



Office for Standards
in Education

L'Ile aux Enfants School

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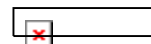
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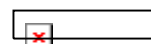
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

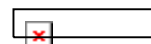
Information about the school



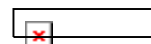
L'Ile aux Enfants is a French-medium school for pupils aged three to eleven situated in the London borough of Camden. It has been 'conventionnée' (a school subject to the authority of the French Ministry of Education, exercised through the Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger (AEFE) and the French embassy in London) since 1994. The school is also registered as a limited company. There are currently 192 pupils on roll, the great majority of whom come from French-speaking or English/French bi-lingual backgrounds. Approximately a quarter of the pupils receive a study grant, the highest percentage of any school subject to the authority of the AEFE. About 90 per cent of pupils continue their education in the Lycée Français in London or in another French language school in France or elsewhere. The remaining pupils transfer to English-medium schools at the age of 11.

The school aims to provide an education based on the recently-revised French primary school curriculum, whilst taking account of the particular circumstances deriving from its location in an English-speaking environment. The language of instruction in all French national programme lessons is French. A substantial amount of time is currently devoted to the teaching of English, starting with one hour per week for four-year olds and rising to four hours per week in the last three years. The school is managed by a board composed of six volunteer members. The headteacher and full-time teaching staff are appointed directly by the French education authorities; the board appoints locally-recruited staff. The school is subject to regular visits from the French inspectorate and is shortly to undergo an 'inspection d'homologation', a process to confirm its status as 'une école conventionnée'. The school has to meet the requirements and regulations of both the French and British authorities. The current doubts over whether the lease for the building will be renewed next year are leading to great uncertainty at the school.

Summary of main findings



What the school does well:

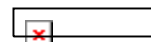


The school provides parents and their children with a good education based on the French National

Curriculum. Standards of teaching and learning are generally high and achievements good in external evaluations. Most of the regulations are met in respect of the quality of the curriculum, assessment, and teaching and learning. The areas to be dealt with concern mainly the completion and implementation of policies on pupils' safety, health and welfare, the introduction of a complaints procedure, and issues relating to the nature of the premises.

- it provides a broad and demanding curriculum defined by the French educational authorities and monitored by the French inspectorate;
- it offers a good range of extra-curricular activities;
- it achieves a high proportion of good teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics, French, English, science and discovery of the world (découverte du monde);
- it provides a regular programme of assessment and reporting to parents following the regulations established by the French authorities ;
- it succeeds in ensuring good responses of pupils in class through their active participation, enthusiasm and highly-developed oral skills in French and English;
- it promotes a warm atmosphere in classrooms and good relationships between pupils and teachers;
- it achieves well in relation to French national averages and those of similar schools abroad at Cours Elementaire 2 (eight years old);
- it enjoys a high level of support from parents who particularly appreciate the strong emphasis on bi-lingual education and the teaching of English.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:



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- implement anti-bullying, child abuse and behaviour and sanctions policies and make them available to parents on request;
 - take action to ensure the safety and good discipline of pupils at lunchtime in the canteen and at the recreation ground;
 - ensure that all recommendations in respect of fire-risk arrangements made by the London fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) have been complied with;
 - keep a written record of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences;
 - ensure that attendance registers contain all the relevant information on pupils;
 - arrange for the completed forms for full-time teaching staff to be forwarded to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for clearance;
 - consider how the premises might be adapted to meet the regulations, in particular to respond to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and to provide separate toilet facilities for male and female pupils over the age of eight;
 - include all the required information in the prospectus;
 - meet the requirements for the composition of a panel to hear complaints , the communication of the findings of the panel, and the stipulation for confidentiality in the handling of complaints.

All other aspects of the school's work complied with the requirements of the regulations relating to independent schools. The school may wish to consider the following additional recommendation for improvement:

- ensure that structures to facilitate good communications between the headteacher, staff, parents and board are improved to capitalise on the existing strengths of the school.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is broad and includes subjects in the new French National Curriculum. There are syllabuses for every subject, set out separately for each of the year groups. A high proportion of time is devoted to the teaching of French and mathematics, especially reading, grammar, writing and arithmetic. This results in pupils making good progress in these areas by the end of Cours Moyen 2 (CM2), which is the equivalent to Year 6. Other areas of strength within the curriculum include the development of pupils' oracy skills and the teaching of English, science and 'decouverte du monde'. The latter helps to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. Lessons are in French and pupils learn English from the age of three. The syllabus for English is detailed and teachers work closely together to provide a consistent approach across year groups. A high percentage of 11 year- olds move on to the French Lycée.

