

Instituto Español Vicente Cañada Blanch

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector Michèle Messaoudi

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is 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

El Instituto Español Vicente Cañada Blanch is an independent day school providing full time education to boys and girls aged five to 19 years. It opened in 1977 to serve the Spanish community and is housed in a former Dominican convent in Kensington. It provides bilingual education within the Spanish system of education. Admission is subject to an evaluation of pupils' compatibility with the bilingual programme of studies. There are currently 494 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are either bilingual or at various stages of learning English or Spanish as an additional language. The school aims to promote pupils' personal development in all its aspects and to ensure pupils '*develop linguistic competence in Spanish and in English and acquire an understanding of both cultures, so as to enable their complete integration as citizens in the UK and in Spain*'. The school is inspected annually by the Spanish inspectorate. It was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2007 and by the Spanish inspectorate in November 2009.

Evaluation of the school

El Instituto Español Vicente Cañada Blanch provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. The senior leaders have improved the school's partnerships with parents and parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school's work. Improvements in the curricular provision, academic support and pastoral care enable most pupils to make good progress. The school has worked hard to rectify the weaknesses highlighted in the previous report, so that it now has satisfactory safeguarding procedures and makes satisfactory provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. This represents good progress since the last inspection and the school now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education and the curriculum is good. A number of improvements made since the last inspection mean that most pupils make good progress and acquire an increasingly broad range of skills. The breadth of the curriculum has widened recently with the introduction of citizenship in Year 6 and the

extension of French to all primary classes from Year 2. The bilingual curriculum is well balanced to serve all pupils effectively, whatever their initial level of proficiency in either Spanish or English. Very effective grouping of pupils and sharply targeted support for individuals who need it have a positive impact on primary pupils' standards, particularly in Spanish, English and mathematics. Weekly bilingual activities taught by a team of two teachers in each primary year group are extremely successful in making pupils think in both languages and help them to develop speaking skills of a high order that support their progress in reading and writing. This is complemented by a whole-school focus on developing pupils' reading skills in all subjects and developing the language of problems in primary mathematics. The development of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects is a current priority and there are plans to provide computers and other ICT equipment in all classrooms. Pupils' involvement in creating and participating in several computer 'blogs' (accounts of their activities) widens their communication skills. However, secondary and post-16 pupils report that they cannot always access computers when they need to. A good range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum and the parents' association runs a wide range of after-school clubs. However, parents rightly feel that the school has not developed sufficient links with other schools or institutions to identify, release and celebrate the potential of pupils who may not be very academic but have particular talents, for example in art, dance, drama, music or sports.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers know their pupils well and foster a climate of trust which gives pupils confidence to ask questions and participate in the lessons. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge is used effectively throughout the school. Good teaching is characterised by the use of challenging questions and expectation of explanatory answers rather than single words, which promotes good thinking skills as well as language development. Current work builds well on previous lessons and reviews what has been learned, although learning objectives are not always clearly stated or revisited. Outstanding lessons move pupils' learning on at a rapid pace, energised by consistently stimulating teaching that is underpinned by passion for the subject and very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In such cases, a wide range of teaching methods and imaginative use of resources support pupils' creative thinking.

The senior leaders have good systems to monitor pupils' progress in each subject. Assessment information is generally, but not always, used effectively to inform planning. For example, in mixed ability classes, the more able do not always work on tasks that sufficiently extend their knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, the early identification of pupils' needs in the primary school helps teachers to plan the level of support provided and these pupils make good progress. Pupils receive verbal and written feedback to help them understand how to improve. However, the quality of this feedback is variable throughout the school, despite some excellent practice noted by pupils and parents. Consequently, some pupils do not progress at the very highest rate of which they are capable. Nevertheless, most pupils make good progress. This is reflected in the primary and secondary internal assessments as well

as in pupils' improved performance in English GCSE, '*bachillerato*' (baccalaureate) and Spanish university entrance examinations. Stronger pastoral care and good attendance contribute hugely to the improved rate of progress of secondary and post-16 pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Their attendance has much improved and is now good. Pupils appreciate the safe and caring environment and the respectful relationships between pupils and teachers as well as among peers. They speak positively of the bilingual environment and of the family atmosphere in an all-age school. Pupils demonstrate a good sense of right and wrong. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and in the social areas. Pupils are courteous and considerate to others and act responsibly in crowded spaces. They feel free from bullying and racist abuse and trust that the few incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

There are many opportunities for reflection in lessons, for example, in considering a poem stating that 'Nothing's Changed' in contemporary South Africa in a Year 10 English class. In the primary school, pupils have excellent weekly opportunities for emotional and spiritual development when exploring feelings and developing storylines and characters in the stimulating bilingual drama activities. Pupils show good levels of self-confidence, particularly in oral presentations to groups.

