Cambridge International School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.[1, 2]

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Cambridge International School opened in Cambridge in September 2006 and admits pupils aged from 3 to 16. The school has expanded rapidly and now occupies three sites within the Cambridge area. Currently, there are 218 pupils on roll of whom 31 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are all in receipt of government funding Thirty four pupils are identified as gifted and talented. There are 41 pupils on roll with special educational needs of whom nine have a statement. The majority of pupils are bi-lingual, and speak English as an additional language and many are internationally mobile. The school teaches a variety of languages from an early age and supports learning in the home language. The school aims to provide pupils with a stimulating international environment where all children can flourish. The school makes use of sports facilities at a local sports centre and in the delightful parkland surrounding the school. The upper school will shortly benefit from its own all-weather playing surface. The school was last inspected in 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Cambridge International School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Parents and carers appreciate the caring and stimulating environment for learning which results in the good progress overall. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, with a particular strength in teaching English as an additional language. Provision for the health, welfare and safety of pupils continues to be outstanding and requirements for safeguarding children are fully met. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting the true international flavour of the school. Improvements in assessment procedures and schemes of work have been made since the last inspection and form the basis for further development. The school meets all the regulations.

[1] www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162
[2] www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. Pupils make good progress, particularly in acquiring English in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics at a mixture of IGCSE and GCSE in 2010. Good teaching and pupils' commitment to work and good behaviour make a significant contribution to these outcomes. Parents commented that their young children are eager to tell them all about the day at school. Another commented, 'It is a pleasure to hear that they have been so stimulated and are so enjoying their learning.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Those who arrive with little English make outstanding progress in acquiring a level of the language, which gives them access to the wider curriculum. For a while, they may make slower progress but catch-up later. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, the best examples giving varied tasks and encouragement. Learning is supported well by generous numbers of adults in the area.

Pupils in the primary school say they enjoy coming to school, which is evident in their concentration and commitment, which leads to good learning and progress. They like the project work approach of the International Primary Curriculum. A parent commented that his child, 'relished the IPC topics'. Pupils say that they understand their attainment but, when questioned more closely, could not compare their work to other pupils nationally.

There are examples of good, carefully planned teaching which results in good progress. In these lessons, objectives are understood by pupils who then know what is expected of them in the lesson. Teachers' questioning is good; it checks on pupils' understanding and there is a good pace of learning which keeps pupils engaged in their work. The small classes enable teachers to give pupils individual support, and good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to good learning and progress. In less successful lessons, pupils all work on the same task and those who find it too difficult or too easy soon lose concentration and fail to make appropriate progress.

In the senior school, students also make good progress. Students who left last year had made good progress in English and outstanding progress in mathematics. Current students make good progress in most of their lessons because teachers give them the opportunity to work independently to extend their knowledge, develop wider understanding and analyse evidence. As in the primary school, teaching is based on excellent relationships, students are encouraged to put significant effort into their work and enjoy the success it brings. One parent described the teachers as 'amazing, dedicated and talented'.

Teaching is well planned, although it often lacks specific objectives to meet the needs of pupils with a range of different abilities. However, the individual attention teachers are able to provide in the very small classes helps to overcome this. There are many good activities, varied and challenging, which encourage problem-solving and develop confidence. Students explain what they are doing and what they hope to achieve.

The curriculum is good. It meets the regulations and provides for most pupils to make progress. However, accreditation, which is largely by a mixture of IGCSE and GCSE, is limiting and may not provide the best provision for the least able students. There is a good personal, social and health education programme which incorporates aspects of careers education. This is now a strength of the school with individual advice to students in their final year and to those moving into Year 10 and making subject choices, as well as a work experience programme in Year 10. The school has developed a business and enterprise curriculum to support this area of its work. There are extra-curricular activities embracing sport, music, chess, debating and extra classes to support learning.

Assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school is now tracking pupils' progress throughout from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 11. This enables leaders and teachers to have information on which to base planning for the range of ability but this is not yet fully developed, particularly to extend some of the most able pupils. Pupils' work is often well marked, particularly in English and history. In a minority of cases, pupils are not given sufficient information on how to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very polite and courteous to visitors and considerate to each other. They enjoy working in groups and pairs to enhance their learning with others who may come from different countries. Relationships are respectful and, consequently, they feel safe and secure and are confident to ask for help and support should a concern arise. They like the practical activities and speak with pride about the International Primary Curriculum and the way it helps them to learn about each other. They like the small number of pupils in the classes and the family atmosphere: they all know each other really well.

Pupils' excellent social skills, good standards in basic skills and ability to work with one another in real life scenarios contribute well to their future lives. Older pupils experience the world of work and practise business and enterprise skills. Pupils make a positive contribution to society both in and out of school by expressing their ideas and feelings and make suggestions about the way the school operates. They like the jobs available to them such as monitors and 'play buddies' for the younger children. Pupils have responsibilities to clear the lunch hall and to keep the playground tidy. They take an active part in fund raising to support those who are less fortunate than themselves at home and overseas. Work for charities includes cake sales, supporting Children in Need and the Kasiisi Porridge Project. Pupils also sang at a local retirement home.

Behaviour is good. It is excellent in the senior school. In the primary school, pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. However, the behaviour of a few of these younger pupils deteriorates when the teaching does not provide sufficient challenge and they are not fully engaged in their learning.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' health, safety and welfare is outstanding. The school meets all the regulations in this respect. The single central register is a model of good practice. Pupils say that they feel safe and have a good understanding of what it means. Risk assessments are in place for all relevant activities both on and off site. Fire risk assessment is fully in place and the recommendations of the fire officers' inspections have been carried out on every site. The school has a 3-year plan as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and are enthusiastic, inquisitive learners. Children in the early stages of learning English make outstanding progress in the acquisition of spoken English supported by high staffing levels and dedicated teaching. Children are settled and happy in this vibrant setting where each child is valued and they have a good relationship with the caring adults. Children play and work well together to develop independence. There is a good balance between adult-led and child initiated learning with high levels of adults supporting language linked to the activities. The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) is good and, by the start of Year 1, children are achieving above the national expectations in writing and reading. Adults' expectations for some activities are not always challenging enough and, although children enjoy themselves, there are some missed opportunities to develop learning, especially for the most able. Behaviour is generally good, with children being polite and friendly but, at times when there is lack of challenge and pace, behaviour is only satisfactory.

Staff are well deployed and fully involved with the children at all times. There is a freeflow between activities inside and outside. Although there is a good range of learning activities promoting key skills, the tired resources outside make this a less vibrant environment for learning. Better use of the outside space has been rightly identified by the school as an area for further development. Children choose when to help themselves to healthy snacks then independently wash their plates afterwards. Detailed learning journals and records of progress are maintained to track progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').[3]

[3] www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

What the school could do to improve further

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

- make greater use of assessment information to motivate pupils
- create specific links between schemes of work and day-to-day lesson planning to provide objectives and tasks matched to the abilities of the wide range of pupils' abilities.

Inspection judgements

The quality of education

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	International		
Date school opened	September 2006		
Age range of pupils	3–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 116	Girls: 90	Total: 206
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 5	Girls: 4	Total: 9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,694 to £10,332		
Address of school	Cherry Hinton Hall, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 8DW		
Telephone number	01223 416938		
Email address	principal@abelards.com		
Headteacher	Harriet Sturdy		
Proprietor	Monksilver Education		