



Lighthouse Learning is setting new benchmarks in the field of education

Lighthouse Learning Pvt Ltd (formerly EuroKids International Ltd) has continued to expand its pre-school and K-12 school network. Unfazed by the recent pandemic-induced challenges, the school chain, backed by global investment firm KKR, has bounced back smartly. It added as many as 450 franchise pre-schools in FY2023, taking the total count to around 1,300 pre-schools across 360 cities. Enrolments have crossed the 100,000-mark across pre-schools.

In the K-12 segment the company has a network of 45 schools with over 40,000 enrolments. In 2021 it acquired Cambridge School in Bengaluru with over 2,500 students and Centre Point as well as Mother's Pet Kindergarten in Nagpur with 7500+ students. In 2022, the group launched its 45th school campus at the Billabong High World School in Mulund, Mumbai. In the last one-and-a-half years, the group added four K-12 schools. In 2017, the school chain acquired the franchise of Kangaroo Kids and Billabong High, in the biggest known acquisition in the school business in India.

So, in total, in the K-12 segment, the

school chain, founded by Prajodh Rajan and Vikas Phadnis in 2001, owns and operates brands like Billabong High World School, EuroSchool International and the Centre Point Group of Schools and in the pre-school segment (which contributes around 60 per cent to the company's revenue), it has brands like EuroKids, Kangaroo Kids and Mother's Pet. While Phadnis recently exited the organisation, Rajan continues to be a stakeholder and is Group CEO.

Lighthouse Learning launched its first nature-inspired K-12 school in Bannerghatta, Bengaluru. The Bannerghatta campus of EuroSchool, proximate to the Bannerghatta National Park, has been reimagined in a unique way since it is situated on five acres of land amid fruit-bearing trees. As a nature-inspired school, over 25 per cent of classes are held outdoors, allowing students to experience and derive inspiration from nature. The school offers a unique day-boarding program allowing children to also participate in extracurricular, co-curricular and remedial classes at the

*Rajan:
setting new
standards*

school premises from morning till evening.

"We have bounced back quite well. Our enrolments across pre-schools and K12 segments have surpassed pre-Covid levels. Over the last year and a half, we have been expanding and have added quite aggressively to our overall network of schools. During the pandemic, we showed resilience through our Learning Management System (LMS) which we developed over the years. During Covid, we had a full-fledged technology intervention in the form of an LMS with integrated content along with video conferencing. All in all, the last few years have been a great learning curve for all of us," says Rajan, co-founder and Group CEO, Lighthouse Learning.

The K-12 education group recently

announced a strategic partnership with Heritage Xperiential Schools to expand its network of schools in the country. The partnership will witness the opening of 10 new Heritage Xperiential Schools over the next 5 years. Founded in 2003, Heritage Xperiential School (HIXS) is known for its work in project-based and experiential learning. A new campus, spread across 5 acres, will be launched in Gurugram in July 2023. Plans are afoot for new HIXS schools to be launched in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad over the next 5 years.

“We are excited to partner with the Heritage Xperiential Schools as we will be able to assist them in expanding their footprint in the country. Heritage’s goal of transforming mainstream school education is in alignment with our objective of providing a holistic educational foundation to students from early years to K-12. We are thrilled to work with a talented team of educators from Heritage for research on aspects of quality of education and joint development of solutions,” observed Rajan.

“Ever since we built an effective pedagogy around experiential learning about 20 years ago, we have been looking for opportunities to expand the reach of this curriculum and cover more students, without compromising on quality. We are delighted to have found a partner in Lighthouse Learning, which provides a platform of infrastructure, logistics and operations which Heritage Xperiential Schools can tap into expand our schools rapidly. We are also excited by the opportunities for growth and development for our students and staff that will emerge from the growing network of Heritage and Lighthouse Learning schools with diverse backgrounds and locations,” adds Manit Jain, co-founder, Heritage Xperiential Schools.

Lighthouse Learning, which started its journey back in 2001 with two EuroKids pre-schools in Mumbai, has over the years emerged as one of India’s largest education services providers with a presence not only in India but also in Nepal, Bangladesh and the Middle East. Demonstrating a successful track record of mergers and acquisitions in the education services space, it has built a portfolio of one of India’s most trusted and well-regarded education brands with a child-first ideology focused on safety



The school chain is offering high-quality education to 150,000 children daily

and learning experiences backed by new-age curricula that meets international standards and promotes holistic development in children.

New identity

Meanwhile, the school chain has recently secured the ‘Great Place To Work’ certification. The education group scored highly on the five dimensions of a high-trust, high-performance culture, including credibility, respect, fairness, pride and camaraderie. In its journey towards becoming ‘the Great Place to Work’ the group recently carried out a culture renovation exercise wherein the leadership team together with the employees co-created the organisation’s purpose, vision, mission, values, and traits.

In 2021, the group underwent rebranding, unveiling its new identity – ‘Lighthouse Learning Pvt Ltd’. The new identity reflects the company’s vision to be a high-quality educational platform which offers the best educational experiences through its various brands and will serve as guiding beacon in setting new standards in education.

“As we focus on an emergent future, we are embracing change in the form of a new identity. We offer high quality education to over 150,000 children every day through our pre-schools and K-12 schools. Our child-first, outcome-driven approach emboldened with our new vision will continue to seek the highest benchmark in learning. Lighthouse Learning will serve as a guiding beacon in setting new standards in education and driving new strategic initiatives for the organisation. Like a

lighthouse, we strive to guide our students towards being ‘change-makers’ of tomorrow,” explains Rajan.

