

Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle

35, Cromwell road, London SW7 2DG

Inspection dates 5 November 2013

Reason for inspection

The inspection was requested by the Department for Education following concerns expressed by a few students in their comments in an online survey in June 2013; and the responses to Parent View in the Autumn Term 2013. Inspectors were also asked to consider the issues raised in two complaints received from parents, one of which related to safeguarding students.

Inspectors considered the regulations for independent schools related to the quality of education; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students; and the provision for their welfare, health and safety of students. They were also asked to look at leadership and management, and arrangements to safeguard students.

The inspection was unannounced. Interviews were conducted in either French or English. Inspectors observed lessons in both the French and the British sections and spoke to students from both sections. Inspectors focused on discussing students' and parents' concerns and the issues related to the two complaints with the Lycée's leaders and with students, in a non-attributable way.

Inspectors scrutinised many documents, including records of complaints, child protection and staff training; and policies related to safeguarding students and behaviour. They looked at how the curriculum had been modified to meet the needs of particular students. Inspectors visited the infirmerie (medical centre) and discussed its role in supporting students.

Inspectors did not scrutinise students' work because their progress at the time of the previous inspection had been judged to be outstanding. Public examination results in 2013 show that these high standards have been maintained. Inspectors discussed the steps the Lycée's leaders had taken since the previous inspection in relation to the points for further development suggested at that time.

Conclusions

In respect of the two complaints, the regulatory requirements for independent schools are met. In respect of students' and parents' concerns, as expressed in the surveys, the regulatory requirements are met.

The majority of responses to Parent View are positive, particularly regarding students' progress. Inspectors did not find evidence on their day in the Lycée to support the view of a minority of those parents who replied that their children were not well looked after.

The number of responses to the students' questionnaire (37) and to Parent View (192) represents only a very small minority of the total number of students and parents in this very large establishment.

The quality of education

The school continues to meet the regulations for independent schools.

Some students and parents said that the quality of teaching varies. This was reflected in the very limited sample of lessons inspectors observed, but this sample also included outstanding teaching. The quality of teaching overall and over time is a strength of the Lycée. It underpins the high standards students achieve.

Students express concerns about a lack of balance in the curriculum and the length of the school day. The curriculum meets the regulations for independent schools. Inspectors agree that the school day is long, but note that students achieve high academic standards and that parents are informed of the demands of the academic curriculum when they apply for places. Parents are informed that the Lycée does not offer vocational pathways.

Inspectors agree with students that there are few opportunities within the school day for sport, music and the arts. The curriculum is set in law by the French government. The Proviseur (headteacher) has some limited flexibility to add to the set curriculum, but may not remove or replace any compulsory elements in order to do so. The Lycée's leaders recognise that sport, music and the arts broaden students' overall personal development and add weight to applications to universities in the United Kingdom and other English-speaking universities. Many students attend the optional Saturday morning programme to undertake such activities, or seek opportunities out of school. There are good examples of students who excel in a range of extra-curricular activities. The British section of the Lycée is increasingly providing advice to help students completing applications to English-speaking universities, to complement the expertise for French universities.

Inspectors recognise the tension between students' views and the constraints operating on the Proviseur. Inspectors would encourage the Lycée to identify whether, where and how it can provide further opportunities for students, such as sport, music and the arts within the school day, and if this can be reconciled with the demands of the French system.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school continues to meet the regulations, with strengths in students' cultural development.

Provision for students' personal development is growing and increasingly meets the needs of young people. The Lycée's leaders are responding well to their previous inspection report. The two sections of the Lycée are working together to develop provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) still further. In the British section, a PSHE programme for older students has been formalised. In the French section, in addition to an extensive programme of citizenship, visiting speakers address issues relevant to students' lives, such as the dangers of using illegal substances and of smoking; and sexual health education. Recent developments responding to students' needs include help on managing stress and training in first aid.

A minority of students commented that their views are not listened to. The very limited flexibility for change appears to explain this perception. The staff do what they can to seek and respond to students' views. There are appropriate formal channels for communication, including an active Conseil (council) with student and class representation. There are tangible outcomes from some of the students' requests, for example changes to the dinner hour in the British section; and outdoor shelters and games for lunchtime.

Students complained about the new, stricter rules on punctuality introduced in September 2013. The rules are not unreasonable and punctuality to school has improved significantly. Students have a warning bell five minutes before they are deemed to be late and then may not enter the first lesson. Younger pupils arriving late are supervised in study. Older students have a place to work but are not allowed into school if they are late in the morning after 8.30 am until the start of the next lesson, except in the case of transport problems or extreme weather conditions.

Welfare, health and safety of students and safeguarding

Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding students meet the requirements of the independent school regulations. The single, central record of staff is up to date and is maintained according to current regulations. The Lycée site is closely supervised.

Behaviour was good in lessons and around the Lycée on the day of the inspection. Students are assiduous and attentive. In discussions, students said that they felt safe in school and spoke of the friendly atmosphere. Inspectors observed good relationships amongst students. In discussing bullying, students say that the Lycée actively investigates any instances.

There are structures in both sections of the Lycée to support students. Suitable modifications are made to the curriculum, where necessary, to meet individual students' identified needs. Students commented that they felt support was easier for them to obtain in the British section. The British section is much smaller and some structures operate in a different way. This may account in part for the higher degree of personalisation that students perceive there. The Lycée's leaders have agreed to establish a post to coordinate provision for students who struggle at school for personal or academic reasons. Inspectors would encourage the Lycée in this move.

The medical centre plays an important role in supporting students and in child protection. Students have open access to this area and also have access to the services of a psychologist. Appropriate rules operate for when parents' permission is needed. There are suitable channels of communication across the Lycée and records show appropriate links operate with other agencies when required. The Lycée's leaders monitor the use of the medical services on a regular basis, informing the Proviseur of serious matters.

Training for child protection is up to date. Staff show good awareness of the child protection procedure. Records are kept carefully, but occasionally need to be pulled together more coherently. Inspectors suggested setting up a planned cycle for reviewing policies.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations'), and associated requirements

Inspection team

Honoree Gordon , Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Phillips	Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

The Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle is an independent day school providing education for 3,875 boys and girls aged from three to 19 years on four sites in central London. The school serves the French community in London and a smaller number of pupils of other nationalities. The British section provides opportunities for students to take English GCSE and Advanced-level examinations.

On leaving school, the great majority of students take up places in British and international universities as well as French universities. Most students study for the Baccalauréat through a curriculum taught in French.

The school is responsible to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its educational provision under the control of the French Ministry of Education. Day-to-day supervision of the Lycée is provided by the French Embassy in London. The school appointed a new headteacher (Proviseur) in September 2012.

The Lycée aims to offer academic and personal fulfilment within a multinational and multilingual community, where students are taught respect for others and to value diversity.

The school was previously inspected in November 2012.

School details

Unique reference number	100547
Inspection number	433195
DfE registration number	207/6391
This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent French National School
Age range of pupils	3-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3,875
Proprietor	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Headteacher	Monsieur Oliver Rauch
Date of previous school inspection	November 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,185-£10,781
Telephone number	020 758466322
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