

TASIS (The American School in England)

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	936/6532
Unique Reference Number	125423
URN for social care	SC013945
Inspection number	329556
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2008
Reporting inspector	John Francis
Social care inspector	Veronica Crowley

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). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI), which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

TASIS is an international school mainly serving an American expatriate community. Founded in 1976, it is part of a family of schools centred on TASIS (The American School in Switzerland) established in 1956, and has a non-profit making status. Although two thirds of the students are American, around 50 other nationalities are represented in the school. For just under a quarter of the students, English is not their first language. The school follows an American curriculum and students in the Upper School follow Advanced Placement courses in preparation for admission to American, British and European universities. Since the last inspection, the school has added courses leading to the International Baccalaureate diploma. The school is jointly inspected, and accredited, by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the Council of International Schools. The school also offers an extensive range of summer schools each year.

The school currently has 775 students on roll, aged between three and 19 years (American Nursery to Grade 12). Students are in school for varying lengths of time, many for only two or three years, because of family postings. Most students are of compulsory school age or follow post-16 courses. There are two pre-Kindergarten classes with a total of 22 children, including 4 three-year-olds who attend part-time. There are 161 boarders in the upper school aged between 14 and 19.

The school's campus covers 43 acres of parkland close to Thorpe Park in Surrey. As well as an extensive range of modern buildings, there are a number of historically important buildings on the site dating from the 16th, 17th and 18th century. The school is currently undergoing a major construction programme to enhance the facilities.

The school's mission statement aims to 'Welcome young people from all nationalities to an educational community which fosters a passion for excellence along with

mutual respect and understanding....Believing in the worth of each individual and the importance of enduring relationships, TASIS seeks to embody and instil the values of personal responsibility, civility, compassion, justice and truth.'

Evaluation of the school

TASIS provides an outstanding academic and social education for its students and has made excellent progress since the last inspection. The exceptionally broad and varied curriculum, with excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities and enrichment, enables students to achieve outstanding results. The school's good contributions to students' welfare ensure outstanding personal development, preparing them exceptionally well for life beyond school. The school provides well for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school meets all but one regulation for independent schools. Boarding provision is good and meets the majority of the key National Minimum Standards; there are just three key standards that need to be improved.

Quality of education

The school provides an outstanding quality of education. Consistently high quality teaching supported by an outstanding curriculum ensures students achieve exceptionally well during their time in school. Excellent systems ensure that those students who have additional learning needs are exceptionally well supported. Additionally, the Learning Support Centre supports boarders by providing them with the study skills they need to succeed in class. For those who have English as an additional language, a 'total immersion' approach, supported by withdrawal classes where necessary, and beyond the school day by the work of the boarding teachers, ensures every opportunity for them to achieve highly.

The predominantly American curriculum is well adapted to students' needs. The Frog Hollow Nursery provides an excellent start to schooling and a broad curriculum approach. In EYFS, children follow the American Core Knowledge Pre-School Sequence, which is a good, content and play-based approach. While this covers the key aspects of the EYFS curriculum, the two curricula have not been fully integrated to ensure consistency of coverage across all the required areas of learning. Throughout the rest of the school the curriculum provides students with appropriate coverage of all the key areas of learning. In the Lower School, (from pre-kindergarten to Grade 5) students follow the Core Knowledge Sequence providing high quality experiences in reading, language arts, science, mathematics and the social studies areas of history and geography. Much of this is taught through an integrated approach, for example, historical text linking to the key skills of reading and language. An outstanding range of additional visits and field trips adds further breadth to the learning for these students. The Core Virtues Programme provides

these young students with an excellent understanding of their moral and civic responsibilities. While religious education is not studied, this programme enables students to gain a good understanding of religions across the world.

Middle School students (Grade 5 to 8) follow core academic courses that both enthuse and challenge them. These cover English, mathematics, science, history and geography and either French, Spanish or a basic language arts course. They build well on each successive grade level and bring increasing depth to students' knowledge and understanding. As well as the core curriculum, a wide range of electives (options) is available covering the creative and aesthetic areas of learning. Students in Grade 8 are also able to study Latin as an alternative elective course.

Students in the Upper School (Grade 9 to 12) follow a wide curriculum based around an American four-year college preparation course. Students work towards a College Preparatory Diploma, which requires a minimum of six credits a year and students must accumulate 21 credits to graduate. The school has been very successful and the proportion of students graduating is very high. Since the last inspection, the school has been very successful in introducing courses leading to the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma for students in Grade 11 and 12. Regular physical education (PE) sessions for all grade level students, and an exceptional range of additional sporting activities available outside of lesson times, particularly for boarders, provide well for students and complement an excellent health education programme.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall and reflected in the excellent standards achieved in external examinations. Advanced Placement results are very high and have been consistently 90% or above; approximately 20% above the American independent school average. Again, with a strong curriculum and excellent teaching, results for IB are very high, and the 100% pass rate for the last two years, exceeds the international benchmark by almost 20%. This represents outstanding progress.

