



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

British School of Sofia

Sofia
Bulgaria

Date
Inspection number

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education (DfE) has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the DfE schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding, where appropriate); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the DfE on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British schools overseas.

During the inspection visit, nearly 50 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed, and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were seen in lessons, and discussions were held with the staff, parents and informally with students. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Nicola Walsh. The team members were Simon Aurora and Charlotte Clark.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school benefits from a committed senior leadership team who are intuitive to the school's needs and under their careful leadership the school has made significant progress over the past 3 years. Staff are loyal to the school and keen to develop. Pupils are well cared for, enjoy school and attain in line with similar international schools globally. Pupils enjoy the extra activities that the school provides through an extensive curriculum offer and wide range of activities. Parents are provided with many opportunities to become fully informed about the work of the school and partners in their child's learning.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- ambition of a visionary principal who is also the owner of the school;
- senior leadership team who has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces;
- pupils who are confident, welcoming, articulate and kind;
- teaching staff who feel very supported by the school and are keen to learn and develop;
- pupils' high standard of attainment in modern foreign languages;
- involvement of parents in the life of the school;
- provision of information provided by the school to parents, which is impressive;
- wide range of provision for pupils with additional learning needs, which is excellent;
- community ethos and support for pupils new to the school;
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is excellent.
- commitment to embedding strong attitudes and values in pupils.

3.2 Points for improvement

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following development points:

- i. Enhance further the teaching methods in EYFS, key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 to be very well matched to the age of the learners, and in line with best practice in British international schools;
- ii. Consider appointing heads of phases who can take on the responsibility for monitoring the effective implementation of the marking and feedback policy, and ensure curriculum plans are aligned to the syllabus and evident in pupils' work;
- iii. Continue to develop curriculum long term, medium term and lesson plans so that there is focused progression over time, and that plans contain all the information teachers need to deliver engaging and stimulating lessons well matched to the needs of all pupils.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school	British School of Sofia		
Address	Bulgaria, Sofia, 1700, Vitosha, 20 "Georgi Raichev" str.		
Main telephone #	+359 886 510 510		
Website	www.bssofia.bg		
Email	office@bssofia.bg		
Principal	Mrs. Teodora Nenova		
Chair of board of governors/ proprietor	Mrs. Teodora Nenova		
Age range	3-18 years		
Number of pupils	Total = 374	Boys = 189	Girls = 184
Pupil numbers by age on date of entry	(0-2 years) 0	(3-5 years) 28	(6-11 years) 141
	(12-16 years) 139	(17-18 years) 66	(18+ years) 0
Total number of part-time pupils	0		

The school is situated in Sofia and has been providing a British education since 2009. The school has grown quickly and now provides for 374 pupils from 44 different nationalities of which the largest group is Bulgarian. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language and pupil mobility is high. Annually approximately one third of pupils arrive at the school entering into grades 1 -13 as new pupils. Staff are made up of international and local teachers, including members of the school's leadership team and middle leaders.

4.1 British nature of the school

- The school delivers the English National Curriculum to pupils in the primary and secondary sections of the school.
- Assessments and external examinations are supplied by Cambridge or the International Baccalaureate.
- The school promotes British values through the curriculum.
- The school celebrates British events and hosts a British culture week.
- Policies mirror those required by UK schools.
- The school has close links with the British embassy and ambassador in Sofia, which includes an annual visit to officially open and close the school.
- The school is resourced in materials that are used in British schools.
- Libraries are well stocked with books in English.
- The school's behaviour policy.
- A house system and school council reflect those in place in English schools.
- The school maintains a close relationship with the British Bulgarian Business association.
- Pupils wear a uniform similar to that worn by pupils in UK schools, this includes the Union flag on summer school T-shirts.
- The language of instruction as well as communication in the school is English.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school.

The quality of education meets the standard and is good.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

The school provides a British-style curriculum that includes the Early years foundation stage (EYFS) to pupils under 5, the English National Curriculum for pupils in primary and lower secondary, the IGCSE for secondary and the International Baccalaureate (IB) for pupils in sixth form. The school meets the requirements of the ministry, and this is detailed in the school's curriculum policy. Although the school follows UK schemes of work the term "grade" is used throughout the school which corresponds to year groups in the ENC.

