



**British Schools Overseas
School inspection report**

**The British Council School, Madrid
20 and 21 April 2015**

Issue and revision record

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

- Five inspectors carried out this inspection. The inspectors visited 66 lessons and held meetings with staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at data on pupils' achievements over the past three years, at schemes of work, policies, the school improvement plan and the school's self-review.

The inspection team:

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|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
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- Inspectors used the Department for Education standards for the inspection of British schools overseas aligned with the NABSS accreditation criteria. The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's owners on the overall effectiveness of the school and the standard of education. Cambridge Education reports to the Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for British schools overseas as follows:

- the quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching and assessment)
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
- the welfare, health and safety of the students
- the suitability of the proprietor and staff
- the premises and accommodation
- the provision of information for parents, carers and others
- the school's procedures for handling complaints
- leadership and management of the school.

Information about the school

- The British Council School, Madrid was founded in 1940 and moved to its present buildings between 1990 and 2004. It now has almost 2000 students on its roll. The

school's educational programme for students up the age of 16 is based on the National Curriculum for England and Wales. Most students are Spanish nationals but there are others from the UK and other parts of Europe. The school is authorised by the Spanish Ministry of Education to offer a British education to children of all nationalities and is a member of the National Association of British Schools in Spain.

Overall effectiveness

- The British Council School provides an outstanding education for all its students. It has high expectations of everyone, respects others for what they have to offer and promotes a very strong culture of belonging where staff and students work together to turn dreams and aspirations into reality.
- The school upholds the highest British values of democracy, tolerance and respect for diversity and, at the same time, ensures that students have a thorough understanding of Spanish culture. It teaches the National Curriculum for England and Wales up to the age of 16 (Year 11) very effectively so that students can move to higher education in the UK if they wish. The sixth form curriculum, which was not part of this inspection, also allows students to enter Spanish and British universities. The school meets its aim to provide a high quality bicultural education very effectively.
- The school is led and managed extremely effectively. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders lead with a passion that defines the school's very positive ethos and with a rigour that ensures high standards. Middle leaders contribute effectively to the school's vision and direction. Attention to detail, a strong desire to give students the best possible chances in life and an emphasis on high standards results in a cohesive, happy and productive community.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They are polite, treat others with respect and enjoy their lessons a great deal. This is because teachers know their students very well and have very good subject knowledge. Students have extremely positive attitudes to school and learning and these have a substantial impact on their learning and progress.
- Standards and achievements are outstanding. Students start school with little grasp of the English language but make very swift progress during the Early Years and Year 1 to become fluent. Progress continues to be rapid as they move through Key Stage 2 and into Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result, students achieve outstanding IGCSE results that are well above schools in the UK and other British schools in Spain. This is the case for all students, including boys and girls and those from different abilities. In addition, more than a quarter of students were accepted at British universities in 2014.
- Over time, teaching and learning are outstanding. This is why students' achievements across nearly all subjects are so good. Only in drama and ICT is achievement in

IGCSE not at the very high levels of other subjects. However, the school's actions to improve performance in these areas are paying off and achievement is now improving.

- The wide range of co-curricular and other activities that take place before, during and after school contributes very strongly to students' high standards. These activities, including an impressive variety of musical opportunities, help students to develop a wide range of skills and behaviours, such as team work and respect and care for others. Students are highly motivated and, in most cases, teaching builds on this enthusiasm for learning by setting challenging work. This enables all pupils to achieve extremely well, especially the less able: success in sporting and creative activities has a strong impact on academic success.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students very effectively because of the wide range of subjects and co-curricular activities that extend the opportunities available to students extremely well and trips abroad, especially to the UK, give them a broader perspective about British society.
- The school provides extremely well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the wide range of co-curricular activities, raising money for charities and the way the family system enables students to develop their personal skills. As a result, students develop outstanding personal qualities to become well-rounded young people ready to take their place in modern society whether that be in Britain or Spain.
- The school provides for students' welfare, health and safety most effectively. This is because the school's "Family" system ensures that all students are known personally and that each is seen as an individual.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The British Council School, Madrid meets the requirements for British schools overseas, as laid down by the UK Department for Education, in full. The school's work to promote British values is very successful and students respond thoughtfully and maturely. The school meets the requirements of the Spanish Ministry of Education.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Improve academic standards and progress even further by:
 - ensuring that all students are given work that challenges their thinking
 - continuing to develop the outside space in the early years.

