

The Swedish School in London

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	318/6076
Unique Reference Number	102948
Inspection number	302907
Inspection dates	25-26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, 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 school is one of a number of Swedish schools abroad. It is situated on an attractive site on the south bank of the River Thames in Barnes. It provides education to the children of the representatives of Swedish organisations and companies located in London. The school provides the opportunity for its pupils and students to continue their school work inside the Swedish National Curriculum whilst living in England. Established in London in 1907 the Swedish school is this year celebrating its centenary.

The school caters for boys and girls from the ages of 3 to 18. There are currently 209 pupils and students on roll. Of these, there are 25 children in the nursery and reception and 55 in the sixth form. Occasionally this number increases when sixth formers come from Sweden on short exchange visits. Students above the age of 16 (above compulsory school age in England) receive tuition some little way from the main school in accommodation rented from a local college of further education. A number of students in the sixth form live locally with host families. This provision was last inspected by the Commission for Social Services Inspection in 2006.

Evaluation of the school

The Swedish school provides a very positive learning environment where pupils and students thrive. The overall quality of education and care is good. Teaching is good and this ensures that pupils and students make good progress. The school works hard to ensure that their progress is carefully monitored. It is in the process of refining its structures to further improve assessment in line with its own and external evaluations by Swedish inspectors. Monitoring and assessment is effectively supported by the particularly good interactions between staff and pupils, so that teachers know the learners' needs very well. The school meets its aim of providing high quality care for its pupils and students throughout the age range, but needs to develop one or two welfare policies and other procedures to meet all English requirements for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum at the Swedish school is good and has a number of important strengths. It is supported by a clear policy and good schemes of work. The provision meets the needs of pupils and students of all ages and abilities, including those who are identified as having special educational needs and who require additional learning support and all make good progress. The curriculum is designed to meet Swedish requirements and expectations. It ensures continuity in the education of Swedish children and young people living in England. In addition, it provides pupils below the age of 16 with a curriculum which reflects the requirements for independent schools in England. Expectations with regard to the learning of languages are considerably higher than the norm in English schools. However, some aspects of the curriculum are constrained by the provision available, for example opportunities for creative work in textiles and wood.

Personal, social and health education is an integral part of the educational experience of all pupils and is fundamental to the school's provision. The school nurse provides a valuable and specific role in this aspect of their development. Provision for careers education is appropriate. Specialist careers teachers who visit the school from Sweden provide advice and guidance to pupils, students and parents.

Support for pupils identified as having special educational needs is very good. Specialist support is provided by both teachers and learning assistants. The progress of these pupils is particularly well monitored. All pupils in the school have individual learning plans as this is a requirement for all Swedish schools.

Pupils and students have a good range of opportunities to take part in additional activities which enrich the curriculum, including team sports and theatre visits. Large numbers of pupils regularly stay after school to take part in a range of activities. During the week of the inspection several groups of pupils were preparing for a school trip to Rome. Such regular visits include all pupils in a specific age range.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned by the teachers who understand the needs of their pupils well. Teachers' positive beginnings to lessons are supported by pupils also being well prepared for their lessons and willing to learn. The purpose of individual lessons is well communicated by teachers and understood by the pupils. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of what pupils and students of all abilities can achieve and lessons are invariably conducted in a positive atmosphere. This is enhanced by a good level of resources available to support most aspects of learning.

Relationships are positive between teachers and pupils and between pupils. The high quality of discussions between teachers and pupils reflects their interest and enjoyment in learning. Teachers are effective at asking pupils questions and drawing

them into discussions. For example, in a well structured English lesson for pupils aged 13, cultural differences between English and Swedish attitudes were very effectively used as a focus for discussion. Pupils responded with great maturity and humour. The high quality of class discussions and subsequent written work effectively supported progress in the use of English.

Strategies for assessment are very good. They are designed to meet the formal requirements for Swedish schools, but are significantly enhanced by the high quality of teachers' interaction with pupils. The structure of the curriculum ensures that they have frequent opportunities to speak to pupils individually about their work and to offer guidance and support for further improvement. This process is again supported by the very positive relationships within the school, in particular between staff and pupils. The progress of pupils and students is monitored carefully and effectively recorded in their individual development plans. Records show that pupils are involved in evaluating their own progress and in setting targets and plans for their further improvement. There are effective strategies for involving parents in decisions about their children's development as well as ensuring that they are aware of their progress. Teachers report to parents and meet with them regularly.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school provides a very positive learning environment in which pupils' knowledge of themselves and their self-esteem and self-confidence are effectively developed. The young people develop a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and show consideration for one another. Their behaviour is outstandingly good and they have very positive relationships with one another, as well as with their teachers. In lessons pupils and students show interest in learning new things. For example, in an English lesson on the theme of 'What a wonderful world', younger pupils showed interest and pleasure in discovering new aspects of the use of the language and describing good news.