The curriculum offered by the school promotes the school's mission statement, '*Inspiring students to create and shape the world of tomorrow.*' The school's curriculum considers the development of the whole child and incorporates schemes of work from Cambridge for core subjects, the National Curriculum, through PYP, for humanities in primary, the IMYC at key stage 3, the IGCSE programme in key stage 4 and the International Baccalaureate programmes at post 16. This is complemented by the Thinking-based learning programme and extra-curricular activities. There is strong provision for ICT within the curriculum.

Within the timetabled curriculum a broad range of world languages are offered; French, German, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin and Arabic are delivered in addition to Bulgarian for first (L1) and second language (L2) speakers. Subject options at key stage 4 and key stage 5 reflect the school's extensive language provision. IGCSE courses offered in 2023 were: English L1 and L2 and English Literature, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Arabic, mathematics, coordinated science, ICT, business, history, art and design. At the IB diploma in 2023 pupils had the option of 6 languages along with biology, physics, computer science, visual arts, mathematics, business management, and IT in a Global Society. The school tries to accommodate all pupils' subject choices and if a face-to-face class is not available pupils can study online independently using the *Pamoja* online platform. However, the school will do as much as possible to ensure pupils' option choices are met, such that, most notably in foreign language classes, very low pupil numbers were evident.

Curriculum plans written for each subject combined the Cambridge objectives and the PYP and IMYC values. Links between long term, medium term and lesson plans

and the time allocated to different aspects of study could be clearer. This was evident in discussions with subject leaders, in lesson observations, and scrutinising plans. Detailed information for objectives and resourcing was in place. The school provides a system where every lesson plan can be uploaded and transformed into a PowerPoint for pupils who are following online. This started during the pandemic and has continued -although during the inspection there were no pupils working remotely. As a result, lesson plans are very detailed.

The school provides a comprehensive personal, social, health, and emotional education (PSHE) programme that has been well planned for all age groups. The school employs a SMSC coordinator, who is responsible for PSHE across the school and there is a written policy that includes relationships and health education. PSHE is timetabled and reflected in assemblies and activities throughout the school. Circle time in the early years ensures pupils have time to consider and reflect.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is excellent. Pupils with a diagnosed SEND such as ADHD, ASD or dyslexia have an individual education plan (IEP) created which details additional support in lessons and withdrawal. This may include one on one and small group teaching where appropriate. As a result, the few pupils on roll with a diagnosed special need make strong progress against their targets.

Where pupils' access to the curriculum is impacted by low levels of English the school identifies this and acts quickly to ensure support is in place. This is provided by an online programme *FastForWord*, which provides regular sessions on foundational language and literacy skills: as well as this, additional lessons are provided in support. As a result of using this online programme the school's internal information indicates that pupils have made rapid progress and can be quickly integrated into classes with their peers.

The school offers extra-curricular activities over lunch time so that all pupils finish their school day simultaneously, and this is appreciated by parents. These are paid for in a few instances and led by qualified coaches external to the school, while others are teacher or pupil led. There is a wide choice to encourage all pupils to participate such as sports and fun, Taekwondo, football, chess, modern dance, a choir, applied arts, Russian, Arabic and mental maths. Instrumental piano and guitar are also offered as 1:1 tuition.

To prepare pupils for life beyond school careers and university guidance is provided by the school counsellor. Pupils who have completed their IGCSE exams participate in a one-week induction as preparation for the IB Diploma and begin the process of thinking about careers and university options in grade 9. The school organises work experience for all IGCSE pupils that help to prepare them for the world of work. Other activities, such as a visit from the British embassy staff and other professionals

to deliver a talk on careers in the diplomatic service and other areas, provides pupils with a broad range of information. Pupils are supported with their UCAS applications and use *BridgeU* at all stages of their university applications process, as well as attending career fairs and visits to universities.

