



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

Meridian International School

May 2023

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School's Details

School	Meridian International School			
Address	Meridian International School 1, Frydlantská 1350 Kobylisy 182 00 Prague 8			
Telephone number	+420 775 581 801			
Email address	info@meridianedu.cz			
Head	Mr Richard Jackson			
Proprietor	Mr Ahmet Gürsoy			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	497			
	EYFS	58	Primary	206
	Secondary	132	High School	101
Inspection dates	30 to 31 May 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Founded in 2004, Meridian International School is an independent co-educational day school located in a northern suburb of Prague. It is owned by a single proprietor, who is also the school's director, assisted by a deputy director. The school comprises a primary school, including an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, and a secondary school, including a high school for pupils aged 16 to 18 years, located a short distance away. The school has not previously been inspected by ISI.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school seeks to educate and develop resolute and resilient global citizens who are self-confident, committed, and able to face life's challenges and contribute positively to a constantly changing world. The school aims to be a joyful, confident community offering an ambitious climate for learning. The school aspires to embrace the diversity of its pupils. It endeavours to encourage a collective capacity for learning that fosters a will to challenge and discover theories and ideas, while respecting the individual.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils are drawn from a range of business, professional, diplomatic and entrepreneurial backgrounds. Fifty-nine nationalities are represented in the school. Twenty pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including processing and attention deficits, and are supported by their classroom teachers. English is an additional language (EAL) for 350 pupils, all of whom are able to access the curriculum without difficulty. The school's own assessment data indicate that pupils' ability is above average. The school sets out to offer challenge and enrichment to all its pupils through the taught curriculum and a programme of trips and co-curricular activities.

2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO). It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements. Schools may opt for an inspection of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas. The standards represent minimum requirements, and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. In order to gain BSO accreditation, a school is required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report. If a school does not meet all of the standards, it may elect to be re-inspected once it has taken the required actions in order to gain BSO accreditation.

Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.

Accreditation as a British school overseas lasts for three years. The school's previous inspection was in September 2018.

Key findings

2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

2.2 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

2.3 The school provides an appropriate and well-planned curriculum, beginning with a bespoke programme in the EYFS. Pupils then follow the Cambridge International pathway. In the primary school and the lower secondary school up to the age of 14, pupils develop skills and understanding in ten subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The core curriculum in Years 9 to 11 is English, mathematics and Global Perspectives (GP), and pupils choose from a good range of additional subjects in preparation for IGCSE examinations. The curriculum meets government requirements relating to Czech nationals and the development of their language skills and cultural understanding. It also enables all pupils to develop suitable communication skills in English, including listening, speaking, literacy and numeracy. A small number of Czech pupils in Year 13 follow a separate programme at a partner school. They sit the Maturitat examinations for entry into Czech universities and, typically, they combine this with continuing one or two A-level subjects.

2.4 These arrangements equip pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Policies, planning documents and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils. A rich and varied programme of co-curricular activities supports pupil development, enabling them to gain additional skills, with an emphasis on creativity and leadership. The school ensures that teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils by a range of methods, chiefly through individual learning plans and through work in lessons which is appropriately adapted. Of those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents and pupils confirmed that the school offers a suitable range of subjects and extra-curricular activities.

2.5 Pupils are provided with impartial careers advice, including guidance on the most suitable future educational pathway. The GP course and, notably, history lessons enable them to acquire a good understanding of life in the United Kingdom. Supported by work in class teacher time, the school strongly promotes pupils' understanding of fundamental British values, which are also present in the value systems of numerous other countries. When they leave the school, almost all pupils progress to universities in North America and Europe, including those with the most demanding entry requirements. Almost all parents, and a large majority of pupils, who responded to the questionnaire indicated that the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

2.6 Teaching is carefully planned and effective. Good subject knowledge, meticulous planning and effective use of resources ensure that all pupils acquire new knowledge and are enabled to make progress. Teachers have a strong knowledge of how their pupils learn best, and assessment is used systematically to identify areas for development and inform lesson planning. The Cambridge pathway ensures that regular checkpoints are used to assess progress and attainment. The official checkpoints, at the end of Years 6 and 9, are supplemented by annual stand-alone internal assessments and routine testing throughout. The data collected from this process is used to identify areas of weakness in individual pupils, and topics which need to be revised or taught differently in succeeding years. Teaching does not discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics. Harmonious relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that behaviour is effectively managed. Pupils show application and self-motivation. In the questionnaire responses, almost all parents and pupils agreed that teaching enabled progress and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

2.8 In GP lessons, through a programme of special events, and throughout the curriculum, the school actively promotes fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom and respect for those of different backgrounds or beliefs. The school enables pupils to take a balanced view of political matters. Pupils embrace the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In accordance with its mission statement, the school also promotes principles which encourage in pupils self-confidence, resilience, a strong moral sense, and an ability to take responsibility for their actions. It prepares pupils for the responsibilities of citizenship in the UK and in the Czech Republic. Likewise, it offers opportunities for pupils to contribute to the lives of others. The vast majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire confirmed that the school encourages them to be tolerant of those with different beliefs and faiths.

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16] are met.

