

The German School

Douglas House, Petersham Road, Petersham, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7AH

Inspection dates 17–19 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils achieve exceptionally high standards in most subjects throughout the school as a result of outstanding teaching, an outstanding curriculum and excellent pastoral care.
- All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress and most make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points.
- Bilingual education is very strong from Kindergarten onwards and pupils develop excellent speaking, reading and writing skills in both German and English. They also attain high standards in mathematics.
- Pupils have achieved exceptionally well in the Abitur (German Baccalaureate) in the last few years. They have performed the highest in languages and science. The first International Baccalaureate (IB) results show that pupils have made a good start in achieving a dual qualification in the sixth form. Pupils gain entry to top-ranking German, English or other European universities.
- Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Their subject knowledge is very strong and promotes a very high level of intellectual development in pupils. This, coupled with very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, enables pupils to make rapid and sustained progress.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils' excellent personal development is supported by a broad, balanced and extremely rich curriculum that helps them to become well-rounded individuals. The work to keep pupils safe and promote their well-being is outstanding and pupils feel exceptionally well cared for.
- The leaders and managers at all levels, and the teaching staff have worked hard to maintain the school's excellent academic standards. The headteacher provides clear vision and strong direction. The school knows itself well and continuously strives for excellence. The directors are highly skilled and very effective in supporting the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed lessons, analysed pupils’ work and documentation and conducted meetings with the assistance of an interpreter. They observed 28 lessons or part lessons and sessions, taught by 27 different teachers. They also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, teachers, coordinators, heads of department, the managing director and the senior leaders. They examined a wide range of records and documents including teachers’ planning and assessments, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils in all circumstances, and records of checks carried out to keep pupils safe. The inspectors also held telephone conversations with three members of the governing body including the Chair.
- The inspectors also took account of the responses in 32 questionnaires completed by staff and 205 parental responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Barrett	Additional Inspector
Flora Bean	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
John Worgan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The German School is a non-selective independent co-educational school for pupils aged from three to 19 years. The school opened in 1971 and is registered to admit up to 800 pupils. It is housed in modern purpose-built accommodation set in extensive grounds in Richmond-upon-Thames. The school had its last inspection by Ofsted in March 2011 and by the agency for German schools abroad in November 2010.
- The school serves the German-speaking community in London. The German School London is part of a system of 140 German schools abroad. Most pupils come from Germany, Austria or Switzerland, although, in all, 21 nationalities are represented in the school. The language of instruction is German and the school follows the Baden-Württemberg curriculum that leads to the Abitur (German Baccalaureate). The school has also been teaching the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme to post-16 pupils since September 2011 to provide them with a dual qualification.
- There are currently 808 pupils on roll. Almost all speak English as an additional language. The school supports 37 pupils who have specific learning difficulties and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. In the Kindergarten and pre-school (children under six years), children are taught in the morning only, with optional afternoon sessions for pre-school children. The school has been granted exemption from the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Hence, these aspects were not inspected.