Most pupils leave school to attend universities in Europe and the UK, most recently in Italy, Netherlands, Czechia and the UK. Pupils who have left the school regularly return to the school, and the school has plans to strengthen its alumni programme.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good.

Teaching in the kindergarten phase of the school is organised in small groups to ensure the learning objectives are met. Both nursery and reception follow the UK recognised *Monster Phonics* programme, as well as the *Superheroes* spelling programme. This supports teachers to structure lessons so that pupils learn a new sound, apply it to words, and consolidate the learning in activities. Teachers and leaders are noticing the positive benefit the structured scheme has on pupils' achievement in literacy and language. Where teachers were confident with the pronunciation of sounds and used a cross curriculum approach to meet the objective, learners made most progress. For example, in reception class the pupils developed their mark marking skills when applying their knowledge of the 'ear' sound. It was noted, in most lessons observed the learning was adult led. As a result, pupils had very few opportunities to work independently, problem solve and improve their learning through their own initiative. In the lessons where teachers read a story and engaged the pupils through actions, interest was higher. Such as the nursery monster story. Here the teachers modelled acting as characters which supported pupils understanding and engaged pupils fully.

In kindergarten, teachers gather evidence against the curriculum areas in the pupils' portfolios. The teachers use their internal assessments to make judgements against the early learning goals.

In the majority of lessons observed in key stage 1 teachers share the lesson objective and success criteria with pupils. Teachers lead lessons, and in delivery of core subjects two teachers work together to maximise adult interactions with the pupils. In the strongest lessons teachers creatively used the learning spaces available to work with small groups of pupils and actively engage pupils. For example, in grade 2 the learning centre was used for pupils to create fractions using balls to share and group. In lessons where teaching approaches relied upon presenting from an interactive whiteboard screen, pupils were much less engaged in their learning. Teachers assess pupils' attainment of learning objectives through questioning and summative testing at the end of the term.

Teaching in key stage 2 follows the curriculum plans. Class teachers from grade 3 deliver English, maths, science and humanities and PHSE. Specialist teachers deliver all other subject areas including ICT, robotics, Lego education to grade 4, music, art, and PE. From grade 6 a maths specialist delivers maths lessons across the grade. Lesson objectives are shared routinely with pupils so that they know what they are learning to do. In upper key stage 2 a common feature of all lessons is the use of the interactive timer to ensure pace is appropriate and pupils are on task. iPads are provided to all pupils from grade 3 and they are used to access the teachers'

presentations and find information. In the strongest lessons teachers planned tasks that enabled pupils to learn through investigation, such as at the start of a grade 6 robotics lesson. Here pupils had to decode a message. In grade 4 science pupils enjoyed the practical aspects of a task to sort items into conductors and insulators.

In the majority of lessons observed teachers plan tasks that meet the needs of the whole class and there is limited differentiation of the tasks set. There was also limited evidence of collaborative learning or group work. As a result, a few pupils are not challenged sufficiently and those requiring support do not get the help that they need. This approach to whole class teaching was replicated in key stage 3. Although in a few lessons where teachers drew upon their subject knowledge and regularly checked on pupils' understanding, progress was stronger. Such as in a grade 8 maths lesson on finding angles of a regular polygon. Here the teacher modelled and worked through a method. The teacher's targeted use of questioning and support to individuals, ensured all pupils made progress. Summative assessments are in place at regular points throughout primary and key stage 3 as progress checks, and checkpoints at the end of grade 6 and grade 9.

The majority of lessons observed in secondary demonstrate teachers' strong subject knowledge and a keen interest in passing this knowledge onto the pupils. Pupils were observed working in notebooks and also on their iPads which were in use in almost every lesson that was observed in upper secondary. Pupils studying for IGCSE and IB Diploma are usually in small class sizes, so teachers know each pupil's level of attainment and areas for improvement. This enables teachers to adapt lesson plans to individual abilities and adjust questioning. This was demonstrated most effectively in both an IB French and German lesson where pupils' abilities varied widely. Here teachers confidently presented different levels of questions to each pupil. Pupils benefit particularly in languages from the small class sizes and make strong progress due to the teachers' strong knowledge of individual abilities.