The curriculum is enhanced by music, arts and drama workshops, visits to places of interest and opportunities for residential experiences in France. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including an English club, drama, arts, and football.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons observed was at least good. There was a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and an awareness of the requirements of the new French curriculum. They know their pupils very well and generally match tasks well to their needs. Relationships are very good; teachers have high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond readily. In most lessons, teachers explain tasks and instructions clearly and provide pupils with effective support. Most pupils work hard to achieve that which is expected of them and make good progress overall. Particularly good teaching was observed in English, French, mathematics, science and in the knowledge and understanding of the world lessons. The most effective teaching was characterised by:

- the setting and display of clear learning objectives;
- explicit teaching of key vocabulary, which enabled pupils to participate fully, using the correct terminology;
- creative and dynamic lessons which engaged and motivated pupils;
- pupils working in pairs and groups, sharing and developing ideas and strategies;
- the use of probing questions, which encouraged pupils to explain their answers and enabled teachers to assess pupils' levels of understanding; and

- an appropriate range of activities and support to meet the individual needs of pupils.

Resources for teaching are generally sufficient. The librarian and English teachers ensure there is a broad range of books, including multicultural books. There are resources in either English or French. However, there are insufficient bi-lingual books to help pupils to develop an equally broad range of key vocabulary in both languages. The school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is constrained by the physical limitations of the accommodation. As a result, pupils do not learn how to use a sufficiently wide selection of software. However, by the age of ten pupils know how to save and retrieve their work. They can edit their writing and manipulate text by cutting and pasting. The school may wish to consider increasing the level of technical support and training for teachers to enable them to make more use of ICT across the curriculum. The small size of many of the classrooms limits pupils' opportunities to undertake practical activities.

The majority of teachers mark the pupils' work regularly. The most effective examples of marking give clear guidance to pupils on how to improve and enable them to make good progress. This good practice could be extended in all subject areas as soon as pupils are able to read. The school uses a range of mechanisms to assess pupils' achievements, including informal and standardised tests. The results of these are recorded on evaluation sheets, enabling pupils' progress to be closely monitored. Parents receive reports at the end of every term as well as at the end of the academic year.

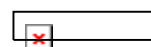
Although there are systems for the identification of special educational needs they are not sufficiently well known by all teachers and strategies and structures to provide support for these pupils are under-developed.

By the end of CE2, standards of attainment in French and mathematics are above the French national averages.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good. While there are some opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, for example through the arts, this aspect is less well developed as religious education is not included in the French curriculum.

There is a school council ('conseil des élèves') which encourages pupils to discuss school-related issues in class and with the headteacher. Pupils are encouraged to express themselves in lessons, for example when sharing news or explaining the reasons for their answers. All pupils take on an area of responsibility, for instance reading to younger pupils. They learn to express ideas coherently and with increasing clarity as they progress up the school. This helps them to develop their self-esteem and the ability to express themselves confidently.

Pupils are polite and greet adults and visitors confidently. They co-operate with one another and work well together. For example, in a very good mathematics lesson creative and dynamic teaching encouraged pupils aged six to work in groups on number bonds. They worked collaboratively, sharing ideas and strategies: for example, when working out the difference between two numbers,

one pupil showed his group that by using cubes they could count on and see how many more cubes were needed. The pupils listened to each other attentively and learnt from their peers as well as their class teacher. In another lesson, the youngest pupils in the 'petite section' co-operated excellently when making pizza.

Pupils learn about other cultures and countries in history and geography. They make effective use of the good selection of books in the library to undertake research for projects. Where teachers' subject knowledge of religious communities is secure, this helps to promote tolerance and racial harmony. Knowledge and understanding of the world is taught in every class and enhances pupils' education effectively. One class goes on a trip to France every year.

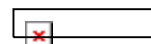
The school is taking part in a project, which focuses on music from Africa. This will lead to a performance later in the spring term in which all pupils will take part. The project is helping to broaden pupils' knowledge and appreciation of music from a different culture.

Behaviour in class and around the school is generally good, with the exception of lunch times, when strategies to help resolve incidences of undesirable behaviour as and when they occur are insufficient. This results in teachers spending valuable teaching time dealing with issues which have not been successfully and amicably resolved during the lunch time period.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has recently drafted an anti-bullying policy that takes account of French regulations and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance. This policy has yet to be agreed with the AEFÉ, the French inspectorate, the staff and the board, and so has not yet been implemented. The situation is similar with regard to the policy concerning the welfare of pupils that complies with DfES circular 10/95 'Protecting Children from Abuse: the Rôle of the Education Service'. Whilst a policy exists in draft form, it has not yet been implemented.

The standard of behaviour in the school is generally high and incidents of bullying are rare. At lunchtimes, however, it is difficult for the school to be sure that the welfare and safety of pupils are always guaranteed. The canteen is supervised by staff employed by the catering contractors or other non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff are also responsible for movements to and from the recreation ground at lunchtimes and for supervision at the playground. The lack of a clear disciplinary structure for lunchtimes, including use of the recreation ground, increases the risk of pupil misbehaviour and potentially puts their safety at risk. It also leaves them open to possible harassment from the local community. One recent incident was reported to inspectors.

