

The German School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	3186070
Unique Reference Number	102945
Inspection number	317948
Inspection dates	27 February - 28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The German School is an independent co-educational school for pupils aged three to 19 years of age. There are currently 698 pupils on roll. It opened in 1971 and serves the German speaking community in London. Most pupils come from Germany, Austria or Switzerland and many come directly from other German Schools abroad. All are either native German speakers or bilingual. The language of instruction is German and the school follows a German curriculum. The school is located in modern purpose-built accommodation set in extensive grounds in Richmond-upon-Thames. 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. This is the first published inspection report for the school. The school is also subject to regular inspections by the German inspection system.

Evaluation of the school

The German School is a welcoming, happy school, which is successful in meeting its aims. It provides a good standard of education and care. Due to good teaching using an outstanding curriculum, pupils make good or better progress. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and based on that of Baden Württemberg, one of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany. It has significant exemplary elements, notably the provision for modern languages, science and mathematics. The secondary phase of the school runs a primarily grammar school curriculum (*Gymnasium*), with some additional provision for pupils who would normally have attended a secondary modern school (*Realschule*) in the German system. The older pupils are prepared for the German final school examination (*Abitur*) and for entry to university. In recent years an increasing number of pupils have chosen to enter higher education in prestigious universities in the United Kingdom (UK). Pupils have careers advice from both British and German sources, which enable them to be better prepared for the next stage of their education. Many senior pupils communicate confidently in several languages. Their progress in English is such that many pupils by the age of 16 feel so confident that they can transfer to British sixth forms. This means that the numbers in the sixth form (*Oberstufe*) are small, enabling students to receive a lot of individual tuition. The range of extra curricular

opportunities offered in sports and the creative arts is outstanding and many pupils actively participate in them. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet fully developed; this is not an aspect of the Baden Württemberg curriculum, which the school adopts through inter-governmental agreement. ICT is in use in some curricular subjects but discreet courses are offered only in the extra-curricular programme. There is a strong emphasis in the primary phase (*Grundschule*) on the acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills. English is taught from an early age, as is swimming. The curricular provision for the younger pupils is appropriate for their age and stage of development. Pupils who need additional help are supported appropriately in class. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are integrated successfully throughout the curriculum. A wide range of curricular related visits further enhances pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and consequently, pupils make good or better progress. The staff are knowledgeable, well prepared for their lessons and their classroom management is good. Relationships are good at all levels with staff providing effective support and guidance. The pace of lessons is good but not all staff plan in sufficient time for consolidating learning at the end of lessons. The practice of paired and independent work during lessons strengthens the pupils' ability to take responsibility for their own learning. The staff have high expectations for both work and behaviour and the pupils respond by concentrating, working hard and behaving well in lessons. The majority of pupils are motivated to learn. The regular homework and systems for monitoring it are good. Older pupils attain results, which are above the average for Baden Württemberg *Abitur*. Many pupils, whose education is disrupted through transfer to and from abroad to other schools, make outstanding progress to achieve such high standards. This is even more commendable as the obligatory practice of staff secondments places constraints on the continuity of teaching and learning. Very few pupils have to repeat a year in line with the requirements of the German system.

Teaching of the younger pupils' is good with a well-planned and interesting range of appropriate activities. They are well supported by the proficient and enthusiastic staff but currently, there are insufficient additional staff to fully support group and practical activities for the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, which is to be implemented in September 2008. Resources are plentiful and are used effectively. The assessment system is robust and very effective in tracking the progress of pupils and identifying any under achievement, which is promptly addressed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with many outstanding features. Pupils' spiritual development is good, they are taught religious education and have opportunities to study world religions. Younger pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect on the beauty of the world around them. Pupils are given time to reflect and discuss their ideas and mix well during lessons and

breaktimes. Younger pupils in particular, say that they enjoy school. Pupils are successfully helped to develop into lively, responsible young people able to think for themselves and unafraid to express their views. The staff are good role models and pupils respond well. This helps them develop a strong sense of right and wrong. In lessons, behaviour is good. Around the school, it is satisfactory, because of some pupil's lack of consideration for others and failure to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils' attendance is high. Older pupils make a good contribution to their own community through the student council, although they do not always feel that their voice is heard or acted upon. They have concerns about the safety of their property in school and some pupils' behaviour.

A very varied programme of visits and visitors encourages pupils' awareness of public institutions both in Germany and the UK and contributes well to pupils' personal development. German authors are invited annually to the school to share their work with both pupils and the community. The school hosts an annual German national youth music competition and local musical events. The school has positive contacts with local schools where older pupils teach German on a regular basis. Pupils' cultural development is outstanding, through immersion in their German speaking culture. They are involved in the Model United Nations simulation exercise. There are opportunities for pupils to learn about non-European traditions and different cultures throughout the world. For example, younger pupils are currently involved in a project on Africa and enjoyed listening to African music during their break time. There is a high degree of racial harmony. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills and these make an effective contribution to their wellbeing and prepare them well for later life.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. They have devised and implemented a range of policies including anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and child protection. The school is aware of safeguarding issues, although the designated officer's training has not been updated in view of the latest guidance. The vigilant health and safety officer has fully implemented procedures to promote the pupils' welfare through fire prevention, first aid and general safety around the premises. Pupils are well supervised when engaged in lessons and in extracurricular activities, but there is some laxity of supervision at parents' pick-up times during the open extended school day. They are encouraged to eat healthily and many enjoy the wholesome lunch cooked on the premises. All pupils take regular exercise on the sports field or in the pool.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has made appropriate checks on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and holds the information on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation support effective learning. The administration is based in Douglas House, a large period house, and the former stable block has been attractively converted for use by the younger pupils. The main school building, built in 1981, accommodates most of the pupils and the specialist areas. A very well equipped ICT building has been recently built. The school is well maintained. It is set in very extensive grounds, which are attractively laid out and include sports grounds and adventure play areas for younger pupils.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A good range of information is provided for parents about the school's work, policies and procedures. The parents' handbook, the regular '*dslive*' newsletter, and the website keep parents up-to-date with developments at the school. Parent representatives are an important link between the school and the parent body. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were supportive of the school; they expressed some concerns mainly about the supervision of their children, their property and behaviour. Parents are kept well informed through good written reports and consultation meetings, in addition all teachers have a lesson set aside each week where they are available to discuss ongoing issues with parents. Some parents were concerned that they were unable to discuss their child's progress as regularly as they would like, but the school has made provision according to the German guidelines.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which meet the regulations. Some parents were unaware of these procedures and the school has taken steps to address this.

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 the one listed below.

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

- ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training and update the policy in line with Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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:

- introduce wider use of ICT in the curriculum
- allow sufficient time to consolidate learning robustly at the end of lessons.

School details

Name of school	The German School
DCSF number	318/6070
Unique reference number	102945
Type of school	Foreign International School
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1971
Age range of pupils	3-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	Boys: 343 Girls: 355 Total: 698
Annual fees	£ 4,250
Address of school	Douglas House Petersham Road Petersham Richmond Surrey TW10 7AH
Telephone number	0208 940 2510
Fax number	0208 332 7446
Email address	info@dslondon.org.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Marie-Luise Balkenhol
Proprietor	The German School Association
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton
Dates of inspection	27–28 February 2008