valtorta to Foreign Section Department Imperial Nipponese Government", 4 July 1942; Ayako Fukushima, "Building St. Francis of Assisi Church and School in Hong Kong: Emergence of Church and School Complex in the 1950s", *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, Vol.85, No.768 (2020), pp. 454-455.

³ Ayako Fukushima, "Building St. Francis of Assisi Church and School in Hong Kong: Emergence of Church and School Complex in the 1950s", *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, Vol.85, No.768 (2020), p. 455; Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/09A/03, "Vicar Apostolic of Hong Kong Henry Valtorta to Foreign Section Department Imperial Nipponese Government", 23 September 1943.

the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the government granted a new site in Sham Shui Po,⁴ where the church and school stand today. Sham Shui Po was chosen as the location because of its rapidly growing Catholic population and the urgent need for educational facilities in the district, which had recently become home to many Chinese migrants and refugees whose children often lacked access to formal schooling.⁵ The establishment of a new school aimed to provide these children with education opportunities. Continuing the approach adopted in the 1930s of combining religious and educational functions, the new building was designed to serve both purposes. Construction was initially scheduled to commence after securing the land lease on 15 December 1953.⁶ However, the project was delayed due to the Shek Kip Mei Fire that broke out on 25 December of that year. Temporary shelters for fire victims and contractor sheds for the construction of resettlement blocks were erected on the new site,⁷ postponing the building work until late November 1954.⁸ The school section was completed first in September 1955, followed by the adjoining church three months later, in December.⁹ The newly built school was named St. Francis of Assisi's School (聖方濟各學校) and officially opened for admission upon its completion.¹⁰

The school has operated as a private, non-profit institution since its

⁴ Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/11/02, "W. L. T. Crunden for Ag. Supt. of Crown Land & Surveys to the Procurator of the Catholic Mission", 1 September 1953; Ayako Fukushima, *Building Catholic Churches in Hong Kong: Stories of the Laity and Living Faith* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2022), p. 80.

⁵ Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/11/02, "Bishop of Hong Kong to Public Works Department Office M. I. De Ville", 29 November 1950; Ayako Fukushima, *Building Catholic Churches in Hong Kong: Stories of the Laity and Living Faith* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2022), p. 79.

⁶ Ayako Fukushima, *Building Catholic Churches in Hong Kong: Stories of the Laity and Living Faith* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2022), p. 81.

⁷ Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: IV/11/02, "Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong to Crown Lands and Survey Office W. L. T. Crunden", 26 January 1954; Ayako Fukushima, *Building Catholic Churches in Hong Kong: Stories of the Laity and Living Faith* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2022), p. 81.

⁸ 〈聖五傷芳濟各教堂學校興建〉，《華僑日報》，1954年11月26日。

⁹ Ayako Fukushima, *Building Catholic Churches in Hong Kong: Stories of the Laity and Living Faith* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2022), p. 81; "Notice about St. Francis of Assisi's School", *South China Morning Post*, 24 September 1955; 〈深水埗聖方濟各堂明招待一千貧童 貧童幸福週今天如期開幕〉，《華僑日報》，1955年12月24日；〈九龍聖方濟各新堂聖誕節開始臨時起用〉，《公教報》，1955年12月25日。

¹⁰ "Notice about St. Francis of Assisi's School", *South China Morning Post*, 24 September 1955.

establishment. By 1956, it had grown rapidly, enrolling over 1,000 students.¹¹ To support the local community, 15 percent of places were reserved for pupils from deprived families who did not have to pay fees as long as they maintained good conduct and academic results.¹² Initially, the school offered both morning and afternoon sessions across twelve classrooms, along with evening classes from 7 to 9 PM in English and free classes in Chinese.¹³ The morning session offered primary-level classes in English, while afternoon classes were taught in Cantonese.¹⁴ As student enrollment continued to rise and space became increasingly limited, an extension to the original building was constructed and completed in 1962. The two sessions were subsequently reorganised into separate schools, with the morning classes conducted under the name St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School (聖方濟各英文小學) and the afternoon classes under the name St. Francis of Assisi's Caritas School (聖方濟愛德小學).¹⁵ In 1999, the afternoon classes were relocated to No. 221 Nam Cheong Street,¹⁶ while the morning session adopted a full-day schedule, an arrangement that continues today.

The school and the church are physically connected, both designed by Chien Nai Jen (錢乃仁),¹⁷ a prominent Chinese architect of the time. Compared to the church, the two-storey school section is modest and utilitarian in design. The front façade is characterised by regularly spaced windows in a pattern that culminates at a bell tower at the corner of Shek Kip Mei Street and Berwick Street. While this tower is notably shorter than the church's bell tower, the design remains consistent as they

**Architectural
Merit**

¹¹ 〈聖方濟各學校畢業獲獎名單〉,《華僑日報》,1958年3月14日。

¹² “ANNUAL SPEECH DAY: St Francis Of Assisi Primary School Function PRESENTATION OF PRIZES”, *South China Morning Post*, 13 March 1958.