The school's self-evaluation has accurately identified that the implementation of the school's marking and feedback policy is not yet consistently applied across the school. Older students receive high quality feedback from teachers regarding work completed online and in verbal feedback in lessons. This was observed in an IB English lesson where the teacher had written detailed marking comments and also gave specific feedback during the lesson. Across primary and lower secondary, teachers rely mainly upon the use of verbal feedback and encourage pupils to self-assess within lessons. Curriculum leaders commented that where online feedback is provided on pupils' work in notebooks, this is written mainly for parents. Where online feedback is provided on work completed in notebooks, it is difficult to see the impact of this on the pupil's next piece of work in the notebook, or progress overall. There needs to be a more focused approach of teachers using assessment information to provide feedback to younger pupils or adapting lesson plans. Teachers' feedback is not regular enough with the younger pupils to be impacting

significantly on their progress, particularly in addressing misconceptions and improving standards of presentation.

The school has a strong system of summative assessments in place such as the use of Cambridge checkpoints at the end of grade 6 and grade 9 and mock examinations in place for pupils preparing for IGCSE and IB. Teachers' use of feedback and formative assessment strategies was most effective with older pupils in lessons preparing for external examinations.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by pupils are good.

Pupils in kindergarten are well engaged and enjoy learning. They benefit from well-established routines and are responsive to the high expectations set from the adults that they work with. The quality of pupils' work indicates that almost all pupils are working at age related expectations in reception and are in line with curriculum standards. Effective systems are being implemented to monitor and track pupils progress, and this was supported by the internal assessments made.

When lessons are interactive and engaging in key stage 1 pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. This was seen in the strongest lessons. Such as pupils applying their knowledge of question words into writing sentences. Pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 3 are attentive and well behaved. They ask questions of the teacher if they are unsure of the task and work through the tasks set. However, standards in presentation in pupils' notebooks are below the standards expected. In notebooks sampled in lower primary common errors are repeated by pupils because teachers do not pay sufficient attention to correcting these. However summative end of term test and curriculum objectives indicate that pupils are working at age related expectations and in line with curriculum standards. At the end of grade 6 and grade 9 pupils are attaining in line and slightly above the Cambridge checkpoint average in all core subjects, with 100% of students achieving the required Cambridge pass in the Core subjects.

Pupil results at IGCSE have improved over the last three years. In particular the number of subjects taken by each pupil has almost doubled. Pupils now achieve a pass or higher in a broader range of subjects. In 2023, 71% of pupils were awarded grades C and above at IGCSE which is above the UK average. The school was awarded the highest marks in modern foreign languages with 50% of all grades in modern foreign languages in 2023 graded A*. Most pupils achieve what they need to progress to IB Diploma and national requirements in their home countries.

Pupils in KS5 sit the IB Diploma. Over the past 3 years pupils' attainment at IB level has been in line with the international IB average. A few more able pupils in the last 3 years have achieved 40+ in their diploma which is well above the IB average. The majority of the pupils are awarded grades between 4 and 5, which is in line with global expectations at IB. In 2023 the highest average grade was awarded in IB English. Almost all pupils achieve the IB diploma scores they need and most attend European and UK universities at age 18.

6. *Standard 2* Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school community is made up of a diverse community of pupils who are respectful of one another and celebrate each other's cultures. In addition, a broad range of cultural events throughout the year such as international days and themed days are promoted by the school and shared with all stakeholders.

The school celebrates British culture through a variety of events, such as the recent coronation of King Charles III. British science week and British culture week takes place annually. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to visit the UK such as the recent trip to London to attend the World Scholars' Cup. This is in addition to work through the curriculum such as in art, music and literature.

A comprehensive PSHE programme supports pupils' development and understanding of one another. Regular assemblies provide time for quiet reflection and consideration of the school's values where each week a different aspect is considered. Strong teacher pupil relationships enable discussions around social, moral and cultural issues in lessons with teachers providing considered guidance particularly to older pupils. The school golden rules are displayed in every classroom and remind pupils of what is right and taking responsibility for your own behaviours. A detailed behaviour policy describes the school's restorative approach particularly when pupils may need guidance. The school's counsellor and pastoral leads ensure the restorative approach is fully implemented, such that pupils feel guided and supported.