2.10 The school takes all reasonable steps to protect pupils from any form of abuse or harm, following safeguarding guidance provided for UK schools, as well as local requirements. The school's policy includes up-to-date references to UK legislation, and it is implemented effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. It is reviewed annually by the directors. A team of seven fully trained staff supports the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and responsibilities within the team are clearly set out. The DSL has undertaken appropriate training and has a thorough understanding of the role and its responsibilities. All staff undergo training at least annually in every aspect of safeguarding. They understand how to manage disclosures about pupils or staff. They support a listening culture within the school, they know their pupils well, and they are vigilant. Oversight at board level is well informed and effective, with the director and the deputy director readily available for advice on local requirements, and constantly checking and testing the systems and recordkeeping.

2.11 Measures to protect children are supplemented by a range of policies for whistleblowing, safer recruitment of staff, and a code of conduct for all adults who work at the school. In discussion, all pupils said that they knew how to remain safe online. This is an area in which the school has established a relationship with a university in the Czech Republic, which runs courses in online safety and is offering to support parents to ensure they are well informed. Allied closely to the school's stance on online safety, the work of the counsellor and the safeguarding team has raised awareness of mental health issues. Through the curriculum and the class teacher hour, school leaders have reinforced messages about self-care and pupils learning to be alert to their own moods. In the questionnaire, almost all parents, pupils and staff who responded confirmed that the school provides a safe and healthy environment.

2.12 Behaviour is managed effectively, with an appropriate range of sanctions and rewards used to reinforce standards. All parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. A large majority of pupils agree that the school does all it can to prevent bullying. Pupils in discussion were confident that the school would deal promptly and effectively if any instances were to occur. Inspection evidence confirms that this is the case.

2.13 The school has suitable policies in place to ensure that the buildings and grounds offer a safe and healthy environment, free of hazards. It takes steps to reduce the risk of fire, in accordance with local requirements. An external company is engaged to check and maintain the fire alarm system, to review signage, and to check that fire extinguishers are working properly. The proprietor maintains oversight of arrangements for health and safety, including policy documentation and associated procedures, and ensures that records are kept of all health and safety checks. The school has effective measures

in place to identify, assess and reduce risks which may affect pupils' health, safety and welfare. In discussion, pupils and staff confirmed that they knew what to do if they identified any hazards. Fire drills are held twice annually, and pupils were unanimous in discussion that they knew what to do in case of fire. Entry gates are secure and well monitored.

- 2.14 First aid is administered in a timely fashion when necessary. Records are clear and thorough, and they confirm that any medical emergencies are managed suitably. Sufficient staff are trained in first aid, and those with responsibility for supervision in the EYFS have paediatric first aid training. Staff are deployed effectively at break and lunch times to supervise pupils and maintain good order. Pupils agree that there is always an adult available if one is needed. Attendance is monitored effectively. Admission and attendance registers are maintained as required.

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

- 2.16 The school carries out all the required recruitment checks to ensure that members of staff are suitable before they start work. The Czech government has approved the suitability of the proprietor and the deputy director. A comprehensive register of all staff appointments is kept so that all checks are recorded. These checks encompass identity, previous employment history, and at least two references for every new member of staff. Similarly, the school checks each new employee's right to work in the Czech Republic, their medical fitness and, where appropriate, their qualifications. Teachers appointed from the UK are checked to ensure that none is prohibited from teaching or management. Individual staff files contain copies of the appropriate documents and verify that the information on the central register is accurate.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

- 2.18 The school provides suitable washing and toilet facilities for all pupils, as well as appropriate accommodation for their medical needs. The premises and accommodation are maintained to a high standard, with adequate lighting and acoustics, a plentiful supply of water, including drinking water, and outdoor space for play and recreation. The primary school building is purpose-built and offers a fresh, welcoming environment which is well maintained. The secondary school is accommodated in a spacious building which has been adapted successfully to its new purpose. Daily visual checks by the proprietor enable any issues of maintenance or safety to be addressed swiftly.

Part 6 – Provision of information

2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

- 2.20 The school website offers details of how to contact the school's leadership team, and it contains a statement of the school's ethos and aspirations. Policies are published covering arrangements for admissions and exclusions; expectations about pupils' behaviour; curriculum and provision for pupils' educational needs; the school's academic performance in public examinations; the anti-bullying strategy; health and safety; and first aid. The child protection and safeguarding policy is also available through the website, as are the school's most recent inspection reports. The school provides two written reports each year to parents on each child's progress and attainment. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that information about the school's routines and policies were readily available and that they receive helpful information about their child's progress and performance.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

2.22 The school publishes the complaints procedure for parents on its website. It provides for informal resolution of a complaint; a formal procedure for parents to make a written complaint; and a hearing in front of a panel if the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved in the first two stages. The panel includes a member independent of the school; complainants may be accompanied at a hearing. The panel may make findings and recommendations, which are recorded. A confidential record is kept of complaints and outcomes. In practice, formal complaints are extremely rare, and issues raised by parents are almost invariably resolved informally at an early stage. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they receive timely and helpful responses to any questions, concerns or complaints.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

2.24 The leadership and management of the school show good skills and knowledge so that the BSO standards are consistently met. In addition, they take all reasonable steps to promote pupils' well-being and protect them from harm. In their responses to the questionnaire, the vast majority of parents said that the school is governed, led and managed well. Inspectors agreed with this view.

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Bill Burn

Reporting inspector

Mr Andy Falconer

Team inspector (Head, IAPS school, UK)