



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SOUTHBANK INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL - WESTMINSTER

STANDARD INSPECTION

FINAL VISIT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Southbank International School

The campuses in Kensington and Hampstead were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of School	Southbank International School - Westminster	
DCSF Number	207/6383	
Address	Southbank International School 63-65 Portland Place London W1B 1QR	
Telephone Number	020 74369699	
Fax Number	020 74369799	
Email Address	michele.key@southbank.org	
Principal	Mr Terry Hedger	
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd	
Age Range	11 to 18	
Total Number of Students	314	
Gender of Students	Mixed (150 boys; 164 girls)	
Numbers by Age	11-16	213
	16-18	101
Number of Day Students	314	
Inspection date	22 Feb 2010 to 23 Feb 2010	
Final (team) visit	22 Mar 2010 to 24 Mar 2010	

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. It consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. No previous ISI inspection has taken place.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of students
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Southbank School was founded in London in 1979 as the American International School, for pupils aged 13 to 18, by Mr Milton Toubkin and five other educators; it was renamed Southbank International School in 1981 and moved a number of times before settling at the Kensington campus in 1989. In 1992 Southbank Primary School was opened on the same campus and in 1995 a second junior school was opened in Hampstead. In 2003 the school opened a campus in Portland Place, Westminster for pupils in Year 7 and above and the Kensington site was remodelled as a primary school for pupils up to and including Year 6. In 2007 the Diploma Programme (DP) students on the Westminster site in Years 12 and 13 moved to a building in Conway Street for the majority of their classes.
- 1.2 In 2006, the whole school was taken over by Cognita Schools Ltd., who exercise their responsibilities as proprietor through the director of international schools, who sits on the education board for the whole school and who reports to the Cognita main board. The everyday running of the three campuses is devolved to the education board, whose chair is currently the director of admissions for the whole school, and whose other members include the three principals as well as the director of international schools. Marketing, finance, admissions, payroll and personnel and staff appointments are all handled centrally for all four Southbank sites.
- 1.3 Southbank International School is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School offering all three of the IB programmes: the Primary Years, the Middle Years and the Diploma, all in an international context. Currently, students represent 69 different nationalities and the teachers originate from at least 35 different countries. The school roll currently includes 314 students at Westminster, of whom 150 are boys and 164 girls, but it is continually changing, with approximately a fifth of students leaving and being replaced every year; the average length of stay for students is between four and five years. The majority of students are the children of expatriates representing banking and other businesses, the diplomatic corps, the arts and the news media, who are in the UK on short- to medium-term assignments.
- 1.4 The school is non-selective. The school does not use a nationally standardised measure to ascertain the ability of pupils; however the average ability was judged to be above the national average for maintained schools. Two hundred and twelve pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom thirty-two receive support for their English. Thirty-three pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), and of these eight receive support.
- 1.5 The aims of the whole school are summed up in the mission statement: "Southbank International School is committed to developing students who are internationally minded, independent, enthusiastic about life and learning, and imbued with a sense of service to others. Our school strives for excellence in a happy, caring community founded on integrity and respect."

