



Dzongkar Choede Monastery

Western School

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Summary: At Dzongkar Choede, education is understood as the formation of the whole person. Alongside prayer, memorisation, philosophy and debate, young monks receive a modern education: Tibetan reading, writing, grammar and spelling, English, Chinese, history, religious history, mathematics and computer classes. What began as an open-air calligraphy class grew into a school with classrooms, trained teachers, regular examinations, a student magazine, the Zongchoe Library, and a new classroom building opened in November 2024.

Tags:

COMMUNITY

EDUCATION

MONASTIC SCHOOLING

Read the original page at: <https://dzongplum.netlify.app/en/community/western-school>



Overview

At Dzongkar Choede Monastery, education is understood as the formation of the whole person.

Young monks are not only trained in prayer, memorization, Buddhist philosophy, ritual, and

debate; they also receive a modern education that gives them the knowledge and skills needed to

serve their community in the contemporary world.

The monastery's school grew from very humble beginnings into a structured educational institution

serving young monks from Tibetan and Himalayan communities. What began as an open-air calligraphy

class gradually developed into a school with classrooms, trained teachers, regular examinations, student writing activities, library support, and a modern curriculum including Tibetan, English, Chinese, mathematics, history, religious history, and computer education.

This Western-style education is not separate from monastic life. It is carefully woven into the

daily rhythm of the monastery. The students begin their day with prayer, memorization, and

self-study before attending regular classes from late morning until afternoon. After school, they

return to memorization, dialectics, and debate. In this way, Dzongkar Choede offers an integrated

model of education: rooted in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, while open to the knowledge and

practical skills needed in today's world. The traditional half of that formation is described

under [Buddhist education](/en/community/buddhist-education).

A School Rooted in Monastic Life

Dzongkar Choede's school is part of a living monastery. Its purpose is not only to provide

ordinary classroom instruction, but to support the full development of young monks as future

holders of Tibetan Buddhist culture, learning, and responsibility.

The students live within the monastery, follow the monastic daily rhythm, and receive both

religious and modern education. Their classroom learning is surrounded by prayer, memorization, debate, discipline, and care from their teachers. This creates an

educational environment in
which modern knowledge and traditional wisdom support each other.

The school therefore reflects one of Dzongkar Choede's deepest commitments: to preserve the
Dharma, Tibetan language, culture, and heritage while preparing young monks to take
their place
in a changing world.

From Open-Air Calligraphy to Modern Classrooms

The school at Dzongkar Choede began in a simple and inspiring way: as an open-air
calligraphy
class. From this modest beginning, the monastery gradually developed a more
complete educational
program for its young monks.

By 1984, the school had a building and classrooms. This important step was led by Ven.
Geshe
Jampa Norbu la, with the support of the monastery's governing body. Later, in 1997, the
basic
modern curriculum was formally developed through the efforts of Ven. Jampa Gyaltsen
la, then
principal, and Ven. Thupten Lodoe la, then vice principal.

The school began with 45 students, from kindergarten to class four. Over time it
developed into a
well-established school functioning at both primary and secondary level. Older school
materials
describe around 200 pupils receiving education in modernized circumstances.

A major new chapter began on November 10, 2024, when a new classroom building for
Zongchoe
Secondary School was opened. This development shows the steady growth of Dzongkar
Choede's
educational mission: from a small outdoor class to a school with a clear role in the
future of the
monastery and its students.

Purpose of the School

The school was created to fulfill His Holiness the Dalai Lama's concern for the education
of
young monks and adolescent students. Its purpose is closely connected to the

preservation of
Tibetan culture, heritage, literature, and religious tradition.

At Dzongkar Choede, modern education is seen as a way to strengthen monastic life, not to replace it. The school helps young monks develop literacy, languages, numeracy, historical awareness, and practical skills. These abilities prepare them for future service, responsibility, and leadership within the monastery and the wider community.

What the students learn here is what they will pass on. Education gives them the means to do it with confidence, understanding, and dignity.

Subjects and Curriculum

The school provides a broad foundation in modern education while keeping Tibetan language and culture at the heart of learning. Subjects taught include:

- Tibetan reading, writing, grammar, and spelling
- English
- Chinese
- History
- Religious history
- Mathematics
- Computer classes

These subjects can be understood as four important areas of formation. First, language and literacy are central. Tibetan reading and writing help students remain deeply connected to their heritage, scriptures, and cultural identity. English and Chinese give them access to wider forms of communication and knowledge.

Second, history and religious history help students understand where they come from and why their tradition matters. Third, mathematics develops clear thinking, discipline, and practical ability.

Fourth, computer education introduces students to the digital skills needed in the modern world.

Together, these subjects help the students grow as literate, thoughtful, capable young monks who

can serve both the monastery and the wider Tibetan and Himalayan communities.

A Day in the Life of the Students

The school day at Dzongkar Choede is embedded in the rhythm of monastic life.

The students gather early in the morning in the prayer hall with the monastic assembly. After morning prayer, they receive tea and bread. Until 8:45 a.m., they memorize chants and scriptures under the guidance of designated teachers.

From 9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., students attend self-study classes. Senior students also take part in dialectic sessions during this time. Regular classroom instruction begins at 10:15 a.m. and continues until 3:00 p.m. During these hours, the students study their modern subjects, including languages, mathematics, history, and computer education.

After school, the students return to monastic learning. They continue memorization, attend dialectic classes, and participate in debate sessions. This daily rhythm reflects the special character of education at Dzongkar Choede. The students are not divided between two worlds. Their modern education and monastic formation are part of one integrated path.

