

Inspection report

Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle: British Section

Independent school

DfES ref no: 207/6391

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 March 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

The British Section is part of the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle, an independent day school, founded in 1915 in London to provide a French education for French and Belgian refugees.

The British Section is recognised by the Department for Education and Skills as a separate school. Many of the teaching staff share their time between the British and French Sections. The British Section is based in two Victorian houses with teaching taking place in all parts of the school. It is a small section of 223 boys and girls, admitting most of its pupils from the Primary and Secondary Schools of the French Section from the age of 14, at the beginning of the *troisième* (Year 10), and provides education up to the age of 18.

As the section prepares pupils for the English examination system, they are expected to have a sound knowledge of English. The school operates under the auspices of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its educational provision under the control of the French Ministry of Education and benefiting from the local supervision of the French Embassy in London. It is subject to regular inspection by the French Ministry of Education.

It pledges to allow children of all nationalities, and those whose main language is not French, to complete their studies in a French educational environment whilst preparing for English examinations.

Summary of main findings

The British Section of the Lycée Charles de Gaulle is highly successful in enabling pupils to reach very high standards. Very good teaching, following the curriculum of the French Lycée Général in a bi-lingual, multi-national context, provides a valuable educational experience. Much of this success is due to the inspired and caring leadership of the Head of the British Section.

What the school does well:

- it provides very good teaching, enabling pupils to achieve very high standards;
- it instils in its pupils a strong sense of self-confidence and respect;

- it fulfils parents' wishes for their children to be educated in a multi-national setting;
- it provides very high quality advice on careers and university entrance;
- it encourages pupils to behave in an exemplary manner; and
- it keeps parents well-informed about all aspects of the British Section.

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

- attend to the training issue in section 3 of this report; and
- improve the complaints procedures as set out in section 7.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- extend the provision of information and communication technology (ICT).

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The British Section, in common with the whole school, follows the curriculum appropriate to a French Lycée Général, taught in French, until pupils reach the age of 14. Pupils who then choose the British Section continue to follow the basic principles of the French curriculum whilst preparing for English examinations. This curriculum is academic in nature and provides opportunities for pupils to learn a broad range of subjects including separate sciences, Latin and philosophy. Technology is experienced through ICT. The range and quality of modern foreign language provision is a particular strength of the curriculum, as is the opportunity for the most able students to join accelerated groups, such as in mathematics. All pupils study French to General Certificate of Secondary Education and General Certificate of Education Advanced (A2) Level. Pupils have opportunities for physical education (PE) both in school and in hired premises locally and at the school's sports ground in west London. The school day is long and lasts from 8:40am to 6:00pm.

Provision for careers guidance is a significant strength of the school. A part-time specialist has renowned expertise in application to British and French universities and all employment and study opportunities. She is available to speak to individuals and their parents by appointment and teaches small groups.

The school develops good levels of self-confidence in its pupils, who leave well prepared for the next stage of their lives, through a range of programmes within and outside the curriculum. This includes a Lifeskills programme entitled 'Informal' delivered by a visitor to the section as an extra-curricular activity. A few parents and pupils are critical of limited extra-curricular provision. Bearing in mind the available time in a long school day, however, the section provides a satisfactory range of activities, with presentations such as the 'Talent Show' and curriculum-related visits at home and abroad. There are a number of lunchtime societies, such as the debating, film and photographic societies.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Very good teaching provides opportunities for all pupils to achieve according to their ability. They are motivated to work hard, concentrate well in lessons and achieve high standards. The school has no pupils with special educational needs. It provides extension for the most able in accelerated groups and support through individual attention in small teaching groups. Teachers know and understand their pupils well and encourage them to respond positively. Lessons are well-planned and make good use of available resources. The best teaching displays great energy and commitment, sharing the teacher's high level of subject skills with pupils through discussion and intellectual challenge. This is a style much appreciated by pupils. The bi-lingual and multi-national character of the school adds a significant perspective to the teaching and learning experience for all pupils.

Teaching resources are often limited, except in practical subjects, but this is not a drawback to high achievement. Many teachers supplement information from textbooks by photocopying articles from newspapers and journals. There are no interactive whiteboards and few opportunities for pupils to use the good quality but limited ICT provision. The British Section has access to well-equipped science laboratories and an art room on the main site.

Assessment follows a school-based programme of *Conseils de Classe* (progress meetings), in which pupils' progress is formally discussed each term by a group consisting of the headteacher, teachers, parents' and pupils' representatives. Pupils find this system effective and helpful. As they progress through the section, they appreciate the regular individual contact with their tutors. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and includes detailed advice on how to improve. There is very good on-going assessment of pupils' progress in the classroom.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the British Section. In line with their stated interest in character building, there is a strong emphasis on individual responsibility, participation in school life and the encouragement of good behaviour. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the British Section where pupils mix well together in social groups in the foyer and around the premises.

The British Section is non-denominational. French education is secular, therefore there is no collective worship and no religious education is taught. Pupils are given opportunities for spiritual reflection and the development of personal awareness through, for example, studying art, music, history and literature.

Teachers promote pupils' self-esteem, self-discipline and the ability to mix freely and sensibly with others. Relationships are good between pupils and between staff and pupils. There is an effective tutor system in place which ensures that each pupil has someone they can talk to if they have any problems. Pupils are always very respectful towards members of staff and visitors. There are very good opportunities during lunch for pupils to mix socially with friends from the Lycée. The wholesome, nourishing three course lunches are served in the refectory to a very large number of pupils who all behave very sensibly. Behaviour is very good in class and around the buildings, despite the large number of pupils moving around. Pupils have the opportunity for a variety of visits to galleries, museums, theatres and places of interest, including residential visits recently to France, Hungary and the USA. They are very fortunate in their central London location close to galleries and museums.

