



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**British Schools Overseas**

**Inspection Report**

**British School of Brussels**

**November 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	British School of Brussels			
<b>Address</b>	Pater Dupierreuxlaan 1 Tervuren Belgium			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0032 27660430			
<b>Email address</b>	reception@britishschool.be			
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Melanie Warnes			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Ian Backhouse			
<b>Age range</b>	1 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1396			
	<b>Early Years</b>	89	<b>Primary</b>	436
	<b>Secondary</b>	607	<b>Sixth Form</b>	264
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24 to 25 November 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 The British School of Brussels (BSB) is a co-educational school for pupils aged one to 18. The school was founded in 1970 and, since then, has been situated to the south-east of Brussels on the edge of Tervuren. There are separate heads of the secondary and primary schools, who work closely with each other and the principal to maintain an integrated community on the shared campus. The school is a not-for-profit association (Vereniging Zonder Winstoogmerk). As a consequence, in some areas of Belgian law BSB is not recognised as a school. A board of governors, which includes the principal, heads of school, chairs and vice-chairs of the staff and parents' associations, together with a board of trustees, oversee the running of the school.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school's aim is to be an inclusive force for good by developing confident, caring and courageous people who engage actively, ethically and purposefully with the world around them. It seeks to foster curious, resilient learners who enjoy life and achieve the best they can, and to encourage respect of self, others and the wider world.

### About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from Brussels and the surrounding areas, and other cities in Belgium. There are over 70 different nationalities, with just under one-third British, the next highest proportions being Belgian, north American, Ukrainian, French, Indian and Dutch. Many parents hold professional or diplomatic posts and are resident in the country for only a few years, which creates a transient pupil population. Data provided by the school show that pupils' ability on entry is slightly above the average compared to others taking the same tests worldwide. There are 278 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, all of whom receive additional help. Of the 634 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 203 receive specific support. The school challenges the more able pupils through setting in key subjects.

## 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. This the school's first BSO inspection.

## 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'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. On entry, pupils are assessed for their level of English and given additional support if necessary. Pupils will often start in lessons where progress does not rely heavily on linguistic understanding, for example mathematics or physical education. Those categorised as new to English (NTE) or early acquisition (EA) are offered intense language support instead of, for example, English or the humanities. As pupils reach more advanced levels of English and are developing confidence (DC), they attend the majority of lessons but may study EAL instead of taking a second modern foreign language. The vast majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they were pleased with their children's progress in English. Bilingual (French and English) classes are offered from Reception to Year 9 for pupils who have a need to maintain a good working knowledge of both languages.
- 2.4 The curriculum in the lower primary and early childhood centre (ECC) encourages independence and curiosity, supported by resources that allow pupils to explore and play both indoors and outdoors. The school has recently undertaken a review of the curriculum and learning in Years 5 to 8 to further embed the concepts of coherence, continuity, collaboration and community. The curriculum reflects the different backgrounds of pupils in its implicit focus on internationalism and cultural inclusivity. In the primary school, approaches are founded on UNESCO's four pillars of learning. Units of discovery and schemes of work seen by inspectors reflect a consideration of the different needs, stages and ages of learners, and seize opportunities to approach topics from global and ethical perspectives.
- 2.5 Secondary school pupils follow a broad range of subjects that give experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. The vast majority of parents replying to the questionnaire thought that the range of subjects was suitable for their children and most thought that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activity. A large majority of pupils said they could take part in a range of activities, including clubs, art, drama, music and sport. Pupils with SEND, and parents in the questionnaire, feel that those with additional or specific needs are well supported. Secondary pupils sit international GCSEs in Year 11 and, in the sixth form, can study for IB, A-level or BTEC qualifications. They achieve results well above the average compared with others taking the same tests worldwide. Almost all pupils said that the school gives them opportunity to make progress. Pupils seize that opportunity, as is reflected in data comparing examination results with pupils' starting points. They are prepared well for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in both British society and their destinations after leaving BSB. Sixth-form pupils spoke positively about the advice they had received about careers and university application.
- 2.6 The arrangements for, and content of, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) have recently been reviewed. PSHE now includes a full programme of relationships and sex education (RSE) although this is not yet a requirement of the standards for BSOs. A very large majority of pupils believe the school encourages them to respect other pupils and, in discussions, both male and female pupils described the considerate and open relationships between the genders.
- 2.7 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. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the ages of pupils and the subject taught. The use of learning assistants in the younger age groups is effective in supporting pupil progress, especially through intervention in mathematics and reading. In response to the questionnaires, most pupils and parents cited the impact of the quality of teaching on pupils' progress. The school's leadership has prioritised professional learning, and nearly all those in teaching roles take part in internal or external training. Teaching is very 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. Teaching does not discriminate against pupils and draws upon the international element of the community. Strategies to manage behaviour are effective, and all pupils are engaged in lessons.

