



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

The British School of Amsterdam

October 2022

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School's Details

School	The British School of Amsterdam			
Address	Havenstraat 1075 PR Amsterdam The Netherlands			
Telephone number	00 31 20 6797840			
Email address	info@britams.nl			
Principal	Mrs Ruth Sanderson			
Chair of supervisory board	Dr Helen Wright			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1077			
	Early Years	217	Juniors	425
	Seniors	345	Sixth Form	90
Inspection dates	27 to 28 October 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The British School of Amsterdam (The BSA) is a co-educational day school for pupils from the ages of 3 to 18. Founded in 1978, the school has occupied several sites and in 2021 moved to Havenstraat 6, a 19th century listed former prison. The building has been completely refurbished to provide accommodation for pupils of all ages. The early years, junior and senior school pupils occupy different wings. The BSA is legally constituted as Stichting British School of Amsterdam which is a not-for-profit foundation under Dutch law. According to The BSA's articles of association the school comprises four bodies: the supervisory board; the management board; the parents' organisation committee; and the works council. Since the previous BSO inspection in 2017 a new principal has been appointed.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The vision of the school is to be forward looking, forward thinking, and to provide the best that British international education can offer. It aims to be a thriving school community which nurtures, inspires and empowers everyone to be the very best they can be.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from all over Amsterdam and neighbouring areas. They speak over 40 different native languages and have roots in over 90 countries. Data provided by the school show that the average ability of pupils is in line with others taking similar tests worldwide. Their performance in such tests often reflects their previous education. Typically, around a quarter of the pupil body changes every year. There are 221 pupils who have been identified as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 186 receive additional help. About half the pupils who join the school are identified as EAL, and each is given appropriate support both inside and outside lessons. The curriculum is adjusted for pupils who are identified as the more able, or who have particular talents in, for example, languages, mathematics or music.

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 November 2017.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSOs) 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's curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work meet the needs of the ages and aptitudes of all pupils from the early years to the sixth form. The curriculum provides pupils with experience in a suitably wide range of skills and a good understanding of English. Because pupils arrive at the school from myriad educational backgrounds the school tailors the curriculum around the particular needs of individuals. For example, native speakers of languages other than English or Dutch are given specialised help to enable them to continue their formal study and encouraged to speak their native language at home.
- 2.4 The vast majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the range of subjects was suitable for their child. Inspection of the curriculum plans at all ages concurs with this. The curriculum provides personal, social, health and economic education, up-to-date guidance about careers, and appropriate programmes of activities for all pupils. Pupils who join the school with little or no understanding of English, or who have SEND, are supported effectively inside and outside lessons. Almost all pupils in the questionnaires thought their English had improved since joining the school. In discussions, pupils showed an excellent command of expressions, grammar and drew on a wide vocabulary. The curriculum follows closely that in UK schools and, for example, includes a full programme of relationships and sex education (RSE) although this is not yet a formal requirement. Almost all pupils believe the school encourages them to respect other pupils, and in discussions both male and female pupils described the considerate and empathetic relationships between the genders. The curriculum provides all pupils with the opportunity to learn and make progress. Many pupils have lived or will move on to live in countries across the world, and the curriculum prepares them well for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in both British society and their destinations after leaving the BSA.
- 2.5 Teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons and suitable teaching methods. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the pupils and their needs, good subject knowledge and understanding, effective use of resources and effective strategies for managing behaviour. They enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress and foster self-motivation, application and interest. In the questionnaires the vast majority of both pupils and parents cited the impact of the quality of teaching on pupils' progress. Teaching is well resourced, and information and communication technology (ICT) widely used in both teaching and learning. Teaching does not undermine fundamental British values nor discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics. The school uses a suitable framework to assess pupils' performance by reference to the school's aims and uses assessment information to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

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

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

- 2.7 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance and furthers the pupils' personal development. It promotes principles which enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, esteem and confidence; distinguish right from wrong; accept responsibility for their behaviour; and contribute to the lives of others. It enables pupils to gain knowledge and respect for public institutions in England and for the responsibilities of citizenship in the Netherlands and the European Union.

- 2.8 Through effective promotion of its values the school encourages tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions; respect for other people; respect for democracy and the democratic process; and balanced presentation of political issues and preclusion of partisan political views. In the questionnaires, the very large majority of parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. In discussions pupils with strong religious faith, said they were at ease with the different views of others.