- The current headteacher has been in post since August 2006. Most staff are recruited locally and 14 staff are on secondment from Germany, initially for a period of three years, extendable for three more years for teachers and five more years for senior leaders. The senior leadership team includes the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, the head of Kindergarten and pre-school, the head of the primary department, the head of the sixth form, the head of the IB programme and two heads of year. The governing body consists of eight directors. In the German system, the governors have no authority to hold the senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and learning. Their responsibilities include overseeing safeguarding arrangements and financial management, as well as developing the premises and facilities, and organising events.
- The school aims to provide a high quality education for its pupils, and to minimise the stress and disruption to their education which might be caused by their frequent mobility. Only one third of pupils stay in the school from Kindergarten to Abitur.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that checks on the quality of teaching and learning are always carried out with the highest rigour to sustain pupils' outstanding achievement and the high quality of teaching.
- Implement plans to sustain a high quality of support for pupils with special educational needs as their numbers increase by allocating sufficient time for the coordination of this area of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make at least good progress and most make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points as a result of outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum. Excellent pastoral care and very effective specialist support help pupils to meet the demands of an increasingly challenging curriculum as they move through the school. A strong focus on developing pupils' study skills prepares them extremely well for university.
- School records and inspection findings show that there is no significant difference in the rate of progress of boys and girls over time, and of pupils who are mainly German or English speakers. Throughout the school, pupils who are at risk of lagging behind in German, English or mathematics receive very effective targeted support that enables them to catch up swiftly and attain the expected standards. As a result, the proportion of pupils repeating the year is much lower than the average for schools in Germany.
- Pupils who are identified as having special educational needs make mostly good progress and some make outstanding progress owing to early identification of their needs and very effective support.
- In the Kindergarten and pre-school, pupils develop excellent language, communication and mathematical skills in both German and English as a result of a well-planned and well-resourced bilingual curriculum that is taught by German- and English-speaking staff. Pupils develop a joy for learning through a wide range of practical experiences and a curriculum that takes their individual interests into account.
- In the primary department, pupils attain high standards of numeracy and literacy that prepare them extremely well for secondary education. Throughout the primary and secondary departments, systematic teaching of reading and writing skills focuses on accurate grammar and spelling, as well as on the development of pupils' comprehension and writing skills in both German and English.
- The very few pupils who do not stay in the sixth form all pass their final examinations in class 10 (Year 11) and move on to pursue the IB course at Richmond College.
- In the sixth form, pupils are supported and taught extremely well to meet the demands of the dual Abitur and IB qualifications. In the last few years, they have achieved exceptionally well in the Abitur. Not only have they all passed, but their performance has been consistently above the average performance in the state of Baden-Württemberg. Pupils achieve particularly highly in German, modern foreign languages and the sciences. Pupils were entered for the IB for the first time in 2013 and most achieved well. In the last few years, all pupils have gained entry to top-ranking British, German or European universities.
- The more able pupils achieve exceptionally highly in most subjects as a result of a challenging curriculum and outstanding teaching that fosters a very high level of intellectual development. In addition, pupils who have particular talents gain awards in art, music, mathematics, science, geography and swimming competitions, at local and national levels.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