A school house system named around 4 fantasy beings (Dragon, Phoenix, Kraken and Centaur) and are displayed prominently in the entrance hall. Pupils enjoy the sense of belonging to a house and wear school uniform T shirts that indicate their house membership. House competitions encourage social activities and team work. House points provide rewards to pupils in primary and secondary.

The school council, albeit limited to older pupils, enables pupils to develop skills in leadership and collaboration. Pupils are encouraged to present to their peers a community project of their choosing that they are then elected by peers to the school council to implement. These projects have a big impact on the life of the school and pupils talk positively of the benefits. One recent project enabled pupils to partner with an animal shelter. Pupils created and sold a calendar to raise money and promote awareness of the need for people to adopt abandoned animals.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities both within the curriculum and also in extracurricular clubs. Pupils can participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award, volunteer at charity events and actively participate as part of the model United Nations. A pupil-led art project involving pupils from grade 1 to IB2 has recently been introduced on the theme of equality. This work will culminate in an exhibition of pupils' art work on this subject towards the end of the academic year. Pupils recently went on a school trip to learn about sustainability and waste management, helping to understand the issues around managing waste in the community. Pupils participated in the COBIS robotics, poetry and mathematics competitions, more able mathematicians participated in *Manga*, both providing an external opportunity to compete and socialise with pupils from other schools. Off-site trips and visits enhance the curriculum and also develop pupils' socially, such as a recent ski-week trip..

7. Standard 3 The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils meets the standard and is good.

Safeguarding measures are in place and all staff, including support staff, have training in safeguarding annually to level 1 standard online and receive training face to face. Staff who work in school but use a different language receive training translated by a member of staff. This ensures all staff on site understand their duties around keeping children safe. A team of designated senior leaders (DSLs) are in place. They are trained and updated in policy through links with the Council of British International Schools. Pupils know who to go to if they have a concern and any concerns are acted upon swiftly. Where a child protection issue may be a concern, the school's owner and principal will help the school's designated senior leaders to find a suitable course of action if this is required. At all times, the DSL align their work to the local support services in place in Bulgaria and the UK DfE *Keeping Children Safe in Education* document. The school's owner is also trained and understands the duties involved in keeping children safe.

Staff at the school ensure pupils safety is the highest consideration. As a result, pupils in all phases of the school feel safe, valued and cared for. The strong positive relationships that are fostered amongst pupils and staff contributes to the welcoming environment that is embedded at all levels through the school. Pupils' behaviour is good, and bullying is rare. Pupils know what to do if someone is being bullied or misbehaving. An active school counsellor supports pupils in dealing with challenging situations through playing games, conversations and involving parents where appropriate. This has had a positive impact on all pupils who receive the support. The school promotes themed weeks around staying safe and personal choices, such as online safety and anti-bullying weeks. The school has rigorous systems in place around the use of bring your own device and accessing online content to ensure pupils are safe.

There are excellent procedures around promoting pupils' welfare. Pupils who arrive new to the school are supported initially by a member of staff who they may meet online before arriving in school. A clear system is in place around ensuring pupils settle quickly and identifying any specific needs. These procedures support pupils and are appreciated by their families who commented that their children settle quickly and feel part of the community.

Pupils' attendance in school is well below what is expected in the UK and the school is considering approaches to engage parents and the whole school community in promoting attendance. The high level of pupil mobility stated by the school is due to pupils leaving to return to home countries who may return at a later date. (14% of pupils on roll are from countries experiencing war, such as Israel or Ukraine.) The school has attempted to counter this by keeping pupils on roll as long term absent, so that they provide schooling for the pupils through remote learning online and support from teachers in school. This impacts on the

school's attendance data but enables pupils who are long term absent to return to the school with limited gaps in their education.

