

International Community School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	213/6304
Unique Reference Number	101171
Inspection number	318149
Inspection dates	11-12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	R Kapadia HMI

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 International Community School is based in two locations in central London for its primary and secondary provision respectively, with more pupils on the primary site. Pupils come from diverse communities across the world and most speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school aims to build on its EAL heritage by providing a plural and diverse education based on the International Baccalaureate Primary and Middle Years Programmes. There are pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), including some with a statement of special educational needs. It has small classes with up to 16 pupils. A small number of pupils stay only for six weeks and most stay for less than two years.

Evaluation of the school

The school meets its aims of providing an integrated education more successfully in the primary section than in the secondary section. The overall quality of education is satisfactory, as are all other aspects, including progress, teaching and assessment, welfare, health and safety, as well as spiritual, moral, and social development. Cultural development is well developed in this international school, as reflected by its pupils and staff.

Quality of education

The overall curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in the primary provision and its holistic approach through units of enquiry. The school recognises that more work is needed in its secondary provision to provide an integrated approach, where teaching is through subjects.

In the primary section, a progressive programme of development follows six trans-disciplinary themes, including all the areas of experience. The core subjects are studied as well as technology, humanities, art, music, and Italian. Physical education is offered at a local leisure centre twice a week and includes swimming.

The middle school programme, for Years 7 to 9, covers the main areas of experience, with plans to develop cross-curricular approaches further. Older pupils study for International GCSE (IGCSE) and International A levels. The provision in some curricular aspects such as technology is limited, especially for the small number

of pupils who come for short courses to improve their English. They study English for over half the week, leaving insufficient time for other areas of experience. There are schemes of work but they are not always implemented effectively, such as technology in the secondary section.

Personal, social and health education is taught across the whole school; careers education is provided in the secondary section by themed days. The curriculum is supported by a good range of planned visits, including residential visits to a rural setting on the Suffolk coast. There are also after-school activities such as performing arts and sports activities.

With regards to special needs, the school maintains good individual education plans and conducts regular reviews. However, the current curriculum does not fulfil requirements of a statement of special educational need for one pupil with regards to the provision of the subjects of the National Curriculum.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall, with strengths in the Foundation Stage and primary section, where several outstanding lessons were observed. In the secondary section, only a limited amount of teaching could be observed since examinations were taking place.

Teaching in the primary section enables pupils to make progress. Teachers plan their lessons well, following the requirements of the school for long-term and medium-term planning. Planning is monitored at strategic times by management. Lesson plans are generally appropriately detailed.

Lesson planning is also sound in the secondary section and monitored by senior managers. However, teaching is not always well matched to individual needs of pupils. Though there is assessment on entry and subsequently, the information is not always well used to plan subsequent teaching. Pupils in the secondary section are positive about much of the teaching, but also voiced a few concerns.

In the best lessons, such as in a primary science lesson, a variety of activities helped pupils explore aspects of their body. In another secondary lesson for older pupils on the past tense in English, a competitive activity in groups helped to maintain pupils' focus and engagement at the end of a long morning. An inadequate science lesson was not well matched to the needs of a class whose ages ranged from 11 to 15.

Resources are good for the primary sector but there are deficiencies in the secondary sector, particularly with regards to the teaching of technology, including information and communication technology (ICT). Occasionally, pupils have to share textbooks. The school recognises in its development plan that its facilities for art need improvement.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Portfolios of work are kept to show pupils' progress. Regular assessments are undertaken throughout the year and pupils are

entered for IGCSE in Year 11. The results are rather mixed, partly reflecting the fact that some pupils have been at the school for a limited time and also speak English as an additional language. The school has not undertaken a careful analysis of its results yet. For its younger pupils, the school's managers are aware of the need to plan more formalised assessment to help pupils who change schools in their subsequent education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Social and moral elements are developed well in the primary sector through its holistic approach to the curriculum. There is a trans-disciplinary theme about who we are. It encapsulates beliefs, values and personal development. This enables pupils to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Older pupils in the secondary sector have a regular form period with a structured programme to include personal development. Visits are arranged on a regular basis to enable them to acquire a broad general knowledge of public institutions in Britain. Social cohesion is promoted by the residential trips which are undertaken on a regular basis. There is a school council which recently carried out a survey of pupils' views of the school. This elicited adverse comments about the application of policies on behaviour and discipline in terms of consistency, which are now being investigated by senior managers.