- Throughout the school, teaching in most subjects is mostly outstanding and never less than good, enabling pupils to make rapid and sustained progress and achieve exceptionally well over the time they stay at the school.
- Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Their subject knowledge is very strong, particularly in the secondary department and sixth form. This, coupled with very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, enables them to extend pupils' knowledge and skills beyond the age-related expectations of the Baden-Württemberg curriculum. Secondary pupils say that they fully appreciate being driven hard to attain very high standards.
- In the Kindergarten and pre-school, pupils make excellent progress in developing their literacy

skills in both German and English because the teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together to provide high quality bilingual education. When pupils initiate their own play, the staff engage them in conversation consistently to extend their vocabulary and communication skills. Pupils have easy access to a wide range of resources that help them to develop secure mathematical skills and make sense of the world around them.

- From the primary department onwards, pupils use lesson time efficiently to cover a lot of work. Regular homework helps them to build on what they learn in class. Pupils respond well to well-established routines and work productively, whether in pairs, groups or on their own. They participate highly in class when teachers lead interactive sessions. Pupils develop their speaking, reading and writing skills extremely well because teachers promote them consistently in all subjects.
- Pupils gain a deep understanding of the subject matter because teachers give clear explanations and use challenging questioning to make them think of different aspects of a topic and solve problems. Teachers use different types of questions and resources carefully to support or extend individual pupils and enable all pupils to experience success. In most lessons observed, teachers checked on pupils' learning frequently enough to support or extend pupils in a timely fashion and maintain a high level of challenge. Pupils were encouraged to improve their work through consistently helpful verbal feedback.
- Frequent assessments enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress closely. Teachers use the information from these assessments to discuss individual pupils' progress together and plan the most effective way to support and extend their learning. The analysis of a sample of pupils' work shows that written feedback often informs pupils of what they have done well and what they need to do to further improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The behaviour and safety of pupils throughout the school have greatly improved since the last inspection as a result of a thorough review of procedures to promote high standards of behaviour and strengthened pastoral care. The provision of a separate building for primary pupils has increased pupils' safety and well-being.
- The inspectors observed that pupils' behaviour was never less than good and often outstanding in lessons and at break times. Pupils work and play in harmony with each other. School records show that, in the last few years, there has been no need to apply serious sanctions other than very few warnings. Pupils take responsibility for maintaining high standards of behaviour, for example as peace makers. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and their attendance is high. In lessons, they are fully engaged in their work and participate actively in their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is robust, as noted by parents, carers, staff and pupils. Supervision is vigilant without being obtrusive. Aside from having form teachers and heads of year who provide them with high quality care, pupils choose a member of staff to whom they can turn if they have concerns and with whom they can meet weekly or more frequently. Pupils going through emotional difficulties also have access to a psychological counsellor.
- Safety education is planned well and includes e-safety, safety in the community, cycling and driving safety and first aid.
- Bullying is very rare. In the last academic year, the school dealt very effectively with a one-off incident in which a racist remark was made, and deepened pupils' understanding of discrimination by involving the whole class in making a film on bullying. The class then presented it to the whole school.
- Learning to respect those who appear different and those who hold different beliefs and views is built in the curriculum, particularly in personal, social, health and citizenship education, ethics and religious studies. Culture weeks in the Kindergarten and exchange visits with English, French and Japanese schools enhance pupils' appreciation and acceptance of cultural diversity.
- Pupils have consistent practical experiences of democratic values, whether as class

representatives, members of the sustainability committee, or participants in Model United Nations conferences as delegates to various United Nations Committees.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is promoted exceptionally well through the curriculum, the strong pastoral care and a wealth of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. Pupils have numerous opportunities to make meaningful contributions to school life and the wider community.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

- The senior leaders and directors lead and manage the school extremely well and, as a result, pupils' achievement is outstanding. They have ensured that the school has maintained its very high standards of education and that all the regulations for independent schools and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. They demonstrate an excellent capacity for bringing about further improvements.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Meticulous checks and records, and a strong commitment to staff training ensure that pupils are kept safe on and off site.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very strong. Clear vision and direction and very close collaborative work with the other senior leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has remained outstanding; that pupils' behaviour has greatly improved and is now outstanding; that the introduction of the IB as a dual qualification has been managed very effectively; and that self-review is accurate.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is very effective overall throughout the school. The senior leaders, coordinators and heads of department work very effectively together to monitor and evaluate the curriculum, moderate teachers' assessments and track pupils' progress. Well-qualified specialist teachers support pupils with special educational needs very effectively. However, the school has rightly identified that insufficient time is allocated to the coordination of this work to sustain the high quality support as the number of pupils with learning difficulties increases.
- The school fosters a culture of continuous improvement. Arrangements for the appraisal of all staff follow the German system. Peer observations enable staff to share the most effective teaching practices. Most staff are satisfied with the training they receive. Checks on the quality of teaching are very effective when the senior leaders give teachers specific targets for further improvement and follow up with subsequent visits at close intervals. However, they are not always carried out with this level of rigour.
- The broad, balanced and exceptionally rich curriculum produces well-rounded individuals and promotes their personal development extremely well. Detailed planning supports the teaching very effectively. The school promotes very high standards in most subjects including German, English and mathematics. Careers advice is well planned.
- The governing body is highly skilled and very effective in supporting the school and in constantly developing the premises and improving resources for the benefit of all pupils.
- Partnerships with parents and carers are very strong. Parents and carers have access to a wealth of information about all aspects of the school's work. The school gathers their views regularly and it was in response to parental demand that the school introduced the IB course. Although a minority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey are not satisfied with some aspects of the school's work, a large majority would recommend the school to others.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	102945
Inspection number	441612
DfE registration number	318/6070

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	International co-educational day school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	808
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	German School Association Ltd
Chair	Mr Peter Kästel
Headteacher	Mrs Marie-Luise Balkenhol
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 March 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,085
Telephone number	020 8940 2510
Email address	marie-luise.balkenhol@dslondon.org.uk

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