

International Community School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	James Henry

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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}

Information about the school

The International Community School opened in 1979 and is a non-selective school offering education for pupils aged three to 18. It is situated on two sites in central London for primary and secondary provision respectively. There are currently 223 pupils on roll, including 16 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, none of whom are funded under the Nursery Scheme. The school provides an education based on the International Baccalaureate. Pupils come from diverse communities across the world and many speak English as an additional language. Most pupils stay for about two years. There are a small minority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including eight with a statement of special educational needs, a few of whom are funded by local authorities. Through the International Baccalaureate, the school aims to provide a broad education that develops pupils into independent and collaborative learners who celebrate diversity and become successful world citizens. The school was last inspected in December 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The International Community School successfully meets its aims and provides a good quality education, including the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching and assessment is good and this enables pupils to make good progress overall; this is an improvement since the last inspection. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Safeguarding requirements are met and the provision for welfare and health and safety is good. The school now meets all but two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum which is appropriate to pupils' needs at all ages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school delivers an education through the International Baccalaureate. The curriculum provided through the International Baccalaureate units of enquiry places an effective emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and scientific skills as well as enabling them to

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

study other subjects that reflect the National Curriculum, including modern foreign languages. However, the use of information, communication and technology (ICT) is not fully embedded in the curriculum, particularly in the primary phase. The curriculum is adapted flexibly to meet the needs of individual pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language. Pupils from overseas who do not speak English as their first language are well supported. Extra English lessons and small class sizes ensure that these pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in learning English, and older pupils acquire the advanced language skills they need to access the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme or examination courses such as A levels.

Curriculum plans are well constructed but the school recognises that it has more to do in coordinating the content of the curriculum across the Primary and Middle Years programmes, particularly in mathematics and science, to ensure that pupils make consistent progress across the different areas of the curriculum. The curriculum is effectively enhanced through a wide range of links with other schools internationally, residential trips, and local visits to places of cultural and historical interest around London.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good in both the primary and secondary provision. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and /or disabilities, make good progress. However, in both the primary and secondary schools, progress is better in English than in mathematics and science. Teachers know their pupils very well and lessons are planned to meet their needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use effective question and answer techniques to extend pupils' learning and develop their English vocabulary skills. Relationships are very positive and good support is provided by teachers working together in lessons. In a few lessons, teaching is outstanding, due to meticulous planning based on a thorough knowledge of pupils' prior attainment and needs. As a result, tasks are set that closely match pupils' needs and provide them with sustained challenges. Where teaching is less successful, opportunities are missed to fully engage pupils in their learning due to activities not being pitched at the correct level to match their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard and persevere to complete tasks in lessons.

Pupils in both the primary and secondary schools are regularly assessed against the attainment targets in the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Assessments are used particularly effectively in the secondary school to set targets for pupils and their progress is rigorously monitored. The primary school has just introduced a new system to use assessments to monitor pupils' progress but this has yet to be fully embedded. Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are often comments about how pupils can improve further. However, this is inconsistent and some marking provides limited opportunities for pupils to respond and develop their work using the feedback given.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy being at school because, as one of the older pupils said, 'School's like a family'. Staff show high levels of care and consideration for the pupils, especially as they are often joining the school from overseas. The staff act as very positive role models to promote the school's philosophy of inclusion. Pupils respond by working in harmony alongside others from a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds, learning to develop good social skills as well as tolerance and understanding of other cultures. Staff have high expectations of pupils and consequently their behaviour is good, although a very small minority of pupils who returned questionnaires thought that behaviour was not good enough. However, pupils said that they felt safe in school and that any form of bullying was rare. They also have confidence in staff to deal quickly with any concerns they have.