The school is continually promoting healthy lifestyles with pupils. Pupils' health needs are met by an onsite doctor and a well-resourced clinic. In addition to providing medical support, the doctor is also involved with health education across the school and the quality of the meals provided in the school's canteen. The school's canteen offers a choice of a hot meal at lunchtime, with choices available such as vegetarian options, salad and also fruit. This is healthy nutritious food that is quality checked before it is served to pupils. The school's promotion of how to make healthy food choices with pupils has involved sessions around Jamie Oliver's healthy meals initiative and inviting local chefs in to teach the pupils how to cook a balanced meal. The school also provides a cafeteria snack shop where pupils can buy a snack. This was well used by pupils at break times and contained a wider range of food choices, such as pizza, crisps and fruit.

Risk assessments are conducted for areas of increased risk, such as laboratories, play areas, and the schools canteen. The school has very recently acquired a swimming pool which was not in use at the time of the inspection. This was identified as a potential risk to pupils' safety particularly once the pool is in use and will require risk assessed procedures and systems in place. Risk assessments for off-site visits are well managed and comprehensive. Security of the site is well managed by a secure turnstile gate at the school entrance and a locked gate at the entrance to the KG area. However, fencing in the recently required area for the younger pupils and the gate that separates the youngest pupils from the older pupils may require further review. CCTV cameras are widely used within the school and a policy regarding their use is in place. Play areas and break times are well supervised by staff. Drop off and pick up at the start and end of the day bus are smooth.

The school meets all the health, safety and fire requirements of the host country. The school is subject to checks by the ministry, and these are up to date and records of the checks are in place. The school has carried out the appropriate number of fire drills throughout the academic year. The school is well equipped with appropriate fire safety equipment such as fire hoses, alarms, and fire blankets. There are a range of fire exit routes with these displayed prominently around the school. Moving forward, the school would benefit from revising and aligning their exit procedures so that all users of the building are fully aware which route they should take to exit the building in the event of a fire or an evacuation.

8. *Standard 4* The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

All members of staff undergo appropriate checks to ensure their suitability for the role when they are appointed to the school. There are robust systems in place to ensure all staff at the school meet the requirements of the standards. The school ensures checks are completed before appointment against an applicant's identity, medical, qualifications, VISA requirements where applicable, and police checks. Almost all staff are recruited locally and undergo the same checks. The school does not use supply staff.

The checks are maintained on a register, and these are overseen by the school's owner and headmaster. The date when the check was made and also the date when the certificate was obtained has been added to the record so that the school is fully compliant with the standards. Drivers and cleaning staff are also listed on the school's register. The school does not have parent volunteers who visit the school regularly or a board of governors.

Most teaching staff are recruited locally and respond to adverts that the school places locally online. The school ensures that all advertisements to recruit staff to the school contain a message stating the school's commitment to keeping children safe. Where the school advertises using social media then the same tagline is in place. The school's headmaster is involved in almost all aspects of recruitment of teaching staff and has completed safer recruitment training. It is recommended that as the school has increased in size, that the head of HR is also trained in safer recruitment. This may enable a delegation of the responsibility around record keeping and also ensure a greater understanding of the responsibility around the recruitment and suitability of staff.

References are in place for staff appointed to the school within the last 3 years. These are held in individual files and on a single central record held centrally and by the HR manager in the school. The school ensures that all staff new to the school will need to supply at least two references, of which one is from the most recent place of work. These will be checked for authenticity. All information is stored securely and confidentially.

Induction processes take new staff through the policies and procedures related to keeping children safe. Induction for teaching staff also includes guidance around the expectations of the school for activities such as lesson planning, lesson delivery, homework, marking, health safety, welfare, and hygiene issues. New teaching staff undergo an interim probationary review to ensure their suitability to the role. Teachers who had recently joined the school talked confidently about the support they had on joining the staff team. They had received training and understand their duties in keeping children safe.

9. Standard 5 The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation of the school meets the standards for BSO and is good.