There is no formal personal, social and health education but opportunities are available through organised lunchtime sessions twice each term. Topics such as self-esteem, assertiveness and stress management have been explored with the help of visiting speakers. Opportunities are available for pupils to take responsibility

by acting as class delegates voted for by their classmates, they attend the *Conseils de Classe* and representatives attend the whole school council.

Pupils report that they are very happy in the British Section, they feel that due to the small numbers, staff know them very well personally and give them a great deal of help and support. As some pupils said '*this is an amazing school, it doesn't feel like we are learning*' and '*teachers help you to find out your own information and involve you in the lesson*'.

The British Section prides itself on the bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism of its pupils. There are pupils from many cultural and religious backgrounds, all of whom mix well together. Both French and British cultural traditions are studied and a wide range of cultural visits further enhances this aspect of pupils' development.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The British Section makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It takes the necessary steps to ensure that it is a safe place in which to work and learn. Pupils are well supervised throughout the day. Suitable policies meet all the key requirements for pupils' welfare, health and safety, supported by suitably detailed risk assessments. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and specialised staff to oversee the provision.

There is very good provision for First Aid, with medically qualified staff on duty most of the day in the infirmary, which is a welcoming and comfortable place in which to be unwell. There is an effective behaviour policy and the pupils all behave very well in class and around the building. Anti-bullying policies are in place and pupils report that there is little or no bullying. The British Section has written records of serious disciplinary offences and the sanctions taken. Arrangements to record the admission and attendance of pupils are in very good order and the *Conseiller Principal d'Éducation* (CPE) is extremely vigilant in carrying out his duties.

There is an appropriate child protection policy. The child protection officer has not attended up-to-date training to undertake this role. The management has acted very promptly to ensure that the member of staff is due to attend an appropriate course in the near future.

Good provision has been made for fire safety. The fire officer has visited and declared that the buildings meet all requirements for fire safety. There are regular fire drills which are carefully documented. The fire appliances are well maintained under professional contract arrangements and a fire risk assessment has been carried out.

The British Section, in conjunction with the Lycée, has taken steps to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and is currently finalising a plan to show how this will be addressed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets almost all the requirements.

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:

- *ensure that the designated child protection officer receives appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The headteacher is the on-site representative of the proprietor, which is the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Educational advice is provided by the French Ministry of Education, with local accountability to the French Ambassador in London. Staff are usually appointed to the British Section in the United Kingdom (UK) and hold enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance before taking up their post. Some British Section pupils may be taught by staff from the French Section, who are more usually appointed in Paris and must hold the French clearance, *Casier Judiciaire Vièrge* (CJV). Recent appointees from France are now required to obtain British CRB clearance after six months in post.

Staff are checked appropriately for identity and qualifications in France or in the UK through references and other documentation. Appointees must satisfy the school of medical fitness. All support staff must hold standard CRB clearance.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The British Section is based in part of the large site of the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle in Kensington, in central London, and makes occasional use of facilities elsewhere on this site. The site has been redeveloped as the size of the school increased and thus comprises a range of buildings of differing styles and ages.

Maintenance and improvement of the site are well planned and efficiently managed. The British Section is not yet fully accessible to pupils and staff with disabilities, as it is the only part of the site with no lift. There is a commitment to schedule the teaching of any disabled person on the ground floor. Long-term planning seeks to improve access through ramps, wider doors and to consider the installation of a lift. Toilet facilities are adequate for the number of pupils, but currently there are laundered hand towels rather than the more hygienic paper towels or air dryers.

The size of classrooms varies significantly. The choice of rooms for classes is carefully matched to the size of the group. Several rooms in the British Section accommodation are in poor decorative order, but will soon be redecorated. Pupils

have access to outside leisure space and the school staggers break times to accommodate the number of pupils using the facility.

Le Centre de Documentation et d'Information (CDI) provides good quality library and information resources and the careers library is well-stocked with up-to-date information. There are good laboratory facilities for science available to the British Section and pupils use the impressive main school refectory.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Parents are provided with a wide range of information. They have a British Section handbook as well as the very detailed and informative prospectus for the Lycée. Parents are also provided with extensive curricular information. They have the opportunity to attend several meetings throughout the year to keep them up-to-date with developments concerning their children, for example choice of post-16 subjects and university entrance. Regular newsletters also give parents a good flavour of the life of the school. A comprehensive website gives a range of information, even including the refectory menus for each week.

Parents receive detailed end of term reports and have the opportunity to attend a consultation evening with staff. This is in addition to the *Conseils de Classe* each term. The parents' association holds fund raising and social events and parents are kept informed through their notice board. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were pleased with the school and the information they were given.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The British Section has a written complaints policy which is an effective combination of British and French procedures. It provides for informal and formal contact with the school and the next stage is dealt with by a senior official at the French Embassy. This stage does not include the formation of an independent panel, nor the opportunity for the parent to be present at any hearing. Most parents indicated in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they were aware of these procedures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets almost all the requirements.

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:

- if parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, provide for a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f));*
- ensure that one person on such a panel hearing is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g)); and*
- allow for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h)).*

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle: British Section
DfES Number:	207/6391
Type of school:	Foreign National school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	14 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 85 Girls: 138 Total: 223
Annual fees:	£5,499
Address of school:	35 Cromwell Road London SW7 2DG
Telephone number:	020 7584 6322
Fax number:	020 7823 7684
Email address:	webmaster@lyceefrancais.org.uk
Headteacher:	Monsieur A Bécherand
Proprietor:	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Peter McKenzie
Date of inspection:	20 - 23 March 2006

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