Policies concerning the welfare, health and safety of pupils in schools subject to the authority of the AEFÉ are contained in the relevant 'Bulletins Officiels', and partially covered by the 'Règlement Intérieur', a code of conduct that is signed by parents to signify that they accept its conditions. There is an additional draft policy on child protection that includes references to DfES documentation and sets out key points for action. The policy has not yet been agreed by all relevant bodies or implemented.

A thorough risk analysis has been carried out to identify potential sources of danger in the school

and to cover all outside visits made by pupils. The school has made reference to Bulletins Officiels and DfES guidelines in making these arrangements.

The school has high expectations of good behaviour on the part of the pupils, although there is no specific behaviour policy setting out formally the sanctions to be adopted in the case of serious misdemeanours or indicating how good behaviour might be positively promoted. There is no written record kept of any punishments given to pupils. However, the 'Cahier de Correspondance' (a book recording all exchanges of information between the home and school) plays an important part in promoting good relationships and the flow of information between parents and teachers. The Cahier allows the school to inform the parents of any action taken in response to minor incidents and gives the parents the opportunity to respond if they wish. It is also used to arrange meetings between parents and teachers to discuss pupils' progress and deal with any problems that might arise.

The school has substantial documentation from both the French and British authorities covering health and safety issues generally. The school was visited by the LFEPA in June of this year in order for fire safety arrangements to be monitored. A number of recommendations for action were made. It was not possible to find any record indicating whether these recommendations had been met. However, there is a Fire Protection Policy and the school takes fire-risk arrangements seriously. The board has responded to DfES requests for evidence of steps it has taken to analyse potential risks and the action to be taken in the case of any incident. All fire extinguishers and other equipment have recently been checked by the firm contracted to undertake this task. Arrangements in respect of first aid are generally satisfactory, although it is some while since the designated first-aiders have had a refresher course.

The school keeps admission and attendance registers in accordance with the French authorities' requirements. The requirements of the British authorities are met in general terms, but there are differences in the level of detail held in the registers of different teachers and cumulative attendance figures do not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absences.

The school has not yet drawn up a plan of action to meet the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Given the nature of the premises, it would not currently be possible for pupils with severe mobility impairment to be admitted to the school or for them to be safely evacuated in the event of an emergency. The school generally meets French and British requirements in terms of race and gender discrimination.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

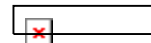
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *implement the draft anti-bullying policy (paragraph 3(2)a ;*
- *implement the draft child abuse policy (paragraph 3(2)b);*
- *agree and implement a written policy to promote good behaviour among pupils and set out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour (paragraph 3 (2)d);*
- *take action to ensure the safety and good discipline of pupils at lunchtime breaks, both on the school premises and in the recreation area (paragraphs 3 (2)c, 3 (2)d, 3(7));*
- *ensure that recommendations in respect of fire risk arrangements made by LFEPA have been carried out (paragraph 3 (5)b);*
- *ensure that a written record is kept of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8));*

- ensure that attendance registers contain all the relevant information on pupils (paragraph 3(9)); and
- complete a plan in relation to the DDA

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school is a registered charity, subject to the authority of the French government exercised through the AEFÉ and the French embassy in London. It is also registered as a limited company and is managed by a board of volunteer members. All full-time French teaching staff (maîtres titulaires) are employed directly by the French government and must fulfil French regulations concerning suitability for working in state schools. They have all completed clearance forms for the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), but, because of administrative difficulties linked with confidentiality issues, these have not yet been sent to the CRB. Arrangements have now been put in hand for this to be done. Other staff employed locally are employed directly by the board, which is responsible for obtaining the appropriate clearance from the CRB. Records maintained by the school show that these arrangements have been satisfactorily implemented. The headteacher is not involved in CRB clearance processes for locally-employed staff. The school takes its duties to check the suitability of staff seriously and is in close contact with the CRB to check on its obligations. In the case of staff absence it is difficult for the school to ensure satisfactory replacements by qualified teachers.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

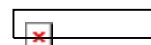
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What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that the completed forms for full-time French teaching staff are forwarded to the CRB for clearance (paragraph 4(b)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The Victorian building has considerable charm, but is not well suited to the teaching of a complex, modern curriculum, nor to accepting pupils with any serious degree of mobility impairment and ensuring that they could be evacuated in the case of an emergency. The building is clean, light, well ventilated and well maintained. It provides a safe and secure working environment for staff and pupils. The classrooms are varied in size and layout. The presence of support pillars in some rooms interferes with lines of vision and, in a small minority of cases, has an adverse impact on pupils' behaviour. Cramped conditions in some classrooms make it difficult for practical work to take place satisfactorily. The furniture and acoustic conditions in classrooms are satisfactory. Storage facilities

in classrooms and in the school generally are limited. The school has access to a local authority sports centre for physical education activities, although travel and timetabling difficulties impose limitations on its use.