Pupils from an early age are expected to take some responsibility for planning their own school work. Opportunities for contributing to the community include participating in a local environment project and older pupils and students taking part in local team sports. Provision for this aspect of pupils' and students' development is satisfactory but could readily be extended.

Pupils and students develop a very good understanding of public institutions in the context of Sweden. Such issues are dealt with effectively through the social studies (*socialorienterande amnen*) programme. Other aspects of the curriculum specifically require pupils to develop a broad understanding of public institutions and culture in England.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The quality of care for pupils and students is good. This view is supported by the judgement in the most recent report by the Swedish inspectorate, who last visited the school in December 2006. Questionnaires completed by pupils, students and their parents prior to this inspection, confirm that they are happy to be at the school. This view is further supported by the school's own surveys. There are appropriate policies in place to prevent bullying, to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people and to clarify the school's expectations of behaviour. The school is thorough in its preparation for external visits. It maintains appropriate records of fire drills and the safety of the buildings has been confirmed by a fire officer. Supervision is good and the design of the buildings ensures ease of access for any student, teacher or visitor with disability.

Despite the many strengths relating to the welfare of pupils, the school does not have a written first aid policy, although most staff have received first aid training and there is a school nurse always available. Registers relating to both admissions and attendance are carefully maintained, but the records of attendance are not kept in the prescribed manner.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school is fully aware of its responsibilities to ensure that all staff are checked before taking up appointments. There are clearly established procedures for undertaking such checks, with the Swedish police or the English Criminal Records Bureau as appropriate, to confirm the suitability of staff to work with young people. Records are maintained clearly and in the prescribed manner. However, the school does not yet seek confirmation of the medical fitness of new staff prior to appointment.

School's premises and accommodation

The main part of the school is housed in purpose-designed and relatively modern buildings which were constructed to high Swedish standards 1987. In most respects the school provides good accommodation. The good quality of classrooms in the main school makes a very positive contribution to all pupils' experience of learning. The classrooms for the youngest pupils, including those in the nursery and reception classes, are particularly well organised. Accommodation for the sixth form students, which the school leases from a local college of further education, is adequate to meet their needs. The arrangement provides these students with good opportunities for sports. It provides opportunities for them to mix with English students, for example through team sports.

Whilst accommodation is good in most respects the school authorities are seeking larger premises to further improve the provision and to provide more places. Some

aspects of the premises and accommodation would benefit from development and improvement, particularly the rooms for art and for work with textiles and wood. Art and woodwork are taught in the same space which is inconvenient. Despite the good use made of available space for these subjects, the existing accommodation places constraints on pupils' opportunities for creative and aesthetic education. The grounds make very good provision for the youngest pupils for games and play but again constrain opportunities for sporting activities for older pupils on the main school site.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has good established procedures for communicating with parents. Most of the required information is provided for parents and others, or they are informed that it is available from the school. The maintenance of close contacts and consultation with parents is central to the aims of the school. Parents play a key role in the life of the school. This is emphasised by their role in appointing the Board of Governors.

However, there are one or two omissions in the information provided to parents. The school does not inform them that details of pupils' achievements in central (Swedish national) tests are available from the school. Although a full staff list is provided to all parents as a matter of course it does not contain details of their qualifications.

Procedures for handling complaints

There are suitable procedures for handling complaints.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- prepare a written first aid policy (paragraph 3(6))
- maintain a record of attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all new staff ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to confirm their medical fitness (paragraph 4(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of academic performance during the previous year (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request a summary of the staff's qualifications from the school (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- continue to seek opportunities to enlarge the school premises, in particular with a view to improving opportunities for sports, textiles and woodwork
- continue to seek further ways of developing opportunities for pupils and students to have links with, and contribute to, the local community.

School details

Name of school	The Swedish School
DfES number	318/6076
Unique reference number	102948
Type of school	Foreign
Status	Independent
Date school opened	February 1987
Age range of pupils	3-19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 107 Girls: 102 Total: 209
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,000
Address of school	82 Lonsdale Road London SW13 9JS
Telephone number	0208 741 1751
Email address	jdackenberg@swedishschool.org.uk
Headteacher	Mr Jan Dackenberg
Proprietor	Swedish School Society in London Ltd
Reporting inspector	Mr Michael Thirkell
Dates of inspection	25-26 April 2007