Pupils understand right from wrong and respect the trust given to them by the school. Opportunities for reflection are built into the curriculum and assemblies, enabling pupils to share achievements and views on a range of issues. There are good opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community life of the school as well as the wider community. Visits and visitors such as the local Police Support Officer, form part of the routine of school life and pupils are encouraged to take part in charitable activities, such as a mile run to raise money for a local hospital. At both primary and secondary sites, pupils elect student councils. Older pupils have been successful in making improvements to the school, for example working with staff to establish a more effective homework system. Attendance is satisfactory, with absences often due to pupils' family commitments overseas. Given the often limited time pupils are resident in the country, they are well prepared for their futures and their prospects are substantially improved by their attendance at the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The school now meets all but one of the regulations in this respect. The admission register does not always record details of the pupils' previous schools.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff recruitment procedures follow government guidelines and all staff have undergone appropriate checks to confirm their suitability to work with children and pupils. There is an appropriate child protection policy. All staff are well trained in child protection procedures, with trained designated staff responsible for child protection on each site. Risk assessments and fire drills are carried out regularly on both sites. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support the welfare of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Provision to encourage healthy living is good. There are opportunities for physical activities, such as swimming, and the well-balanced lunches effectively promote healthy eating. During the inspection, the older pupils took part in a 'walk to

school' initiative. While the design of both school buildings makes access difficult for those with disabilities, the school meets its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, and a three-year access improvement plan is in place.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has improved its recruitment procedures and the checking of staff with the Criminal Records Bureau since the last inspection. All the required checks are now carried out on staff to confirm their suitability to work with children and they are recorded centrally.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The primary section is in a basement of a row of large houses in Regents Park. The secondary section is in a building near Marble Arch. Accommodation is fit for purpose and classrooms are of a suitable size for the number of pupils in each class. Both sites have a room for lunches and to hold assemblies. In the primary section, this room is also used on occasions for physical education. Both sites have a library and the secondary site has an ICT room. The primary school does not have an ICT room but, depending on their age, pupils have either netbooks or laptops. There are desktops in classrooms for daily use. The secondary site has two science laboratories and an art room. There is an enclosed courtyard area on the secondary site for older pupils' play and a garden area for younger pupils on the primary site. Younger children use play facilities in a park close by. Both sites have facilities for pupils who are ill and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

Provision of information

The school has a comprehensive website that contains all the necessary information and policies that parents and carers require, including the details of the number of staff employed and their qualifications. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school does not provide to local authorities an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of pupils funded by those authorities.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written complaints policy which meets requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning and the balance between teacher-led and child-initiated learning is good. Staff effectively compensate for the limited outdoor space available in school by using a local park play area to extend children's experience of learning through play. Children are good independent

learners encouraged by rich opportunities to select activities, investigate and share them with other children. This also helps develop their communication and other skills. As a result, children are well prepared for their future education.

Teaching is good, with staff effectively assessing children's progress and creating a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. This results in good outcomes for children, who feel safe, enjoy learning and make good progress. Small numbers in class help staff to match work to most children's needs effectively. While a few opportunities are missed to further extend more able children's learning, overall, children develop good skills in early reading, writing and mathematical skills.

The provision for children's welfare is good. Safeguarding arrangements are good and are clearly understood by staff. Children learn to behave well, eat healthily and drink water at break times. The links with parents are good and they are given regular written reports about their children's progress.

Leadership and the management are good. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader ensures a continuous dialogue with staff to bring about improvements. The school is working with the local authority to further improve the quality of teaching.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, provide an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

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

- further integrate ICT into the curriculum to enhance pupils' research and independent learning skills, particularly in the primary phase
- ensure progress is consistently good across areas of the curriculum, particularly in mathematics and science, to ensure that pupils achieve their potential
- continue to develop the assessment system in the primary school and ensure greater consistency in the quality of marking.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

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		√		
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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 all-age school		
Date school opened	1979		
Age range of pupils	3–18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 127	Girls: 96	Total: 223
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 7	Girls: 1	Total: 8
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 13,500 - £18,450		
Address of school	4 York Terrace East Regents Park London NW1 4PT		
Telephone number	0207 9351206		
Email address	admissions@ics.uk.net		
Headteacher	Mr P Hurd		
Proprietor	Mr B A Toettcher and Mrs E A Toettcher		