¹³ HKRS229-1-412, “St. Francis of Assisi Primary School – Application from for Interest-free Loan”, 16 November 1961 to 23 June 1972; 〈聖五傷方濟各聖堂學校開幕〉,《華僑日報》,1956年10月23日。

¹⁴ “Notice about St. Francis of Assisi's School”, *South China Morning Post*, 24 September 1955.

¹⁵ 聖方濟各堂:《聖方濟各堂金禧特刊,1955-2005》(香港:聖方濟各堂,2006年),頁24。

¹⁶ 〈歷史背景〉,《聖方濟愛德小學》,
<https://sfacs.edu.hk/tc/%E6%AD%B7%E5%8F%B2%E8%83%8C%E6%99%AF> (2025年8月8日瀏覽)。

¹⁷ Chien Nai Jen was born in Guangdong in 1913 and earned a degree in architecture from the University of Michigan in the late 1930s. He later taught architecture at Sun Yat-Sen University before relocating to Hong Kong, where he became an authorised architect in 1941. His architectural legacy includes several Catholic buildings across the territory, notably a Grade 3 school building—St. Anthony's School on Pok Fu Lam Road. Building Records Access and Viewing On-line, Buildings Department. “Plan of No. 476 Sai Yeung Choi Street North” (File Ref No. 2/4033/54), Drawing No. G4, Front Elevation, 26 August 1954.

both incorporate similar architectural elements. The tower is crowned with a cross and a hipped roof clad in orange-red tiles with a decorative band beneath the overhanging eaves. The two sides facing the street feature a long narrow arched window framed by a window trim. All of these details mirror the decorative design of the church's tower.

In contrast, the front façade of the school has relatively few decorative elements compared to the church. The only notable feature is found above the first-floor windows, where a pair of motifs resembling Chinese sparrow braces (雀替) adorn either side of the pilaster. The fence wall, which originally spanned the entire front façade, is topped by a row of bricks with a cross pattern that reflects the school's religious background. The southeast-facing façade, overlooking the ball court, connects to a cantilevered balcony corridor on the first floor, which is enclosed by a railing and sheltered by eaves supported by cantilevered beams. The old block of the school now houses classrooms and a staff room. The interior design is also utilitarian and is not marked by any notable architectural features, and it has been upgraded with modernised, contemporary fittings.

Over the years, the school has undergone extensive alterations and additions, significantly compromising its original appearance. Among the more significant changes is the addition of a lift tower facing the ball court to provide barrier-free access to the first floor. This installation resulted in the removal of part of the original railing along the corridor. Additionally, one of the ground-floor classrooms along the front façade has been converted into transformer and switch rooms. Consequently, a portion of the fence wall located outside these rooms, originally topped with the row of bricks with a cross pattern, was removed to allow access to these rooms in compliance with current building regulations. The bell tower's narrow arched windows have also been retrofitted with new aluminium frames, altering their original appearance. Furthermore, the construction of the extension in 1962 inevitably disrupted the building fabric of the 1955 school section, as the new addition was physically connected to the original building. Classrooms have been renovated to meet modern standards, including the replacement of all windows with aluminium ones and the installation of an air conditioning system. The interior walls of all the four classrooms on the first floor have also been knocked down to create a larger staff room, altering the original spatial layout of the building. Collectively, these modifications have compromised the architectural integrity of the school, and its authenticity has been largely diminished as a result.

***Authenticity &
Rarity***

Apart from the bell tower, which blends Chinese and western architectural features, the utilitarian design of St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School is

typical of other schools built in the 1950s and is not considered uncommon architecturally.

St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School has played a vital role in nurturing generations of children, particularly during the post-war years when poverty was widespread. By providing access to education for families with limited means, it ensured that children in the area were not deprived of learning opportunities due to financial hardship, hence fostering social mobility. This initiative highlights the school's enduring commitment to education and its mission to uplift the community.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

Religious education is incorporated into the school's formal curriculum with support from the St. Francis of Assisi Church. Religious practices and regular activities are held at the school to encourage the pupils' faith,¹⁸ while some of the school's important ceremonies and masses are also conducted in the adjoining church, where pupils play an active part in roles such as altar servers and prayer leaders.¹⁹

In combination with the Precious Blood Convent (Grade 2) and Precious Blood Hospital (Caritas) (Grade 3), the building stands as a testament to the spread of Catholicism in Sham Shui Po. More broadly, the school features a group value with other Catholic schools, including Maryknoll Convent School (Declared Monument), St. Mary's Canossian College (Grade 1) and Tang King Po School (Grade 3), which together reflect the Catholic Church's commitment to providing education services in Kowloon from the early to mid-20th century.

Group Value

Geographically, it is located within walking distance of a number of built heritage, including the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir (Grade 1), Mei Ho House (Grade 2), the Former North Kowloon Magistracy (Grade 2) and the Building of The Garden Company, Limited (Grade 2).

¹⁸ "Vision & Mission of Catholic Schools," St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School, n.d., <https://www.sfaeps.edu.hk/en/vision-mission-catholic-schools>

¹⁹ St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School, "Student Helpers in Church," *Colours* 9, (2021-2022): 55.

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