Teaching in the Middle and Upper Schools is of an exceptionally high quality. In the Lower School, teaching is consistently good and much of this demonstrates some outstanding features. Significant strengths across the school include excellent subject knowledge, very strong relationships and lessons that have great pace and high expectations. From these high expectations, students develop a very strong work ethic. Lesson planning frequently builds in many opportunities for independent and cooperative working. Students respond very well to these approaches. Very good questioning by teachers extends students' thinking and probes their understanding. Very effective summary sessions at the end of lessons and regular checks on students' understanding during lessons, along with thorough assessments and testing, ensure a good understanding of students' individual needs. However, while some class and subject teachers are able to share common planning time, timetabling constraints prevent this being available to all. This limits the opportunities to share some of the exemplary practice seen in both teaching and assessment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. There is a friendly, welcoming, purposeful atmosphere where visitors are treated with respect. Students confirm through discussion and by means of the pre inspection questionnaire that they are happy at school with one writing 'I love the school...it is preparing me well for university', and younger students commenting, 'it's really nice here, we have fun... the teachers help us'. The students know the difference between right and wrong and their behaviour both in class and around the premises is outstanding. They move around the campus with care and consideration for others. Relationships at all levels are very good with positive role models set by the staff and older students. The school is effective, from the youngest age upwards, in promoting students' self-esteem and self-confidence. This results in mature young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education. Attendance is exceptionally high averaging over 98% across the school, with Upper School attendance over 99%. The simple school rules are adhered to with the emphasis on treating each other with kindness and respect. The younger students are adamant that there is no bullying and some older students act as 'buddies' for new students. Senior students are encouraged to take an active role in the student council. However, a small minority felt the school did not always take into account students' views or act upon them.

In line with American practice the school offers a secular curriculum. Nevertheless, the students have many opportunities to experience spiritual development through the curriculum and cultural enrichment programmes. Regular assemblies are held and the Lower School assembly observed during the inspection focused on 'Wonder'. This encompassed both the wonder of the world around and the opportunities to bring joy to others, for example, through charity fund raising, in this case for orphans in Romania.

Students from many nations live and work together and live in harmony. Cultural differences are shared and celebrated in many ways, for example, through cultural days and sharing typical meals from other countries. Community cohesion is effectively promoted both through the school's local community involvement and the very wide range of cultural visits outside the school. These include local, national and overseas residential visits. Older students who follow humanities courses have the opportunity for residential overseas visits during the autumn semester. An extensive range of planned visits and visitors further enhances the students' cultural enrichment and knowledge of British institutions and services.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The welfare health and safety of students is good and promoted well. All procedures for safeguarding students are in place and statutory checks on staff suitability and fitness for employment are comprehensive and meet all the regulations, addressing the unmet regulation from the last inspection. All faculty staff receive regular child

protection training. A small number of ancillary staff, who do not have unsupervised contact with the students, have not received regular updated training in child protection. Once the school was made aware of this, immediate arrangements were made to address this omission. Risk assessments and fire evacuations are carried out regularly and fire equipment is tested regularly. Suitable procedures for first aid are in place and all staff are suitably trained in first aid procedures. The leader for the EYFS is attending training in paediatric first aid to complement the generic training that all staff undergo. All students take part in regular, scheduled PE and games lessons and the range of extra-curricular and competitive sports is wide and varied. There are very good arrangements to encourage healthy living. However, many of the snacks available from the school shop have high sugar, fat or salt content, somewhat counter to the school's strong line on these for meals. Despite the limitations caused by many of the buildings being Grade 2 listed, the school has made good provision for accessibility in the past and will be drawing up a plan to review the possibility of further improving access.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The school is effective in meeting the needs of the children. The staff plan an appropriate range of both teacher-led and child-initiated activities using their Pre-school Core curriculum. These broadly correspond to the areas of learning in the EYFS. The school has started work to correlate its curriculum with the EYFS to ensure that all aspects of children's development are covered. The staff recognise the uniqueness of children and support them well as individuals. Children enjoy school and make good progress in their learning and development in relation to their starting points. Their progress is carefully monitored and recorded. They are active learners and are encouraged to explore through play. They play well together or on their own and communicate well. Relationships are very good, children feel safe and a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Children from different backgrounds and cultures play in harmony. The stimulating classroom environment is very well resourced. Children's welfare is effectively promoted. The EYFS is well led and managed. The school has built up positive links with parents and carers who confirmed through the questionnaires that they are well-informed about their children's progress.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding at TASIS American School in England is good and the school meets the majority of the key National Minimum Standards. The school's overall management structure operates efficiently and contributes effectively to the provision of care to the boarders. All previous recommendations raised at the last care inspection carried out in October 2005 have been fully addressed. These recommendations related to strengthening recruitment procedures, addressing areas specific to health and producing policies to underpin practice.