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Senior School

School	NC name
Grade 6	Year 7
Grade 7	Year 8
Grade 8	Year 9
Grade 9	Year 10
Grade 10	Year 11
Grade 11	Year 12
Grade 12	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Students are outstandingly well educated in accordance with the school's aims through the wide and appropriate IB curriculum which has specific strengths in two areas: the regular use of the researched personal project to stimulate independent research skills and thinking, and the provision for many students of lessons in their mother tongue, in addition to the full range of the curriculum in English. Excellent teaching, based on high quality planning, develops the ability of students to learn independently, to work cooperatively and to appreciate the diversity of the community.
- 2.2 The combined quality of the curriculum and teaching results in students' excellent personal development. Students are independent thinkers, able to express their ideas fluently, and show respect for others' points of view. They learn to make moral choices, and tolerance flourishes within the community. Students are socially aware and have many opportunities to contribute to the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society of the school; the Town Meeting of the whole school gives students the opportunity to show their achievements including singing, instrumental performances and dance, and also to give presentations on sponsored challenges undertaken such as mountaineering which are undertaken to support charity work. Students value the student council as their voice and see it as an opportunity to contribute actively to the life of the school. Standards of welfare, health and safety are excellent overall. Staff have a clear understanding of the needs of students in this international school, and the strong structure for pastoral care helps the staff to provide outstanding support and guidance for the students in accordance with the school's aims. Responses to the questionnaire indicated that students felt that staff cared for them and were available to help when needed; in interviews, students spoke appreciatively of the care of their teachers and particularly their advisors.
- 2.3 Governance is satisfactory. The proprietor provides appropriate oversight of strategy, and support for the aims and ethos of the whole school; the education board oversees whole-school development and co-ordinates the work of the whole school well. However, some aspects of staff recruitment have not been completed properly. The leadership and management team of the Westminster campus is successful in bringing to life the aims and ethos of the whole school through its belief in the principles of the IB and its successful implementation. The school maintains a positive relationship with parents, in accordance with its aims. Parents appreciate both the varied opportunities for open and easy communications with the school and the views and values the school upholds. Parents would like the school to provide more extra-curricular activities for students.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:

- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check is made by the proprietor in respect of any person employed at the school and that any enhanced criminal record certificate which is the subject of the application is obtained before or as soon as practicable after the appointment [Regulation 4(2)(b) under the Standard for the suitability of staff and proprietors];
- ensure that in relation to each member of staff appointed on or after 1 May 2007 the register shall show where a check was made to establish whether the member of staff is subject to any direction under section 142 of the 2002 Act (reference to List 99) [Regulation 4C(2)(b) under the Standard for the suitability of staff and proprietors];
- ensure that in relation to each member of staff appointed before 1 May 2007 the register shows whether each check in sub-paragraph 2 above was carried out [Regulation 4C(3) under the Standard for the suitability of staff and proprietors];
- for the same reason as the above, implement all aspects of the safeguarding policy [Regulation 3(2)(b)].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommended action

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Continue to develop the role of the heads of departments in the management and monitoring of their staff and programmes of learning to raise all planning and teaching to the levels of the best.
2. Provide further training in the use of interactive whiteboards to encourage staff to fully exploit the potential for delivering stimulating lessons.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the students' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Students achieve high standards in the IB in relation to schools worldwide, and are outstandingly well educated in accordance with the whole school's aims as summarised in the mission statement. Students achieve excellent standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and learn to apply these skills across all areas of their learning. They are articulate, fluent and self-assured speakers, showing obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment as they communicate openly with one another, to their teachers and in class. They think independently and spontaneously, are comfortable in exploring ideas together and are respectful as they listen to others. They are in charge of their own learning, showing integrity in all that they do, as seen in their desire to avoid plagiarism through their conscientious validation of references. In their personal projects and extended essays, which are of high quality, students work independently and creatively, doing genuine research and developing impressive skills of expression and presentation. They work best when they choose topics themselves. Students show excellent skills of quantitative and logical analysis, and use graphs and other illustrative techniques to summarise data. They use ICT with great variety as a familiar tool for analysis, research and presentation. The students naturally adopt an agenda of international-mindedness in a school community that enjoys its own diversity; their inclination is to place their learning in the widest context. Students' creativity emerges in art, design, drama, music and film studies as well as in their writing and thinking in other subjects.
- 3.2 Students' performance in the IB over the last three years has been high compared with the average for schools worldwide, and is in line with the average for UK schools. The results show improvement throughout the years. Students have a high success rate in their applications to good quality courses at universities in the UK and across the world. These achievements represent outstanding progress for students.
- 3.3 Students with LDD achieve well as a result of the effective support they receive. Generally, students joining the school adjust and settle quickly, as a result of the support they receive to help them make up lost ground. Those with EAL make exceptional progress across all subjects.
- 3.4 At all levels students are interested and want to learn. They are supportive rather than competitive, within an atmosphere that is tolerant without being restrictive. Students have a totally constructive, co-operative approach and they understand that they are working together with their teachers towards common goals. Students are attentive, involved and eager to explore.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to students)