The quality of education provided by the school

The curriculum

- The curriculum, including the co-curriculum, is outstanding because it enables students to reach their potential as well as their dreams. As a result students are able to make the most of the opportunities the school provides. The curriculum follows the National Curriculum for England and Wales, includes the subjects required by the Spanish Ministry of Education and enables students to take their place in the modern world
- The co-curriculum is instrumental in enabling the school to produce well-rounded young people who are stretched in ways that the taught curriculum alone does not allow for. Students gain essential learning skills from the rich and varied range of co-curricular activities, for example how to work as a team, independence and how to build success in the face of difficulties. Co-curricular activities include such things as ballet, rugby, music, public speaking and visits; they are well attended, adding hugely to students' positive experiences of school.
- The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1 is outstanding because it enables children to make very swift progress in their learning. This is particularly evident in English language. Almost all children speak little or no English when they start school but in the six months from November, all have moved a whole stage of progress. Other progress data shows that many children make four sub-levels of progress, which is well above expectations. The EYFS curriculum is very well planned. Children develop confidence and begin to speak English quickly because of the encouragement and support of staff. The curriculum in Year 1 continues with this good work so that by the time they move into the primary section, in Year 2, students have the skills, knowledge and understanding to tackle increasingly difficult work.
- In Years 2 to 6 the curriculum builds very successfully on learning in EYFS and Year 1. It is suitably broad and balanced and meets the needs of all students very successfully. Not only are lessons planned to meet the needs of different groups of learners but the wide range of co-curricular activities provides all students with the opportunity to expand their interests. As a result, students are challenged to try new things and make very good progress in both their personal and academic development. By the end of Year 6 standards are above, or well above, expectations.
- Similarly, the secondary curriculum is broad and well matched to students' needs and interests. There is a good breadth and variety of subjects including those that meet the requirements of the Spanish curriculum. Together with the co-curriculum, this results in high levels of achievements at the end of Year 11. IGCSE results compare very favourably with national figures for England and with other independent schools

and British schools in Spain. For example, over 90% of students achieved A*/C in their IGCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching and assessment

- The quality of teaching is typically outstanding. As a result, students learn very well and make excellent progress to achieve very high standards. The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good and some was outstanding. However, what makes teaching particularly outstanding is the wide range of co-curricular activities and the large number of students who take part. These give students a very broad range of skills such as team work, problem solving and resilience as well as experience of subjects not covered by the taught curriculum.
- One of the great strengths of teaching is the attitude of students and the way they respond to both their teachers and the work they are given. This is a testament to teachers: they establish excellent relationships with their students who, in return, give them great respect. This, together with teachers' high expectations of behaviour and personal development, creates a very positive climate in classrooms where students are typically very well behaved and have excellent attitudes to their learning. These relationships, the maturity of students and students' very positive attitudes all have an extremely strong impact on learning.
- Teachers have a very secure and broad knowledge of their subject and are skilled at conveying this to students. They nearly always have high expectations of students. Lessons start promptly and students are usually given interesting and challenging work. For example, learning in an English lesson was outstanding because the teacher's excellent subject knowledge ensured that explanations were clear, questions were thoughtful and feedback to students was detailed.
- Where teaching is good or outstanding, lessons are especially well structured and organised ensuring that students are engaged and motivated from the start. Teachers' planning sets out clearly what teachers want students to learn. This ensures that students are clear about what is expected of them and that learning is brisk. Generally, teachers use questions well: for example, in a history lesson the teacher skilfully probed students on what they had learnt and asked questions that extended their understanding.
- In some cases, where teachers ask questions, they do not give students enough time to answer and intervene too quickly. This caps students' thinking a little and means they are not encouraged to develop higher order thinking skills.
- Assessment is regular and accurate. There are some excellent examples of effective feedback which help students to reflect on their learning and improve their work further. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, accurate assessment and good use

of praise made a significant contribution to learning and as a result, students made clear and identifiable progress with their understanding of English grammar.

- The teaching of literacy is good and is promoted well across the school. As a result, students make excellent progress in English. Teachers include strategies for improving literacy in their lesson plans: key words are highlighted and students are encouraged to apply different reading strategies.
- Students with disabilities and those with special needs are mostly catered for well. In most lessons additional support is targeted carefully and teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have extremely positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy coming to school very much. Students at all stages show a great sense of enjoyment and a thirst for learning. They are interested in the world around them and show care and respect through projects such as recycling and the investigation of renewable energy. Students are especially polite and courteous to each other and to others. These positive attitudes have very noticeable impact on students' learning and progress.
- Students have a strong sense of themselves and of belonging to the school. They are self-confident, take responsibility for their behaviour and have a good understanding of right and wrong. Students are proud of the contribution they make to the school: for example, through the school council, drama productions and sporting competitions. They also help to raise money for charity including the school's own cancer charity and an orphanage in Romania.
- Students are very tolerant of each other and there is a high level of mutual respect. Behaviour is nearly always at least good and often exemplary. As a result, lessons are rarely disrupted although occasionally, where the work is not challenging enough, some silly behaviour gets in the way of learning.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported very effectively by the broad range of subjects taught and by the huge variety of co-curricular activities. They have many opportunities to engage their creativity and imagination and talk about their work with enthusiasm. For example, there is a very rich and impressive range of music opportunities including: almost 500 pupils studying an instrument; all Year 5 to 7 classes studying ClassBand, learning to play a brass or wind instrument; numerous choirs and Key Stage orchestras; a Rock band; and A Cappella choir in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- The well planned activities ensure that students develop a strong understanding of tolerance, respect, democracy, law and liberty. British values are promoted effectively

through events such as involvement in pantomime and the “Boat Race”. Leaders of democracy and advocates of a fair society are celebrated. Students show very high levels of willingness to volunteer, raise funds and be involved in projects that require cooperation and team work.