A well-organised health centre managed by appropriately qualified staff and underpinned by suitable policies and procedures ensures boarders' health and well-

being are fully promoted. Boarders' health is further enhanced by the school's commitment to a healthy eating regime; however, while there is sufficient choice at meal times, the quality of meals provided is satisfactory, but could be improved upon. The school is developing a whole school health and wellness programme which covers the subject of healthy lifestyles and which is integrated into the boarding provision.

There are clear systems in place which protect the welfare of boarders, and ensure appropriate responses are made in safeguarding areas, such as child protection, bullying and fire safety. Bullying is not considered an issue at the school. Although the majority of staff have been briefed in matters relating to child protection some of the ancillary workers and the student leaders have not. The school has guidelines and comprehensive policies relating to the management of behaviour and boarders are encouraged to develop self discipline and celebrate academic achievement. No formal complaints have been made since the last inspection; however details of how to contact Ofsted are not available within the school's documentation. There are clear systems in place across the school relating to health and safety, which provide adequate protection for the welfare of students.

Boarders benefit from good levels of individual support provided by a range of boarding and academic staff. Student advisors, a therapist and the school counsellor play an important role in the wellbeing of the boarders. In addition there are other staff readily available to provide support and encouragement. The Learning Support Centre supports boarders with any assessed learning needs by providing them with necessary tools to succeed in the classroom. Boarders are clear about which members of staff they can go to for personal support.

The school has clear systems in place, including a student council, which provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the operation of boarding within the school. New boarding students are well supported upon arrival at the school and there is good provision for enabling boarders to maintain contact with their families and friends.

Boarding accommodation at the school is of a good overall standard and is well maintained. Both the accommodation and the facilities provided afford appropriate levels of privacy and are well suited to the needs of boarders. Sleeping accommodation in all boarding houses is well furnished and provides sufficient space. The majority of boarders have either single or double bedrooms, with no rooms accommodating more than four boarders. There is appropriate separation by age and gender, with staff having separate accommodation and facilities located close to the provision for boarders.

A comprehensive statement of boarding principles and practice is readily available to parents, staff and boarders in many formats and accurately reflects the aims and objectives of the school. There are good monitoring systems in place which enable senior staff to have a clear overview of key records relating to risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents. Boarder's welfare is protected and promoted by good staffing levels at all times, both day and night, by staff that are suitably

qualified and experienced to meet their needs. Training is encouraged and supported for boarding staff and regular meetings ensure consistency of care to the boarders. All staff with boarding duties are provided with up to date written guidance on the school's boarding policies and practice.

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 one 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 training programme in child protection for all ancillary staff (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

In order to meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and associated regulations the school must:

- review the quality of meals provided (Standard 24)
- ensure all staff at all levels and the student leaders receive child protection briefing (Standard 3)
- ensure the contact details for Ofsted are inserted within the complaints literature for the school (Standard 5).

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:

- create further opportunities for faculty members to have common preparation time to ensure consistency of planning and assessment at class and subject level
- continue work to align both the American and EYFS curricula to ensure that all aspects of children's development are covered.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	√			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	√			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
--	--	---	--	--

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		√		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		√		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		√		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		√		

The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		√		
----------------------------------	--	---	--	--

School details

Name of school	TASIS (The American School in England)		
DCSF number	936/6532		
Unique reference number	125423		
Type of school	Foreign		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1976		
Age range of pupils	3 - 19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 362	Girls: 413	Total: 775
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Number of boarders	Boys: 69	Girls: 92	Total: 161
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,025		
Annual fees (boarders)	£26,750		
Address of school	Coldharbour Lane Thorpe Egham Surrey TW20 8TE		
Telephone number	01932 565252		
Fax number	01932 560493		
Email address	jdoran@tasisengland.org; kweldin@tasisengland.org		
Headteacher	Dr James Doran		
Proprietor	The TASIS Foundation		
Reporting inspector	John Francis		
Dates of inspection	4 - 5 November 2008		