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

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

2.9 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, self-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 of and respect for public institutions in England and for the responsibilities of citizenship in Belgium, the European Union, and the wider world.

2.10 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. This includes respect for the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. In response to the questionnaire, 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. The school is non-denominational and, as such, does not teach religious education as a separate entity. Understanding of world faiths is promoted in assemblies, cultural events and PSHE lessons, and conduits through which pupils can have formal opportunities to share their beliefs are being developed. In discussion and in questionnaire responses, pupils reported that incidents in which disrespect was shown are extremely rare, and quickly addressed.

## **Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

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

2.12 Suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Such arrangements are in line with Belgian law, with its emphasis on privacy, and in parallel have regard to the latest statutory and non-statutory guidance in the UK. The school routinely uses professional expertise from the UK to ensure that the effectiveness of its safeguarding arrangements are kept under review. The particular vulnerability of those with SEND or who are new to the school is recognised. Staff are aware of the code of conduct and whistleblowing policies and say they would be confident to use them. The leadership of safeguarding is strong, and records show that action is timely and appropriate, with each new concern assessed for risk. The wishes and the needs of pupils are prioritised. 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 has no access to the safeguarding partners available to a UK school, and hence uses private consultants or, in more serious cases, would refer direct to the Belgian police. The structures ensure that pupils are listened to and provided with early help. The school employs a counselling team with a variety of skills,

and they support heads of years and other staff. In response to the questionnaire, a few pupils said that they could not talk to anybody at school about any concerns. In discussion, pupils explained that counsellors were sometimes too busy, that they would talk to family and friends before staff, or that they might be worried about confidentiality. The school is aware of their perception. Staff training is thorough, and records allow accurate monitoring. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe at school and on-line.

- 2.13 Good behaviour is successfully promoted. The school's system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood and effective. The overwhelming majority of pupils replying to the questionnaire said that the school expects them to behave well. Excellent behaviour was observed by inspectors during their visit. In response to the questionnaires, most parents agreed that the school does all that it reasonably could to prevent bullying from happening, but a small minority of pupils disagree. Inspectors interrogated this in detail and, in particular, with specific year groups. It is clear that the school's *Respect Charter* sets out transparently the school's approach to bullying. Records of the few incidents that have occurred show that the school has responded swiftly, evenly and robustly. Both alleged victim and perpetrator have been supported, with full reviews of each case. Actions taken have been appropriate. Staff have received further training, particularly on recognising potential incidents, and pupils have frequently been reminded of the need to share concerns, about themselves or others. Although the school's approach is already rigorous, and it is doing all it can to reasonably prevent bullying, it continues to review its arrangements, and in particular to give pupils further confidence to 'speak-up'.
- 2.14 The school complies with Belgian health and safety laws and fire safety standards. Documentation related to these areas is exhaustive, detailed and comprehensive, reflecting a proactive and well-planned approach. Arrangements to ensure pupils on site are secure are appropriate, and pupils say that the school provides a safe environment in which to learn. Security protocols are robust. 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**

- 2.15 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**
- 2.16 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 documents issued by the Belgian authorities. Before appointment the school makes appropriate checks of identity, right to work, receives police checks from overseas and, where relevant, makes checks against the 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. Those in governance roles 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**

- 2.17 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**
- 2.18 The school occupies a large site, with a number of new or newly refurbished buildings, and extensive outdoor facilities including a woodland environment. All are of a standard that fully meets the needs of educating pupils.



- 2.19 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**

### **2.20 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

- 2.21 All necessary information is provided: contact details for the school, the principal and chair of the governors 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**

### **2.22 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

- 2.23 The school's complaints procedure is made available to the parents of current and registered pupils. It enables initial consideration of any complaint on an informal basis; establishes a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing to either the principal or heads of school; 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 response to the questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that they receive timely and helpful responses to their questions, concerns or complaints.

## **Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

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

- 2.25 The leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfilment of responsibilities so that the BSO Standards are met consistently, and actively promote the well-being of pupils. In response to the questionnaire, 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 with governors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities. 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
Mr Jonathan Coward	Team inspector (Schools improvement partner, Spain)
Mr Graham Letley	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school, UK)