The school's premises and accommodation include appropriate facilities to meet curriculum requirements and the school's vision and mission statements. The school's accommodation has recently increased in size due to the acquisition of a large residential villa and gardens on an adjacent site. This has been named *Wonderworld* and creatively adapted to provide for the youngest pupils in kindergarten and lower primary. The school's main buildings on 3 floors and a lower ground floor, provide for key stage 2 and secondary pupils. These provide the required specialist facilities and outdoor areas, such as science labs, art rooms, robotics and ICT suites.

At the centre of the *Wonderworld* building, a creatively adapted shared area provides role play areas, an assembly space, an exploratory science area, and a community dining space. Teachers commented on the positive impact this central shared area has had on learning and teaching during lessons. The area is designed to give pupils opportunities to be active and apply their learning to real world situations. Additionally, the space enables pupils from different grades time to interact with one another at breakfast and lunch times. The outdoor provision has yet to be designed to incorporate provision for all seven areas of the EYFS curriculum. Currently the outdoor equipment offers a selection of large play equipment such as slides and climbing frames.

The classroom environments, across the school, are welcoming with access to air purifier systems that can be altered by the teaching staff to ensure comfort throughout the day and at all times throughout the year. All classrooms have interactive screens and pupils have access to iPads. Areas such as the science and computing labs, the Lego and robotics room are well resourced and support the school's curriculum and vision. Library facilities ensure pupils have access to a wide range of literature with online provision complementing hard copies, and these together promote a love of reading.

Displays within the classrooms and around the school contribute to enhancing the environment. Art work is particularly prominent across the school, with recent work by the British graffiti artist, Banksy outside the art rooms. The *Wonderworld* hosts a wealth of creative and inspiring displays including a large tree in the central area. Resources across the school are appropriate to support the curriculum.

Sports facilities include a multifunction hall with suitable flooring, lighting and padding around the room. Due to the expansion of the premises, the outdoor areas have been significantly enhanced and increased. Older pupils have access to a football pitch, tennis court, and basketball nets which are in constant use by different groups of pupils at break and lesson times. The recently acquired swimming pool has been used for the school's summer

programme. The school recognises the benefits their pupils will gain once the pool is in use as part of their physical education curriculum.

Maintenance procedures ensure areas of the school are clean, safe, and appropriate. Disabled access is in place for ground floor areas and a lift gives access to upper floors in the main building. Age-appropriate washroom facilities are located closely to the classrooms for easy access for the youngest pupils.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents is impressive. A wide range of communication systems inform parents about their child's education and events happening within the school. These include weekly emails, social media posts, and the school calendar of events on the school's website. Communication is timely and purposeful. The school's website provides a range of accessible information concerning aspects of school life. This includes information regarding each phase of the school, admissions processes, additional services and news.

To ensure consistency and quick responses to parent enquiries, the school has implemented communication streams via email. Parents favoured this system and commented positively on the systems that the school has embedded. At the beginning of the academic year guidelines are shared with the parents on how to address emails and write subject headings. This has ensured that emails are sent swiftly to the appropriate person in school and that responses are timely and relevant.

Parents receive termly reports that detail their child's academic grades against the objectives of each subject. The reporting period is followed up with parent-teacher meetings where an overview of the pupil's academic performance and learning behaviours in the class are shared. Parents commented that teachers have a secure knowledge of their child, which is shared both verbally and in the written report. A few parents suggested that they would like additional information to explain the reporting grades. They commented that the differences between external and internal assessment grades are often difficult to interpret.

The school has a strong system of including parents wherever possible in the life of the school. Throughout the year parent workshops and project presentations are offered. The parent academy is an exemplary initiative that is available to all parents led by an external empathy coach. Every month there is a different theme relevant to parents, such as how to raise a self-confident child. This enables parents to share their experiences and learn useful strategies to implement at home. Parents talked positively of the opportunity to be invited into school to see their child's learning and projects and be involved in the cultural weeks that run throughout the year. Parents were particularly praiseworthy of how well their children grow in confidence once they become part of the school.

The school provides an impressive onboarding programme for children who are new to the school. This includes online meetings with children before they arrive at the school, a transition session run by the empathy coach, and a friend for the child. Parents commented on how this supports their children in integrating quickly into the school and becoming a part of the community.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO.