Cultural development is well promoted across the school through its international community, reflected both amongst pupils and staff. Though there is no religious education, spiritual development is developed in cross-disciplinary aspects of the International Baccalaureate curriculum.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. There is a child protection policy but the named officer has not yet undertaken the necessary training. There is an anti-bullying policy, but a significant number of older pupils noted some concerns about bullying. The concerns partly relate to the rather diverse and transient community in the school, which causes more difficulties in the secondary than the primary section. Younger pupils adjust quickly into their classes, even if their English is limited. The older pupils find it takes longer to adjust, especially since there is more transience amongst pupils who are short term English Language learners.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school, but attendance is well below the national average. Though there have been no permanent exclusions there have been three fixed-term exclusions in the last year. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and good amongst the younger pupils.

Fresh food is cooked every lunchtime on both sites. In order to cater for varying backgrounds, the meals do not include meat, which does not suit some pupils. There is provision for sports: younger children play twice daily in Regents Park and the secondary pupils use Hyde Park at lunchtimes.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school does not maintain a register of checks on staff and has not undertaken all the necessary medical and criminal records bureau checks. This is due to some administrative problems earlier in the year; the personnel department is working hard to rectify the situation.

School's premises and accommodation

The primary section is in a basement of a row of houses in Regents Park, while the secondary sector is in a building near Marble Arch. The accommodation is suitable at both sites. However, the primary site is in a building shared with a student hall of residence; whilst this does not adversely affect health and safety, there are plans to move one classroom in the near future. Classrooms are of a suitable size and there is a library and ICT room on both sites. The secondary site has a laboratory for science and an art room, but no facilities for craft technology. Both sites have a room for lunch and also to hold assemblies. There is a small hard-play area for the older pupils and a play garden for the younger pupils, who also use Regent's Park. At present neither site has facilities for pupils who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

There is a school prospectus and an associated web-site for parents. These contain all the necessary information, except for details of the number of staff employed and their qualifications. About a sixth of parents returned the questionnaire and a few more came in late. The returns from the questionnaires to parents were generally positive with few concerns.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy meets requirements.

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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- implement schemes of work effectively (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure the curriculum covers all the areas of learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- ensure subject matter is appropriate for pupils with a statement of educational need (paragraph 1(2)(b))
- ensure that the education provided fulfils the requirements of statements of special educational needs (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- ensure that pupils' needs are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure that resources for technology are adequate (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- ensure that assessment is used to plan teaching (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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

- undertake training in child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- maintain an admissions register as required (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 staff, ensure suitable medical and criminal checks are undertaken (paragraphs 4(2)(a) and 4(2)(b))
- keep a register of staff checks according to requirements (paragraphs 4C(2 and 3), 4C(4 and 5), 4C(6 and 7), 4C(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide facilities for when pupils are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

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

- Provide parents with particulars of staff employed in the school (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

School details

Name of school	International Community School		
DCSF number	213/6304		
Unique reference number	101171		
Type of school	International		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1979		
Age range of pupils	3-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 105	Girls: 88	Total: 193
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 11,280-15,384		
Address of school	4 York Terrace East Regents Park London NW1 4PT		
Telephone number	0207 9351206		
Fax number	0207 9357915		
Email address	deputyhead@ics.uk.net		
Headteacher	Mr P Hurd		
Proprietor	Mr and Mrs N Toettcher		
Reporting inspector	R Kapadia HMI		
Dates of inspection	11-12 December 2007		