



part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

Geneva English School

March 2024

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School's Details

School	Geneva English School			
Address	Route de Malagny 36 1294 Genthod Geneva Switzerland			
Telephone number	+41 22 775 0440			
Email address	admin@geschool.ch			
Headteacher	Mr Matthew Williams			
Chair of governors	Mrs Emily Persse			
Proprietor	The Governing Board of Geneva English School			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	348			
	Early years	41	Juniors	149
	Seniors	109	Sixth form	49
Inspection dates	25 to 26 March 2024			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Geneva English School (GES) is a co-educational day school. It was founded in 1961 by a small group of British parents in Geneva, who desired a British education for their children. There are two campuses: one for the primary school and one for the secondary. The secondary school opened on a purpose-built site in 2016, and pupils now study for GCSE and A-level examinations. The school is overseen by a governing board made up of parents and external experts. The board closely follows the structure of a UK board of governors, with a range of committees with designated areas of focus. There are pupils in all year groups from the early years to Year 13.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to empower young people to unlock their fullest potential to thrive both academically and socially. The school further seeks to instil values of curiosity, morality and courage, and to provide pupils with opportunities to lead lives of purpose and contribute positively to the world.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from families with a range of professional backgrounds. Some are second or third generation ex-patriate families living in Switzerland, others arrive for a short time to work and then remain, whilst some move on after a few years when the family relocates for work. Data provided by the school shows that the ability profile of the pupils is above the average for similar schools in the UK. The school has identified 61 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 26 of whom receive additional specialist support. Of the 100 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), 21 require additional specialist support. The needs of more able pupils are met through modification of the curriculum by their class or subject teachers.

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 2021.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO) 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 Leaders ensure the school provides a British curriculum which recognises its international context. It provides pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. It enables them to acquire effective speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills and a good understanding of English. It provides a programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and teaches relationships and sex education in line with UK guidance. The school provides pupils with suitable advice on university entry and other vocational courses in Switzerland, the UK and globally. It also runs a broader careers guidance programme including opportunities for work experience for pupils in the secondary school. There is a wide choice of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum and the activities programme develops pupils understanding of British values, whilst also reflecting the value systems of Switzerland and France.
- 2.4 The teaching throughout the school is principally undertaken through the medium of English. All of the parents whose children's first language is not English who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that they are pleased with their children's progress in English. Appropriate additional support is provided for pupils whose English is limited and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teaching is well planned, employs effective teaching methods, uses a range of resources, demonstrates good subject knowledge and understanding, and manages behaviour well. The teaching does not discriminate because of protected characteristics.
- 2.5 An appropriate framework for assessing pupils' performance is in place. There are effective systems in place to monitor pupils' achievement. The school uses standardised baseline tests in Years 7, 10 and 12 and undertakes regular assessments of pupils' progress. Tracking of pupils' performance shows that they make good progress to GCSE, IGCSE and A-level examinations. As a result, all the leavers in 2023 – the first cohort of pupils to leave Year 13 – went on to secure places at universities in Switzerland, the UK and worldwide, many with selective entry requirements.

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 Leaders successfully promotes values which are inherent to life in Britain as well as to many other countries through its PSHE programme, assemblies and form tutor sessions. The school actively encourages pupils to have respect for other people regardless of their background or the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 2.8 The school promotes tolerance and harmony between the many different nationalities represented in the school effectively. Pupils speak warmly of the friendly atmosphere, a feature that was also noted by the inspection team. The school prepares pupils for the responsibilities of citizenship in the UK, Switzerland and the wider world. It encourages respect for democracy and the democratic processes. Leaders help pupils to develop nuanced and balanced views on political issues. They provide opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the lives of others within the school, the local community and globally. Pupils volunteer to help local charities, such as those who support the homeless, and the school choir sings at local events and competitions.

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 Leaders make appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. The school's safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and is implemented effectively. The procedures are based largely on guidance for schools in England but also take local requirements into account. Safeguarding matters are overseen by two designated safeguarding leads (DSL), one for primary and one for secondary, both of whom are members of the senior leadership team and are each supported by a deputy DSL. All of them have undertaken advanced safeguarding training and have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- 2.11 The governing body has appointed a lead governor to oversee safeguarding to verify that procedures are carried out appropriately. They have recently carried out an audit of the school's safeguarding arrangements which is informing the development of practice at the school.
- 2.12 Staff are thoroughly trained in the school's procedures, not only when they join the school but through training sessions at the start of each school year and through regular updates. Staff know what to do should they become aware of any safeguarding concern about a pupil or if there is an allegation against a member of staff. The school maintains confidential records of all child protection concerns; these contain sufficient detail and record any discussions, decisions and action taken.
- 2.13 Pupils are made fully aware of issues that might affect their welfare, health and safety, particularly with regard to online safety, through assemblies and topics covered in the school's PSHE programme. Pupils have ready access to specialist support for their mental health if required. Leaders have developed a number of ways to ensure they hear the views of individual pupils. As a result, in discussion with inspectors, pupils stated that they feel safe in their school and know to whom they can go should they wish to share any concerns. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that the school is a safe place to be and that they know how to stay safe online. All of the staff who responded to the pre inspection questionnaire agreed that the school listens to pupils and takes any requisite action.
- 2.14 Pupils are very well behaved. This is facilitated by the small size of the school where everyone is well known and supported. Staff model caring and respectful behaviour which pupils reflect in their interactions with each other and generally around the school. In their responses to the questionnaire, pupils referred to occasional differences between the treatment of male and female pupils in applying sanctions. This was borne out by the sanctions log which predominantly records behavioural incidents of male pupils. In discussion with inspectors, pupils referred to sanctions being occasionally applied more harshly to male pupils for similar behaviours. The record of rewards also showed more rewards being applied to female pupils. Pupils also reported that they are sometimes confused about what rewards are applied for and inconsistencies in the way teachers apply them. However, the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well.
- 2.15 Leaders take effective steps to reduce bullying as far as is reasonably practicable. Consequently, bullying incidents are rare. When issues do arise, the school responds proportionately and maintains close liaison with parents. Appropriate support is put in place. Record keeping is thorough and detailed which informs the school's practice.
- 2.16 The school's health and safety policy states the school's commitment to applying high standards to the management and control of its operation and aims to reflect both UK standards and those applicable in Geneva. It sets out the responsibility of the governing body and how that is carried out, and the responsibilities of the head and other staff. The school implements the health and safety policy effectively. There is a culture of care towards pupils, staff and parents which is reflected around the school. External audits by specialists and Genevan authorities are carried out regularly, and these