- 3.5 The curriculum is outstanding. The range and availability of subject combinations meet the requirements of the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP), and the Diploma Programme (DP) and, as a result, give students a broad education. Effective use is made of a carousel system to provide experience in art, drama and music for Years 7, 8 and 9. One outstanding feature of the curriculum is the regular requirement for older students to write an extended essay which enables them to develop and use excellent research skills as well as follow personal interests. A further outstanding feature is the provision, where possible, of teaching in a student's mother tongue so that the language assessment at Diploma level can be made in a student's first language whilst other areas of the curriculum are assessed in English. This respect for the many nationalities and the best interests of individual students is central to the ethos of the school, fulfilling the declared aim to provide a language-rich environment in which students may study their own mother tongue. A specialised computer programme enables the mapping of specific themes to be tracked through the whole curriculum, ensuring that maximum use is made of opportunities to develop themes important to education in line with the school's ethos; for example, a current theme of "water" is being followed up in PSHE, science, geography and other areas of the curriculum, culminating in a school "World Summit" debate. This co-ordinated approach raises students' awareness of world issues and allows them to develop personal responses.
- 3.6 The curriculum is suitable for students of all ages and abilities in the school, and makes excellent provision for students with LDD and for those with EAL. The effectiveness of the support given to students who arrive with little or no English is seen in the rapid development of their skills, enabling them to take a full part in classes taught in English.
- 3.7 The curriculum is supported by a small range of regular extra-curricular activities, including some sporting and fitness activities and the production of a school newspaper. Older students were seen greatly enjoying their participation in rehearsals for a musical to be produced in a local theatre. The Community, Action, Service Programme (CAS) of the IB has developed many valuable links with the local and the international community. Students give their time and expertise to support many local ventures; for example, they offer ICT training to the elderly, help out at a primary school breakfast club and provide entertainment at a local tea dance for the elderly. The students benefit greatly from service in the local area. In a wider context they have become a community with a conscience, supporting a number of communities abroad directly with fund-raising, visits, work and sponsorship; in particular, they make a significant contribution to the life of a school in Tanzania through fund-raising and practical help during regular visits.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 The quality of teaching is excellent, successfully promoting the students' progress in line with the aims of the school as a whole. At best teaching is inspirational, characterised by a supportive yet stimulating style, based on expert subject knowledge and thorough preparation that sets the students independently on their path to knowledge and understanding. Students are encouraged to think for themselves. The atmosphere is collegiate and collaborative, and students work very well together; they support one another's thinking and offer challenging ideas in pair or group work. The growth to the levels of independence and confidence seen in students at the top end of the school comes from careful planning of work done in earlier years. Teachers know their students well, and regular meetings are held at which the staff discuss students individually to monitor progress. In a small minority of lessons, less effective planning resulted in a lack of engagement by students in the work set.
- 3.9 For the most part, teaching is supported by high quality planning based on the clear structures of the MYP and DP programmes, for which the teachers have considerable enthusiasm. Teaching employs an interesting range of techniques and includes opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning themselves, either through classroom activity or in individual tasks. Generally, resources are used effectively and appropriately, although interactive whiteboards are not always used imaginatively. Impeccable timing in lessons ensures a rapid pace that maintains interest and variety. The excellent rapport between teachers and students underpins the work ethic and results in relaxed yet purposeful activity. Informal but businesslike chatter in the classroom aids understanding and means that students are never daunted. Teachers themselves are diverse in background and experience, bringing worldwide awareness quite naturally into their teaching. Their willingness and ability to allow many students to incorporate their mother tongue into their programme is a great strength. A wide range of languages is supported through teaching in a mother tongue.
- 3.10 The MYP and DP programmes include clear and detailed assessment criteria which are given to students, and referred to in the preparation for work set for formal assessment. This criteria-based assessment of work informs the teaching and is well understood by students, and it emphasises the responsibility that students have for their own learning. The rigour and care with which these assessments are applied contributes significantly to the planning of teaching and learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