Pupils demonstrate their empathy with others through their charitable contributions such as their support of a theatre group which performs for children in hospitals. They learn to take responsibility through class duties, the system of elected class representatives and by becoming members of the *consejo escolar* (council of staff, parent and pupil representatives), as well as through the curriculum for citizenship. However, opportunities for leadership are limited and the older pupils are ready to shoulder more responsibilities. A rich programme of visits to museums, films and concerts enhances pupils' wider cultural appreciation whilst reinforcing their good understanding of Spanish and English institutions and law. There is a high level of harmony between different cultural traditions in the school.

Pupils are well prepared for their future. They develop good work ethics through continuous assessment of their learning. They acquire good linguistic, mathematical and ICT skills which they apply effectively across different subject areas. The weekly tutorial programme, work experience and individual careers guidance support school leavers well in writing applications for future placements and preparing for further education interviews.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory, which represents a significant improvement since the last inspection and has been noted as such by the parents' association. All the essential policies and procedures to safeguard pupils are in place. The designated person for child protection has recently completed her training for the role and the staff are booked to refresh their training in the near future, in order to continue to meet requirements. Nearly all staff have received first aid training and accidents are suitably recorded. The recommendations of the fire safety officer have been acted upon and the fire risk assessment has been updated. There is now an admission register in place. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is monitored particularly robustly in the upper school, which is much appreciated by parents who can easily access the information through the school website. However, whilst satisfactory, the implementation of the policies and procedures is not firmly established. For example, there are minor deficiencies in the continuity and recording of fire safety checks.

Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the curriculum, the provision of nutritious Spanish food provided in the school canteen and sufficient physical exercise supplemented by after-school sports clubs. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves and others safe. A school travel plan is being developed in partnership with parents, pupils and the local authority.

The school has prepared a three-year plan showing how it will fulfil its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that all the required checks are carried out on staff to confirm their suitability to work with children. These checks are recorded on a centralised register. All the personnel files have recently been updated.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises have benefited from a number of improvements including repairs to areas that used to compromise people's health and safety. The school has provided an all-weather surface for one playground, which enables safer physical activities. The teaching accommodation is fit for purpose. A continuous programme of refurbishment is in place.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wealth of information to parents and carers through its prospectus and website. Although parents find the senior leaders approachable, a small minority feel that the school could still do more to communicate in a timely way with parents, respond promptly to their queries and inform them of future plans. The

termly reports which parents receive on their children's progress provide good information as they now include comments on the pupils' strengths and areas for improvement.

Procedures for handling complaints

There are suitable procedures for handling complaints fairly and promptly.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further improve the ways in which pupils are helped to understand the next steps they must take to make better progress
- continue to build up ICT resources and enable secondary and post-16 pupils to have easier access to computers
- widen the range of leadership roles for pupils of all ages and provide older pupils with more opportunities to shoulder responsibilities
- develop links with other schools and agencies to further develop pupils' potential in non-academic subjects, for example in art, dance, drama, music and sports
- consolidate the implementation of the welfare, health and safety policies and procedures and ensure that routine checks are well established at all levels
- further improve communication with parents.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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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			✓	
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School details

Name of school	Instituto Español Vicente Cañada Blanch
DCSF number	207/6305
Unique reference number	100532
Type of school	All-age day school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1977
Age range of pupils	5–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	Boys: 230 Girls: 264 Total: 494
Annual fees	£120 (Spanish nationals); non Spanish nationals: £2,100 (Year 1/educación infantil); £1,950 (primary); £2,610 (secondary and post-16)
Address of school	317 Portobello Road London W10 5SY
Telephone number	020 8969 2664
Fax number	020 8969 9432
Email address	canada.blanch.uk@educacion.es
Headteacher	Ms Helena Ramos García
Proprietor	Spanish government
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Dates of inspection	20–21 January 2010