are acted upon. Leaders take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the sites and takes action to mitigate against any potential risks. They implement the fire safety policy effectively. External contractors ensure that all equipment is checked and reviewed regularly. Signage is clear, and regular fire drills are carried out. Records are clear, and escape routes are regularly inspected.

- 2.17 The school's first-aid policy is effective. Well-qualified, competent staff administer medicines in an organised fashion and in a timely way. Record keeping is clear, and appropriate procedures are in place for informing parents.
- 2.18 Rotas and suitable guidance for staff on duty at breaks and lunchtimes around the school, combined with high teacher to pupil ratios and the compact nature of the sites, ensure that pupils are supervised appropriately.
- 2.19 The school keeps registers of admissions and attendance as required, and these are backed up in line with the standards. When they arise, patterns of absence are quickly identified and addressed.
- 2.20 The risk assessment policy shows a comprehensive list of where risk is considered in the school and shows considerable thought has been put into this area – not just obvious risks such as facilities and trips. The roles of the head and governors is set out. Measures are detailed regarding the carrying out, recording and review of risk assessments. There is a straightforward template detailing how risk assessments should be carried out. Consequently, appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that risk assessments are suitably detailed. Staff and pupils are appropriately briefed on measures taken to mitigate any risk of harm. Risk assessments are systematically reviewed in order to ensure that they remain effective. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that they are looked after on school trips.

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

- 2.21 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**
- 2.22 The required checks are carried out on staff, supply staff and governors to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school verifies each person's identity and previous employment history. It carries out criminal record checks with Swiss and Genevan authorities and, where relevant, with overseas authorities. New staff complete a self-declaration that they are fit to work. The school checks each person's right to work in Switzerland. Checks ensure that no staff appointed from the UK have been prohibited from teaching, or from managing a school. All checks are recorded on a single central register of appointments (SCR). Staff files contain copies of relevant documentation used to carry out suitability checks and indicate that the information recorded on the SCR is accurate.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.23 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**
- 2.24 Toilets and washing facilities are adequate and available. The medical facilities are appropriate and contain a sink. They are near to toilets. Medicines are stored in secure units along with the appropriate documentation.
- 2.25 The school premises are maintained to a suitable standard, and appropriate work is carried out by external contractors. Regular reviews and staff input highlight any potential issues.
- 2.26 The acoustics in rooms are at an acceptable level for use as classrooms. The lighting in rooms is conducive to their use. External lighting is appropriate. Suitable drinking water facilities are provided and are clearly marked. An adequate supply of hot and cold water is available.

- 2.27 Suitable outdoor space is provided for pupils to play outside. At the primary school, there are suitable facilities for physical education onsite, and the school hires suitable outdoor facilities for secondary school pupils' physical education.

Part 6 – Provision of information

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

- 2.29 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and relevant local authorities. This information includes details about the proprietor, the aims of the school and the curriculum offered. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. Arrangements and policies for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, complaints, health and safety, first aid, provision for pupils who have SEND and those who speak EAL are available on the school's website as well as copies of the school's most recent inspection reports. Particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year are published. The school provides a full written report annually on each child's attainment and progress as well as holding parent-teacher meetings.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

- 2.31 The school's complaints policy is made available on the school's website. The policy allows for any concern to be considered initially on an informal basis. It then ensures that it has suitable arrangements in place for a formal complaint to be made in writing for consideration by the head and the chair of governors. Finally, provision is made for a hearing before a panel which includes an independent member and allows for the parent complainant to be accompanied. At this panel stage, there are suitable arrangements in place to allow the panel to make findings and recommendations and for a confidential record to be kept of such findings. Appropriate records are kept of formal complaints; these detail actions taken by the school regardless of the outcome of such complaints.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- 2.33 The governors ensure that the leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards for British Schools Overseas are met consistently and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.
- 2.34 A very large majority of parents in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, agreed that the school is governed, led and managed well. Inspection evidence supports 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 a group of governors and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils. The responses of parents, pupils and staff to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Alasdair McBay

Reporting inspector

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Team inspector (Assistant Head, NABSS school, Spain)