A complaints policy is in place which meets the standards. This is in writing and on the school's website. This initially defines the difference between an informal concern and complaint so that all stakeholders are clear from the outset.

Clear steps are stated in the policy to identify how a parent or carer may make a complaint and timescales included so that complaints can be dealt with in a timely manner. At different stages of the procedure parents can raise their complaint if it is not resolved, to the school's principal. In the event of this not resolving the complaint, then a panel of 3 people will be established to hear the complaint formally.

The school has a system in place for logging parents' complaints and is extremely active in resolving these. The school's headmaster is very proactive in dealing with parents and over the past 3 years along with the school's senior leaders has significantly reduced the number of parent complaints. This is in part due to building very effective communication channels with parents that they trust, and ensuring parents feel that their voice is heard. It is recommended as the school continues to grow that a more formal system to log parent complaints is established. This will enable patterns over time to be identified and where there are common issues these are addressed.

The majority of parents are very positive about the school, and this was evident in those who met with the inspection team, and in the responses to an annual questionnaire. Parents value the community feel which has been established within the school, and one parent shared that they feel the school is their second home. Parents say that the school, leaders, and all staff are very open and transparent and that any concern is dealt with. The school responds effectively to all reasonable requests and parents feel that they are listened to and that their views are valued. Parents identify the leaders as a strength of the school, particularly in leading an open and transparent ethos.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are good, with some outstanding features.

The school's owner is actively involved in the business of the school and carries the title, principal. She has a clear vision for the school's strategic development and is determined and ambitious. Her knowledge of educational policy and practice draws upon her experience to set up the school, a wide range of qualifications, and visits to other international schools and conferences. With this background, the school's principal oversees the school's strategic direction and has visionary plans for the future.

The school's 3 senior leaders; the headmaster, deputy headteacher and academic dean, have an accurate understanding of the contextual challenges that the school faces. They are knowledgeable in education, can draw upon their different experiences of a British education system, and have identified the priorities on which the school should focus. This is clear in the school's SEF, which is accurate, succinct and evaluates the school's performance against the BSO standards. The leaders identify in the SEF the barriers that the school faces to high quality learning and the actions that the school can take to address these.

The 3 leaders work well together as a team and ensure school improvement is at the forefront of all actions. This is translated into actions in the school development plan. As the school expands from a small school to a larger school there is an opportunity for the school's senior leaders to delegate specific areas of responsibility. In most cases the senior leaders carry more than one area of leadership roles and have a class teaching responsibility. They are also very involved in supporting staff development across the school.

Safeguarding is integral to the life of the school and pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Pupils commented that they feel safe and enjoy school. The strength of communication further enables staff to support all pupils' welfare. Regular meetings on both academic and multi-disciplinary issues are held such that staff are informed and actions are followed up. The school moved to a vertical leadership structure following the recommendations from the previous inspection visit. As a result, subject leadership is strong. Subject leaders are given designated time weekly to oversee the implementation of action plans, although they commented that a lot of time is used to support individual teachers. Going forward it may now be a consideration for the school to appoint leaders for secondary and primary, so that teaching staff have an overall point of contact for the phase in which they teach, and one person is accountable for the actions of each phase.

Support for staff is high and there are a wide range of professional development initiatives provided by the school, such as recent training on Suggestopedia and also Thinking based learning. Staff are given opportunities to complete Cambridge professional qualifications; 12 staff members have completed the level 2 Penta inspector's training and there are a range of

professional development workshops provided for the whole staff. Teachers talked positively about the level of support that the school provides. Primary mentors support staff new to the school and also quality assurance mentors are in place.

As a result of the strong level of support staff are very loyal to the school and talk positively about working at the school. The demands on training and monitoring are high for the school leaders. Teachers also spoke of the difficulties that they face as pupils are joining the school all the time. While they appreciated that this was positive for the school, they sometimes found it difficult to manage.

The school runs smoothly due to the close attention that is paid to pupils' welfare by all staff members. The school's leaders are proactive in ensuring all stakeholders can benefit from the education that the school provides. They work closely with the school's principal and owner, who attends the school daily.