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 Suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Such arrangements are in line with Dutch law and have regard to latest statutory and non-statutory guidance in the UK. The structures ensure that pupils are listened to and provided with early help. The particular vulnerability of those with SEND or who are new to the school is recognised. Staff understand the code of conduct and whistleblowing policies. The leadership of safeguarding is strong, and records show that action is timely and appropriate, with each new concern assessed for risk. The effectiveness of any intervention is regularly monitored. Documentation is well-ordered with clear chronologies, as would be required by UK statutory guidance. The school's focus on this area is reflected in the appointment of a substantive safeguarding lead. Safeguarding is managed effectively, and communication between the school and the relevant authorities and external agencies promotes the well-being of pupils at risk or in danger of harm. The quality of communication is enhanced by having fluent Dutch speakers in key safeguarding roles. Pupils have a secure awareness of how to keep safe online.
- 2.11 Good behaviour is promoted effectively. The school's system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood and effective, and bullying is prevented as far as is reasonably practical. The overwhelming majority of pupils replying to the questionnaires said that the school expected them to behave well, and the vast majority felt that the school does everything it could to prevent bullying from happening. Workshops are arranged by the school to enable parents to discuss these areas of adolescent life. Excellent behaviour was observed by inspectors during their visit. The school complies with the relevant health and safety laws and fire safety standards. Documentation related to these areas is exhaustive, detailed and comprehensive, reflecting a pro-active and well-planned approach. Arrangements to ensure pupils on site are secure are effective, and pupils say that the school provides a safe environment in which to learn. Pupils are properly supervised, and attendance and admissions procedures ensure that the school can find the whereabouts of a pupil. The risks to pupils involved in all activities, are appropriately assessed and recorded. First aid is administered in a timely manner.

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

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

- 2.13 The suitability of persons appointed as members of staff is checked in line with national requirements and, as far as reasonably possible, in line with guidance issued to schools in the UK. Appropriate checks are made on those working as contractors and on volunteers. All adults working or volunteering at the school must have a Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag (VOG) (certificate of good conduct). Before appointment the school makes appropriate checks of identity, right to work, reviews police checks from overseas and, where relevant, makes checks against list of those prohibited from teaching and managing schools in the UK. The school can no longer make checks through the UK's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) but mitigates risk through other checks, including references. Although Dutch law prohibits pro-active questions about fitness to work, it is legally incumbent on prospective employees to declare that they are medically suitable if relevant, and hence the school meets this requirement. Those in governance roles, for example the supervisory board, are checked to an

appropriate level. A comprehensive and accurate register is maintained of the recruitment checks undertaken on all those listed above.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

2.15 The school moved to a former prison in Havenstraat in 2021. The conversion has preserved much of the original building and character of the prison, including the dome and the tiled hallways. The former chapel has become a theatre and two cells have also been kept as a reminder of the prison's role during World War II, when resistance fighters were held there. Each age group is sited in different wings of the refurbished building, which is of a standard that fully meets the educational needs of pupils.

2.16 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided, including for disabled pupils. The medical rooms provide accommodation which caters for the medical and therapy needs of all pupils. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a standard so that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. The acoustic conditions and lighting are suitable. External lighting ensures that pupils can safely enter and leave the school premises. The provision of water for drinking and washing is suitable. Outdoor space, both on and off the school site, is provided for physical education and play.

Part 6 – Provision of information

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

2.18 All necessary information is provided: contact details for the school, the principal and chair of the supervisory board and a statement of the school's ethos. The school makes available policies and particulars of arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions; provision for SEND and EAL; and the school's academic performance. It makes available its complaints procedure; curriculum policy; arrangements for promoting good behaviour and preventing bullying; and its health and safety and first aid arrangements. In addition, the safeguarding policy is published on the website. An annual written report of each pupil's progress and attainment is provided for parents or carers.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

2.20 The school's complaints procedure is made available to the parents of current pupils. It enables initial consideration of any complaint on an informal basis; establishes a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing; and provides for a third stage, a hearing before a panel which includes an independent member at which a parent may be accompanied. It provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. In the questionnaires a very large majority of parents agreed that they received timely and helpful responses to their questions, concerns or complaints.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

2.22 The leadership and management of the school, including the supervisory board, demonstrates good skills and knowledge and fulfilment of responsibilities so that the BSO Standards are met consistently, and actively promotes the well-being of pupils. In the questionnaires, the very large majority of parents said the school is governed, led and managed well.

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 a governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. 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 Stephen Cole

Reporting inspector

Ms Katharine Meunier

Team inspector (Former head, BSO school)