The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about education

校

Pronunciation: xiao (Putonghua, 4th tone), haau (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: school

A 學校 (xue xiao = school) has 校園 (xiao yuan = school-garden = campus), 校長 (xiao zhang = school-leader = principal), 校訓 (xiao xun = school-motto), 校歌 (xiao ge = school-song/anthem). 母校 (mu xiao = mother-school) = alma mater.

Oxford is 牛津 (niu jin = cow/ox-stream). Cambridge is 劍橋 (jian qiao = sword-bridge). Ivy League schools are 長春籓盟校 (chang chun teng meng xiao = forever-spring-climber-alliance-schools).

軍校 (jun xiao = army-school) = military academy. 黨校 (dang xiao = party school) taught CCP history and doctrine to cadres. During the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals were sent to farms called 五七幹校 (wu qi gan xiao = May 7 Cadre School) for labor and re-education.