- 4.1 The development of students' personal qualities is excellent. The school's ethos encourages all students to grow and flourish in a climate of tolerance which accommodates difference and respects the integrity of individuals. Students think deeply about their own and others' experiences and relate them to a set of values which inform their perspectives on life and behaviour. Students' discussions in lessons such as English, drama and history, offer moments of spiritual depth; their insight, knowledge and reason are outstanding. Teaching styles value students' questions and give them space for their own thoughts, ideas and concerns and enable students to make connections between aspects of their learning.
- 4.2 Students' excellent moral development is characterised by their willingness to express their views on ethical issues and personal values. Students respect other students' needs, interests and feelings as well as their own. Through CAS activities, preparation for the school World Summit event and many charity works, students demonstrate a readiness to challenge moral neutrality, poverty, injustice and other forms of discrimination. Students are given many opportunities across the curriculum to explore and develop moral concepts and values. Lessons provide an open and safe environment in which students can practise moral decision making. Academic rigour in discouraging plagiarism, effective implementation of school policies, and representation on the student council all model, through the quality of relationships and interactions, the principles the school wishes to promote: respect, tolerance, fairness, honesty and moral integrity.
- 4.3 Students are socially highly aware. They lack arrogance and accept each other's differences. Students are extremely supportive of each other and show respect for people, living things and the environment. The role of form tutors, known as advisors, the school counsellor and the strong personal and social education (PSE) programme contribute very effectively to the development of the interpersonal skills necessary for successful relationships in a multiracial and multicultural society. Through the Town Meetings organised by the student council, the school productions, and discovery weeks, all students participate in community life and have opportunities to exercise leadership and responsibility. The student council encourages a high level of engagement in the school and is a further platform for personal development.
- 4.4 Students have an excellent insight, through sharing experiences, into many cultures and how these are constantly changing. They are open to new ideas, appreciate cultural diversity and are provided with many opportunities to explore their own cultural assumptions and values. They enjoy sharing cultural evenings and value the breadth and depth of these opportunities.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.5 The school provides excellent pastoral care combined with high standards of welfare in most respects, except that some aspects of safer recruitment have not been followed fully. It has a high standard of awareness of health and safety issues complemented by good day to day practice.
- 4.6 The holistic approach to pastoral care is a strength of the school. It successfully meets students' personal, social, emotional and intellectual needs so that they can participate fully in the life of the school and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Strong pastoral structures enable the staff to provide effective support and guidance for students, in accordance with the school's aims. Regular meetings between year leaders and their teams of advisors ensure that concerns about individual students are identified quickly and that effective measures are put in place when necessary. Throughout the school, staff's considerable awareness of the particular issues which affect the life of a student in an international school, such as frequent changes of school, mean that they have an excellent understanding of how to help students cope with these difficulties. The school counsellor is available to support students when needed. Transition and choice are handled well. Trust and mutual respect are tangible hallmarks of positive relationships between staff and students, and amongst students. Whole school issues are effectively mediated through year leaders and their teams.
- 4.7 Pupils respond well to the expectation of good behaviour. Effective procedures promote good behaviour, guard against harassment and bullying, and deal constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. Students of all ages said that they value the high standards of behaviour in the school and that bullying is rare.
- 4.8 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and include provision for students who are ill. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to be healthy through taking regular exercise and developing healthy eating habits. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for three years. The school has prepared an appropriate plan in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) and fulfils its obligations under race, gender and discrimination legislation.
- 4.9 Academic and pastoral staff work together effectively to safeguard students. The safeguarding policy is compliant with requirements and implemented successfully in most respects; the school has not in the past followed all the requirements of safer recruitment, though procedures have been corrected since the initial visit. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. Students feel safe and valued by staff who, they perceive, go out of their way to ensure that they achieve well and are happy. In an interview, one student stated that he 'loved' school; it was 'his home and the happiest part of his life'. Students said that staff are approachable if they have a problem and that they regarded care by staff as excellent.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is satisfactory. The proprietor oversees the whole school's strategic direction, secures its aims and values and supports its educational development, financial planning and investment in resources. It is aware of its responsibilities regarding welfare, health and safety throughout the school as a whole and provides officers to undertake regular checks at each site. It provides staff training and disseminates policies for child protection. However, prior to the initial visit some staff had been appointed without checks being properly completed, though this had been rectified by the time of the main visit. There is currently no direct involvement by representatives of Cognita with the staff, students or parents.
- 5.2 Regular meetings of the education board are held, in which decisions regarding the progress and improvement of the whole school are taken, and these decisions are promulgated effectively. A comprehensive development plan, prepared by the education board, with clear time-lines, cost implications and evaluation criteria sets out the strategic future development of the whole school in some detail. This plan is regularly monitored, reviewed and updated, though there are currently no arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the education board itself. The focus on teamwork and collaboration amongst the education board reflects the key elements of the IB Learner profile, enables the board to share a common vision for all three sites and ensures that Southbank continues to excel as a happy, dynamic, and academically successful school.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The leadership and management at Westminster are successful in bringing to life the aims and ethos of the whole school, reflecting the inspiration provided originally by the founders. This tradition continues under the present leadership, which has continued to develop an open and inclusive community, with a strong spirit which has been developed through responsibility and respect for others. The high expectations and belief that everyone can succeed are the foundations of the school's work.
- 5.4 The school's leadership and management have a clear vision for education, which is realised through the implementation of the IB programme and which places a strong belief in the educational principles embodied in the programme. As a result, students benefit from the trust placed in them and become independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning. They in turn learn to trust and respect others resulting in outstanding personal development.
- 5.5 The education board provides a central arm of administration which deals efficiently with aspects of the school common to all three campuses, such as admissions and finance. Within the Westminster campus, the responsibilities of senior staff are clearly delineated and the management has good communications with staff. An appraisal scheme is underway and staff are being encouraged to visit one another's lessons, a collaborative approach planned to help the sharing of good practice.

