

## **British schools overseas inspection report**

### **British School of Barcelona**

**Inspection dates**  
**Reporting inspector**

**28 – 30 March 2011**  
**Brian Oppenheim**

## Issue and revision record

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by three inspectors from Cambridge Education using the DfE standards for inspection of British schools overseas. The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's owners on the overall effectiveness of the school and the standard of education it provides. The inspection team was joined by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who monitored the quality of the inspection.

## Information about the school

The British School of Barcelona was founded in 1958 in Castelldefels under the name of The Anglo-American School. The school moved to its present buildings in 1999 and the name was changed to The British School of Barcelona to reflect the type of education offered. The school is a founding member of the National Association of British Schools in Spain. The previous headteacher left at the end of the summer term 2010 and a new headteacher takes up the post in September this year. There are 739 students, 360 boys and 379 girls, including 104 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and 79 in the sixth form. The majority of students speak English as a second language and 50 are at an early stage of English acquisition. One hundred and eighteen students are identified as having special educational needs. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties. The school is non-selective. Students have gained places at universities such as Cambridge, Oxford, Bath, Bristol, UCL, UB, Pompeu Fabra and ESADE. In 2011 five students won the Outstanding Cambridge Learners in Spain awards and 18 won the Edexcel High Achievers in Spain awards.

## Evaluation of the school

The British School of Barcelona meets the accreditation standards set out by the Department for Education for England. It is a good school with some outstanding features. The school provides instruction in English, has teachers who are native English speakers and students receive a broad and balanced curriculum which equips them with the skills and qualifications to enable them to enter or re enter the British education system with ease. The school is recommended for continued full authorisation to function as a British School in Spain for 1200 pupil from Nursery to Year 13 (3 – 18 years).

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive an effective education. The vast majority of children arrive in the nursery speaking languages other than English. They make good progress in learning to speak English and their vocabulary continues to grow well as they continue through reception. Children develop well in their social and personal skills, learning to get on with one another and to work diligently and thoughtfully. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now collecting data about children's outcomes in the full range of Early Learning Goals and this will enable staff and parents to have a clear view of actual achievement and progress.

Students in the primary and secondary schools achieve well and make good progress during their time at the school. Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. This is

demonstrated by the 2010 examination results at IGCSE, and AS and A levels which are above the international average overall. At the end of Year 6 pupils' achievement is above average for England based on their performance in the national tests.

Students' personal development is good overall and they develop excellent social skills. They are cared for well and receive good support: by the time they leave school they are well-rounded young people. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious for the school and its students and with expert support from the owners are increasingly successful in making improvements and raising everyone's expectations. The requirements for safeguarding are met in full.

### **Quality of education**

The school provides its children, pupils and students with a good quality of education at all key stages and in the sixth form. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the new curriculum used in England has been followed since the beginning of this academic year. It is providing staff with an excellent framework for planning interesting and appropriate activities for the age group. The planned curriculum allows children good experiences through play to develop their skills and knowledge, and make good progress.

In the primary and secondary schools the curriculum is well balanced, meets the requirements of the English National Curriculum and complies with local requirements. It combines these requirements effectively so that students' learning is broad and balanced. It supports students' learning in English effectively and ensures they develop their Spanish and Catalan language skills well. Planning is good: for example, there are schemes of work for all subjects. However, cross-curricular links are limited and opportunities to build on prior learning are missed. Sometimes, for example, the same work is reported in different subjects.

The curriculum engages pupils effectively and, for the most part is matched appropriately to their needs, interests and aspirations. A particular strength is the way the curriculum is contextualised to take account of the local culture. There is a good PSE programme that contributes effectively to students' personal development. In many cases the curriculum is matched appropriately to pupils' aptitudes and abilities but this is not consistent across the school. In Years 1 – 6, planning is more likely to take account of the range of different abilities than in Years 7 – 11. For example, planning does not always show how the most able pupils are to be catered for. This limits the progress of these pupils. However, senior leaders are aware that there is a need to improve this aspect of the curriculum and action has already been taken. The English department, for example, has developed a differentiated programme that meets the needs of students who are native English speakers and those for whom English is a second or third language. Similarly, the examination board for mathematics has been changed, additional courses in science are being reviewed and an accelerated IGCSE Spanish course is being introduced, to ensure that students' needs are better met. The range of after school activities is good and includes, for example, singing, dance and sports clubs but take-up is limited, partly because many attend local clubs. Some pupils compete at regional and national level.

Students move through Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form at a pace best suited to their individual abilities and aspirations. The criteria for students to continue into the sixth form are deliberately inclusive. Courses and programmes, while essentially academic, are matched well to the aspirations and capabilities of students who appreciate the level of support provided by their teachers.