There are sufficient toilet and hand basin facilities for pupils, but the constraints of the accommodation make it currently impossible to provide separate facilities for male and female pupils over the age of eight. Facilities for the headteacher and the teaching and non-teaching staff are inadequate overall. There is only one toilet for staff and adult visitors. There are no spaces where confidential discussions can take place. Pupils who are taken ill are catered for in the school office; this arrangement is not ideal, but is reasonable given the overall limitations of the accommodation. Food preparation takes place in clean surroundings certificated as meeting requirements by the local authority environmental health department.

The continued existence of the school is under threat. The owner of the building has obtained planning permission to develop the site on which the school stands. The board has lodged a final objection with the local council. It has so far proved impossible to locate suitable and affordable alternative accommodation. If the school has to close the pupils would have to be relocated to other French-medium schools in the London area. This is a highly unsettling situation for the headteacher, staff and parents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

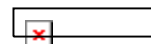
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- consider how the premises might be adapted to cater for pupils with special needs, including those whose mobility is impaired (paragraphs 5(g), 5(h) 5(j));*
- ensure that separate toilet facilities are provided for male and female pupils over the age of eight (paragraph 5(k)); and*
- ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for pupils to play outside safely (paragraph 5(t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The provision of information from the school to parents and other partners is satisfactory. The parents' association produces good and informative newsletters about forthcoming events and matters of interest. The headteacher also includes articles, for example about emotional intelligence and websites that are suitable for pupils.

Reports sent to parents contain information about pupils' current levels of attainment, and the most helpful include advice on improvement. Parents' evenings are held once a year and are very well attended. The 'Cahier de Correspondance' provides a useful means of communication on day-to-day issues. However, systems of communication both within the school and between the school and

the board are underdeveloped.

The parents' responses to the questionnaire sent to them before the inspection were mainly positive. In particular, they were pleased with the teaching and the progress of their children. They appreciate the good range of activities, trips and visits available and believe that the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility. Parents are confident that the teachers expect their children to work hard and that the approach of the staff enables pupils who are new to settle quickly. A significant number of parents were less positive about their understanding of the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. The school is aware of this and a complaints procedure is being clarified.

There is currently insufficient information for parents about procedures regarding discipline and exclusions. Although the school has a health and safety policy in place, it needs to develop and implement its policies relating to bullying and child protection.

The prospectus currently does not include the following information:

- the name of the headteacher;
- the name of the board's Chair and details of where correspondence to the Chair should be sent;
- a statement of the school's ethos and aims; and
- particulars of the school's policy on discipline and exclusions.

Following this Section 163 inspection, the school has arranged for parents to be sent a copy of the final report within 28 days. Where a summary of the report is being sent the school has arranged for parents to have access to the full report on request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

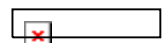
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *include all the required information in the prospectus (paragraph 6 (2) a,b,c,d and e); and*
- *develop, and subsequently provide parents, on request, with all mandatory policies relating to complaints procedures, bullying and child protection*

(paragraph 6 (2) h and j).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has a draft policy on its complaints procedure. The policy has yet to be agreed by the AEFÉ, the board and staff and is consequently not yet available to parents of pupils and prospective

pupils. The policy gives clear timescales for the management of any complaint and provides for it to be considered initially on an informal basis before it proceeds to a formal written complaint. The policy sets out conditions for an official hearing if the response to the written complaint is not considered satisfactory by the complainant. However, whilst it states that the chair of the panel must be somebody independent of the running and management of the school, it does not stipulate the minimum number of people not involved in the original consideration of the complaint who must be involved. The policy does not state who should receive copies of the appeal findings or guarantee the appropriate degree of confidentiality to correspondence, statements and records of complaint.

Since the policy has not yet been implemented, the ways in which complaints can be formulated by parents and satisfactorily resolved are not yet clearly articulated and understood.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

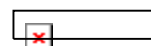
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that the draft complaints procedure is agreed and made available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b)); and*
- *ensure that it meets the requirements in full with regard to paragraphs 7(f), 7(i) and 7(k).*

SCHOOL DETAILS



Name of school:	L'Ile aux Enfants
Type of school:	French-medium nursery and primary
DfES Ref. No.	202/6385
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Number on roll:	192
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	Day: £3270
Address of school:	22 Vicar's Road London NW5 4NL
Email address:	info@ileauxenfants.co.uk
Telephone number:	0207 267 7119
Fax number:	0207 267 0578
Headteacher:	M Abdel Hadjadj
Proprietor:	L'Ile aux Enfants Ltd/L'Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger (AEFE)
Date of Inspection	1-4 December 2003
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Chris Clark

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