5.6 The management of the school has been successful in finding high quality staff who are committed to the ethos of the school. It provides appropriate training in safeguarding, welfare and health and safety, though some recruitment procedures, carried out centrally on behalf of the whole school, have not been done robustly in the recent past. Year leaders have a key role in the management of pastoral care ensuring the high standards are maintained. Heads of departments have some responsibility for the management and monitoring of their staff and programmes of learning; this is not yet fully successful in ensuring consistently high standards in all areas. The potential for further development of this role is recognised in the school development plan. The friendly administrative and maintenance staff provide efficient support for the management team.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

5.7 The school is successful in maintaining a positive relationship with parents, in accordance with its aims. The responses to the parental questionnaire show a high level of support for many aspects of the school, particularly the attitudes and views promoted by the school and the availability of information about the school and its policies. Parents said that they can communicate easily with the school, receiving prompt responses. One area in which parents expressed some reservation was the provision of extra-curricular activities. The inspection found that a small but varied range of activities was offered, including fitness activities and a termly school newspaper "The Coffee Stain" produced by a student committee. Also at the time of the inspection, older students were enthusiastically rehearsing a musical. In interview parents were appreciative of the opportunities to email advisors directly and of the support received by new parents, with contact by the advisor after two weeks to say how a student was settling in.

5.8 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school as expressed in both questionnaire responses and interviews. They say they have regular opportunities to visit, to get to know both parents and staff, and that new parents particularly appreciated the invitation to coffee from the parent teacher association when their children in Year 7 went on their residential visit early in the autumn term. The website, with the departmental blogs showing examples of students' work and work set, gives parents good opportunities to be involved in their children's work, especially, for example, when the school is closed because of bad weather.

5.9 All the required information about the school and its policies is provided for parents and prospective parents. Two full school reports are written per year, at the end of January and at the end of the summer term. Interim reports with effort and attainment grades are sent at the end of October and the end of April, followed by parent, student and teacher conferences to discuss progress.

5.10 In their responses to the questionnaire, parents were generally satisfied with the way concerns were dealt with. The parents interviewed felt that concerns were well dealt with and that both the management of the school and teachers were approachable and quick to respond, and this view is supported by the records held by the school.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, with the chair of the education board, the representative of Cognita on the board and a small group of parents, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and a Town Meeting. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of parents and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Gwen Caddock	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Williams	Team Inspector (Senior Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Lynda Corry	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Philip Couzens	Team Inspector (Director of Educational Development and Director of International Students, HMC school)