Residential Care and Guardian Teachers

Dzongkar Choede's school is residential. Students live in monastic residential houses and are cared for within the monastery community.

Guardian teachers play an important role in the students' lives. They look after the students' well-being, monastic studies, and homework. This means that education continues beyond the classroom. Students receive guidance in their studies, support in their daily life, and care within a disciplined and compassionate environment.

This residential model gives students stability, structure, and a sense of belonging. For young monks who come from Tibetan and Himalayan regions, including communities with limited means, the

monastery provides not only education but also a home, a community, and a path of formation —
with day-to-day wellbeing supported by the
[healthcare center](/en/community/healthcare-center).

Teachers and School Administration

The school's teaching faculty has been described as dedicated, qualified, trained, and experienced. From its early development, the school benefited from the leadership of committed
monastic educators who built the curriculum and guided its growth.

Historically, Ven. Jampa Gyaltzen la served as principal and Ven. Thupten Lodoe la as vice
principal during the development of the curriculum. In 2024, Gen Thubten Lodoe was identified as
school principal during the half-yearly examination ceremony.

The school has been administered by a two-member committee consisting of the principal and vice
principal. This committee oversees academic affairs, educational affairs, financial administration, and development administration. It works under the monastery's general governing
body, ensuring that the school remains closely connected to the monastery's wider mission — see
[administration](/en/about/administration).

Examinations and Student Achievement

The school has a regular system of examinations to encourage learning, discipline, and academic
progress. Each year, the school conducts four terminal tests, one half-yearly examination, and
one annual examination. These exams are organized by the vice principal and teachers, and they
help measure the students' progress throughout the year.

The half-yearly examination ceremony held on September 30, 2024, shows the importance the
monastery gives to academic achievement. The ceremony took place in the new prayer hall and was
presided over by His Eminence Khenpo Jampa Sopa Rinpoche. The school principal, Gen Thubten
Lodoe, gave a welcome speech, the Examination Organizing Committee announced the results, and

prizes were awarded to top-scoring students.

The ceremony ended with moral guidance from Khenpo Rinpoche, showing that academic achievement at Dzongkar Choede is always connected with ethical development, humility, and responsibility.

Reading, Writing, and Student Voice

The school encourages students not only to study, but also to express themselves. Essay-writing

competitions are held frequently to develop the students' mental faculties, writing skills, and

individual talents. These activities help students become more confident in their ability to

think, reflect, and communicate.

The school has also produced a student magazine titled *GANG TRUG GI LANG TSO*, translated

as *Growth of Snowland Children*. The magazine accepts student articles and includes writing in Tibetan, English, Chinese, and other languages.

Through writing, students learn to reflect, communicate, and contribute to the living culture of

the school. This emphasis on writing is an important part of the school's mission. It gives

students a voice, strengthens their language skills, and helps cultivate the next generation of

Tibetan Buddhist scholars, writers, and community leaders.

Library and Learning Resources

The Zongchoe Library is another important part of the school's educational environment. It was

initiated by the Sangha members following advice from His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his 2004 visit.

The library supports both religious and modern education. For the school, it helps enhance modern

learning, encourage reading, and preserve Tibetan history and culture.

Reading culture is essential for the development of young monks. A library gives students access

to books, study materials, and a quiet space for learning. It also supports the school's wider aim

of combining traditional knowledge with modern education.

Ven. Lobsang Tenzin is named in earlier sources as the library in-charge. Like the school itself, the library began with limited resources; earlier sources note that funding was difficult because the initial investment needed for a full library was high. Continued support for the library remains an important part of sustaining the monastery's educational work, and the development of library resources remains an important part of strengthening the school for future generations.

New Classrooms and Future Development

The opening of the new classroom building on November 10, 2024, marked a joyful and important milestone in the development of the school.

The ceremony included the raising of Tibetan-style prayer flags, ribbon cutting at the main gate, the opening of an introductory school signboard, classroom visits, speeches by monastery leaders and guests, and the presentation of certificates and gifts.

Guests included representatives from the Italian Buddhist Union, the Hunsur settlement office, Tibetan public representatives, local school principals, and members of the wider community.

The new classroom building represents more than physical infrastructure. It is a sign of Dzongkar Choede's continuing commitment to its young students. It gives the school a stronger foundation for modern education, student care, and future growth.

As the monastery continues to develop its facilities, the school will remain one of the key ways Dzongkar Choede prepares the next generation of monks for service, learning, and cultural preservation.

Supporting the School

The school depends on the generosity and commitment of supporters who understand the importance of education for young monks. Support helps sustain student sponsorship, teacher salaries, textbooks, school maintenance, library development, and educational resources. These needs are

not only practical; they are part of a larger mission to preserve Tibetan Buddhist culture and
provide young students with a stable and meaningful education.

Many students come from Himalayan communities and families with limited means. Through the care
of Dzongkar Choede, they receive education, shelter, guidance, and the opportunity to grow within
a strong monastic environment.

Supporting the school means supporting the future of Dzongkar Choede. It means helping young monks
become educated, disciplined, compassionate, and able in time to pass on what they were
taught. You can [\[support this work\]](#).

Closing Reflection

Dzongkar Choede's school stands as a bridge between tradition and the modern world. It protects
Tibetan language, culture, and Buddhist values while giving young monks the tools they need for
contemporary life.

From its beginnings as an open-air calligraphy class to its present development with modern
classrooms, regular examinations, trained teachers, residential care, and a growing educational
program, the school reflects the monastery's deep commitment to the next generation.

At Dzongkar Choede, education is not simply about passing exams. It is about forming young people
who can study, serve, preserve, and carry forward the living tradition of the monastery with
wisdom and confidence.