Teaching is good. The large majority of lessons seen were good: some were outstanding while others were satisfactory. As a result, students make good progress overall. They have very positive attitudes to their work. Amongst strengths observed in teaching were secure and enthusiastic subject knowledge, a brisk pace, confident use of appropriate technology to engage students and, in the best lessons, productive questioning skills, successful management of a range of approaches to match varying learning styles. However, in a significant minority of lessons, work and activities were not matched closely enough to the range of students' abilities and aptitudes in the class: expectations for more able students are not always sufficiently challenging. Students are very willing learners but do not always have opportunities to work independently or to make an active contribution to lessons. Where students are given opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work, they were able to identify how to improve their work. The marking of work is uneven. Praise is used well to encourage students but it is not consistently followed up with guidance on how they can improve their work. Relationships are extremely good. Children, pupils and students are very respectful of their teachers and listen carefully. They engage readily with the tasks set, and are highly motivated and very enthusiastic learners. These very positive attitudes to school have a strong impact on learning.

The school has a good understanding of the needs of students with additional learning difficulties. In the great majority of lessons planning identifies these students clearly. Less able students are "paired" with those who are more able to as a way to support their learning but the information is used only rarely to set different work or modify the level of support given by the teacher.

The use of assessment to inform planning and to help students improve their work is at an early stage of development. There is good practice where students are grouped by ability and are given support matched to their needs. Some lesson plans identify different learning outcomes while in others more able pupils are expected to work at a more advanced level. However, this is not consistent in all lessons. Using questions to check learning, deepen understanding and challenge students' thinking is relatively underdeveloped. Across the school assessment is used mainly to test students' understanding and knowledge and only sometimes is it used to support their learning. This is one of the reasons why progress is good and not outstanding.

Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. There is a good balance of adult directed and child initiated activities and the three adults per class (two teachers and one classroom assistant) work well together. They ensure there is always supervision outside and that appropriate attention is given to small teaching groups. Adults are making good observational assessments to keep track of children's progress in the new curriculum. Relationships are very good and children take their activities very seriously and are learning to stay working for increasingly long periods of time.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with aspects that are outstanding. Social awareness is promoted effectively by the PSE programme: for example, Year 9 study issues such as being citizens of the world and mood swings in adolescence. Students enjoy school a great deal as evidenced by their very positive attitudes, outstanding behaviour, and the courtesy they show for others, including their teachers. Students have a strong moral code and know right from wrong. The PSE programme, assemblies, and Spanish and Catalan social studies all provide good opportunities for spiritual and cultural reflection. The school is very successful in enabling students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. This is reflected well in their behaviour: they are polite, attentive, considerate and friendly. Older students act as reading partners to pupils in the primary school and are involved in organising school events. The newly established school council is starting to involve students in the life of the school. It promotes collaborative working effectively although it is too early to see the full impact of this work across the school.

There are good links with the local community. Visits to the school by a local police officer and "parent professionals" help to support students' knowledge of public institutions in Spain and an awareness of good citizenship in a local context. At the same time, the school provides appropriate opportunities for students to develop their understanding and knowledge of modern British life. For example, students in Years 7 to 11 have the opportunity to spend a term at a sister school in the UK and Years 6 and 11, and the sixth form, visit the UK. There are also extensive links with, for example, other local schools and international schools, Spanish and UK universities, schools in the UK and local sports facilities. Pupils participate successfully in the Duke of Edinburgh International award scheme.

## **Welfare, health and safety of the students**

Provision for students' overall welfare, health and safety is good. There is a good range of policies that reflect the latest British guidance and the day-to-day care of students is good. The staff and designated person for child protection have received the appropriate level of training and the child protection policy is up-to-date. All the administrative staff and teaching assistants have received first aid training. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Instances of bullying are very rare and the need for serious sanctions is even rarer. Pupils develop a good awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles through the curriculum and the good quality food provided by the school.

The school manages the transition from Key Stage 3 to 4 and from Key Stage 4 to the sixth form well. Students receive good advice about careers and the process of university application, for both Spain and the UK, is well received by students and effective. Senior leaders are aware of the need to improve arrangements for the transition between Key Stage 2 and 3. They have begun to put in place procedures to improve this aspect but the use of data to track students' progress is not yet embedded.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### **Suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The proprietor ensures that all the required checks are made on staff to confirm their suitability to work with children and recorded in a single central register.

### **Premises and accommodation**

The school's accommodation is good and supports students' learning most effectively. Specialist rooms for science, music, PE and ICT support the school's curriculum and students' learning. All the facilities meet requirements, including those for students who are ill, and security arrangements. They are suitable for the number and age of children, pupils and students. The school has identified the need to improve the resources for science and is currently implementing a development programme. There is good outside space and staggered break times ensure safe and pleasant outdoor play for each age group. The school is also able to use the adjacent tennis courts and the nearby Olympic Canal, thus broadening the range of sports provided. The buildings are well maintained and provide a pleasant environment that supports learning effectively.

The inspection also included an overview of the new buildings and expansion plans for the school. These will enhance the quality of the facilities and the range of specialist rooms. Inspectors recommend the full authorisation of the British School of Barcelona and its new buildings as a British school in Spain.

### **Provision of information for parents, carers and others**

There is a good and helpful range of information available to the public through the school's website. This includes the complaints and safeguarding policies as well as other policies relating to the work of the school. Parents feel well informed about the school and their children's progress. The website also includes examination results adding further to the sense of partnership and openness which the school has developed with its parents and the community.