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

- The school’s outstanding provision for welfare, health and safety is the result of conscious decisions made by the school to establish its Family house system. This ensures that in each Key Stage, students develop excellent social skills. It also enables the school to provide excellent welfare for students and a high level of care.
- The high level of support provided for students is one of the reasons why achievement is outstanding. As a result, all students, regardless of their abilities, skills or interests, are able to reach their potential both academically and socially.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for students to learn about healthy lifestyles and keeping themselves safe, including on the internet.
- Students say that bullying is rare but that if it does occur, it is dealt with very effectively by the school. They feel safe at school and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Inspectors were struck with the sense of calm across the school and it rarely felt like a school of nearly 2000 students.
- Support for students with special educational needs is well-planned and targeted.

The suitability of the proprietor and staff

- The British Council, as the proprietors of the school, set the highest standards for ensuring the suitability of staff and governors. The school meets and, in a number of respects, goes beyond the requirements for British schools overseas. For example, the school has adopted the British Council’s policy on safeguarding which meets the requirements of the UK Government.
- The school maintains appropriate record; and checks on the suitability of staff and governors are thorough.

The premises and accommodation

- The premises and accommodation are mostly first class and provide a high quality learning environment. Classrooms are well resourced and well organised and there is full access for students with disabilities. In the early years, outdoor areas are well planned but lack the natural resources that would make them outstanding.

- The school campus is managed very well so that it provides a safe and secure environment for all students. The premises and accommodation meets all the BSO requirements fully.

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

- The school's information for parents is clear and informative. The school website includes a wide range of information on all aspects of school life. Communication with parents is very effective and includes meetings to discuss their children's achievements, newsletters and activities to involve them in the school community.
- Parents receive regular reports about their children's progress. Reporting is very clear and includes clear targets for progression.
- The information provided by the school for parents meets the requirements for British schools overseas.

The school's procedures for handling complaints

- The school's complaints procedures are effective. Parents' concerns are dealt with promptly and successfully. The school meets the BSO requirements for handling complaints.

Leadership and management of the school

- The school is led with a very clear set of values: resilience, loyalty, caring, flexibility and challenge. These values are achieved extremely successfully. As a result, when students leave school they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. The resolve of the headteacher and senior leaders in promoting these values is highly significant and has a tremendous impact on everything the school does. Leaders at all levels are determined in their commitment to maintain the high levels of achievement, teaching and learning, and improve them still further. This commitment, and success the school has in enabling students to reach very high standards at the end of Year 11, illustrates the school's very strong capacity for further improvement.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress and identify any underachievement are robust. The school is able to provide additional support where needed and, as a result, all students regardless of ability make at least good progress. Many make outstanding progress. This also demonstrates the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity.
- Senior and middle leaders' clear expectations set the tone for the school and, as a result, there is a very strong climate for learning. Lessons observed jointly by inspectors and senior leaders show that the school's judgements are accurate and that feedback is robust but supportive. This is having a significant impact on students' achievements. Middle leaders, including family leaders, have a clear understanding of

their role and about the areas for improvement in their subject or area. This is true for pastoral heads who manage the family system very effectively.

- Given its context, the school uses professional development well to support improvement and individual teacher progression. There is a secure process for managing the performance of teachers. As a result, the school achieves a good balance between holding staff to account and providing a supportive environment for teachers to develop.
- There are strong procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and identifying priorities for improvement. Although the school improvement plan is long and contains many areas for development, this is not hampering the school's quest for improvement in all that it does. This is because there is a strong sense of teamwork and purpose about all that the school does.
- Leadership in EYFS is outstanding because senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the needs of the children. There is a very strong focus on language and literacy. Senior leaders have a very clear vision for early years provision which they communicate very effectively to all staff. As a result, they create an extremely strong team that brings many varied skills. This includes teaching assistants, some of whom have speech and language or physical therapy backgrounds. Children's progress is monitored regularly and thoroughly, particularly in phonics. This helps to ensure that staff are accountable for outcomes.
- Senior leaders ensure that staff have access to high quality training and implement what has been learnt very well. This is evident, for example, in literacy work where strategies for story-telling and writing are having a significant impact on the quality of students' work.

Glossary of terms

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	<input type="checkbox"/>			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs	<input type="checkbox"/>			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range	<input type="checkbox"/>			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural	<input type="checkbox"/>			
The behaviour of pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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School details

School status	Independent, day		
Type of school	All through, 3 – 18 years		
Date school opened	1940		
Age range of pupils	3 – 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys:	Girls:	Total:
Annual fees (day pupils)			1991
Address of school	Calle Solano, 5-7 28223 Pozuelo de Alarcón Madrid		
Telephone number	+34 913 373 612		
Fax number	+34 913 373 634		
Email address			
Headteacher	Gillian Flaxman OBE.		