A management graduate from the University of Madras, Rajan has been instrumental in growing the school chain from a mere two pre-schools to a large network of pre-schools and K-12 schools in India and overseas. He enjoys an enviable reputation in the industry, for his pioneering efforts in early childhood education in the country, besides creating a fertile ecosystem for education entrepreneurship. He is highly passionate and committed to the cause of instilling 21st century skills in young learners, which is a key focus across all K-12 schools.

Under his leadership, the group has always stayed ahead of the curve and is a harbinger of change in the educational landscape. It has set new standards and raised the bar in many aspects, including enriching pedagogy and building a nurturing learning environment for children, using technology in enhancing learning engagements, creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women or leading the way in enabling safety protocols for its students at the pre-school and school levels. It empowers 1,000+ women entrepreneurs across the nation and employs a workforce of over 10,000.

“Since the very beginning, it was mandated that our franchise preschools must be run by passionate women entrepreneurs who share our vision of high-quality education to young children. About 95 per cent of our EuroKids and Kangaroo Kids franchisees are women from different walks of life and different

parts of the country. We not only provide entrepreneurship opportunities, but also employment opportunities at the preschools in roles such as teaching, housekeeping and administration,” states Rajan.

In November 2019, KKR picked up a majority stake in the school chain from a consortium of investors led by mid-market private equity firm Gaja Capital. The investment was made from KKR’s Asian Fund III. The deal was one of the largest foreign investments in India’s education sector.

EY-Parthenon, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, Barclays and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett served as advisors to KKR, while Avendus Capital was the exclusive financial advisor to the company and the sellers. Gaja Capital, along with Swiss investment firm Partners Group acquired 50 per cent in the school chain in 2013 and later on increased their stake to 75 per cent.

During the deal, KKR said: “EuroKids will continue to be managed by its team of experienced educators, administrators and management team led by co-founder & Group CEO Prajodh Rajan, who will also remain a shareholder in the company. KKR will work closely with EuroKids and its portfolio of brands to identify both organic and inorganic growth opportunities and ways to enhance offerings and practices. Areas of focus include tech-enabled/digital learning and tailored pedagogy to provide more students with access to a world-class, holistic education.”

KKR has a strong track record and expertise in the education space. The US PE firm’s former investments in the segment include Cognita Schools, a UK-based global private school group; Weld North Education, a platform operator of digital and SaaS educational solutions and KinderCare, a US-based operator of early-education and childcare education facilities.

“We forayed into the Indian education sector in 2019 when we acquired a stake in Lighthouse Learning. We are working with the team at Lighthouse Learning to provide high quality, tech-enabled future-ready pedagogy that addresses the needs of tomorrow. With over 445 million children in the age group of 2-to-18 years in India, we are excited to support Lighthouse Learning’s mission to create a world-class,



The group has put up a robust learning platform

new-age learning environment through innovative education solutions,” says a KKR spokesperson.

A strong leadership team

Meanwhile, Lighthouse Learning has signed an MoU with Huron University, Canada, which will extend support to the former’s K-12 students in their preparations to pursue their goals of higher education studies overseas. Under the MoU, the students will be guided with relevant information, personalised counselling and guidance to help them choose undergraduate options at the best universities worldwide.

“This partnership will give our students an edge to pursue their higher education dreams overseas. Huron University’s robust student support and engagement programmes will aid students to plan their educational journey effectively,” says Rajan who has put in place a strong leadership team.

Apart from Rajan, the leadership team comprises CFO Rajiv Pillai; Chief Human Resource Officer, Rohit Kumar; Avinash Kumar, chief digital officer; KVS Seshasai, CEO pre-schools and Rahul Deshpande, CEO, K-12 schools. In 2021, the company appointed Bijou Kurien, Chairman of the Retailers Association of India; Indu Shahani, a leading educationist and the President & Chair of ISDI - School of Design and Innovation, and Ashish Kashyap, founder of the online travel group ibibo, as its board members.

Besides, the board also has two representatives from KKR – Simrun Mehta who joined KKR in 2012 and is a member of the KKR’s Private Equity team and

Suveer Sinha who joined KKR in 2022 and leads the value creation efforts for KKR India’s private equity portfolio companies cutting across industries, including education, healthcare, personal care and industrials.

According to the latest report by the IMARC Group, titled ‘India School Market: Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2023-2028’ the Indian school market reached a value of \$43.5 billion in 2022 and is expected to reach \$87.3 billion by 2028. As per the market research company, the growing awareness regarding the importance of education in India is creating a positive outlook for the market. In line with this, the increasing youth population and the shifting inclination toward developing a pool of skilled human resources favour the market growth.

With all these developments in place, Lighthouse Learning, backed by a portfolio of reputed school brands, has put in place a high-quality educational platform to serve both the pre-school and K-12 segments. The Indian early years and K-12 education market is hugely underserved and the group, with its child-first, outcome-driven approach emboldened by its new vision, will continue to seek the highest learning benchmarks. Over the years it has emerged as one of India’s largest education services providers. Backed by KKR’s expertise and resources, Lighthouse Learning is expected to further strengthen its position in the market

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