The school works closely with parents to support their children. During the inspection, for example, the school hosted a parents' workshop focusing on the education of bilingual children.

### **Procedures for handling complaints**

The school meets the requirements and has clear procedures for handling complaints fairly and in a timely manner.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are effective and the capacity for improvement is good. The school was sold in October 2007. Senior leaders, with the effective support of the new owners, have led the school through a period of change successfully and established a strong team approach. Senior leaders are clear about the direction for the school, share this effectively with staff and are highly focused on improving the quality of education for students. This is beginning to have a positive impact. There is now consistency in the way teachers plan their lessons, and teaching is good or outstanding in the majority of lessons. Achievement in English has improved, the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum has been introduced successfully and there is a clear focus on ensuring that courses meet the needs of students. The school's documentation has been revised, upgraded and, where necessary, extended. A revised appraisal procedure and a systematic programme of regular lesson observations, feedback and target setting have been introduced. This is now giving senior leaders a more accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The involvement of middle leaders in this work has been effective in building leadership capacity.

Many of these developments have been introduced relatively recently and mean that there are still some barriers to overcome. While much of the teaching is good or better, best practice is not yet consistently embedded. This means that teachers are not always able to track the progress of individual students across and between year groups closely enough. Senior leaders have identified that student tracking and assessment to support learning are important areas for development. The best practice is in the primary school although it is still not consistent across all the classes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and ensures staff pull together to give the children a good start in their time at the school. Resources have been much improved in the last year and provide the opportunity for good quality learning through play. The department has planned thoughtfully for the move to larger accommodation. There is an effective commitment to improvement.

The use of data to analyse performance is beginning to be introduced but is not yet well established. In English, mathematics and science in the secondary school, for example, IGCSE, and AS and A Level results are used to show the trend over the past few years. It is evident that, overall, students reach high levels in examinations but the data are not used to analyse whether students make enough progress from their starting points. In the primary school, increasing use is being made of test results to identify areas of development, for example in science. In the secondary school students are expected to set their own targets but these are not linked closely enough to assessment information or specific enough to help them improve their work.

There is an increasing emphasis on professional development aimed at improving teachers' knowledge and skills. CPD is generally relevant: some is based on individual need while generic training is linked to staff reviews and improvement planning. As a result CDP makes an appropriate contribution to improvement.

Procedures for safeguarding are secure and ensure that pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding policies are appropriate, staff are properly trained and new staff are

checked to ensure their suitability. The owners give considerable support to the school and have a positive impact on developments.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all the requirements for British schools overseas.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning even further so they are consistently good or better by:
  - setting more demanding work for the more able so that they make the best possible progress
  - using a wider range of strategies to ensure that students are engaged actively in their learning
  - using assessment information to set individual targets for students
  - better use of questioning to check progress, probe understanding and extend learning
  - using marking to provide students with feedback about how to improve their work.
  
- Strengthen the use of assessment and other data to enhance learning by
  - developing teachers' expertise in the use of information about students' attainment and progress
  - setting students clear targets based on their prior attainment and current performance
  - using the data to identify areas for development
  - analysing test and examination results by comparing them with national and international data and with students' starting points
  - developing further the process for tracking students' progress so that students and teachers have an accurate picture of how well they are doing
  - using the data to ensure that all students are set appropriately challenging work.
  
- Embed the work of the school council so that students become more involved in contributing to the life of the school.
  
- Develop cross-curricular links so that:
  - work planned in one subject builds on that covered in another
  - opportunities for repeating the same work in different subjects are minimised.

## Inspection judgements

|             |      |              |            |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

### The quality of education

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education   |  | √ |  |  |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils |  | √ |  |  |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs         |  | √ |  |  |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning  |  | √ |  |  |

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

|  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |   | √ |  |  |
| The behaviour of pupils  | √ |   |  |  |

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils |  | √ |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|

### Leadership and management

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The quality of leadership and management |  | √ |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|

## School details

|   |  |            |            |
|---|--|------------|------------|
| <b>School status</b>  | Independent  |            |            |
| <b>Type of school</b>   | British International School   |            |            |
| <b>Date school opened</b>   | 1958   |            |            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>  | 3 - 18   |            |            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>   | Mixed  |            |            |
| <b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>                              | Boys: 360  | Girls: 379 | Total: 739 |
| <b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b> | 118  |            |            |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>                                       | €8450 - €9940  |            |            |
| <b>Address of school</b>  | Calle Ginesta, 26<br>08860 Castelldefels,<br>Barcelona, Spain                                  |            |            |
| <b>Telephone number</b>   | 93 665 15 84   |            |            |
| <b>Email address</b>  | <a href="mailto:luisf@britishschoolbarcelona.com">luisf@britishschoolbarcelona.com</a>         |            |            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>  | Secondary School Headteacher:<br>Amanda Hughes<br>Primary School Headteacher:<br>Clare Oxberry |            |            |
| <b>Proprietor</b>   | Cognita  |            |            |