



**British Schools Overseas**  
**School inspection report**  
**Swans International School**  
**Marbella**  
**24-25 November 2014**

## Issue and revision record

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

Two inspectors from Cambridge Education's British Schools Overseas Inspectorate carried out this inspection, and Ofsted accredited inspectors.

The inspectors visited 44 lessons and held meetings with staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at data on pupils' attainment over the past three years, at schemes of work, policies, the school improvement plan and the school's self-review.

### The inspection team:

Penny Holden	Lead inspector, Cambridge Education
Angela Cook	Team inspector, Cambridge Education
Adrian Massam	Team inspector, NABSS
Sarah King	Team inspector, NABSS

Inspectors used the Department for Education standards for the inspection of British schools overseas aligned with the NABSS accreditation criteria. 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. Cambridge Education reports to the Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for British schools overseas as follows:

- the quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching and assessment)
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- the welfare, health and safety of the pupils
- the suitability of the proprietor and staff
- the premises and accommodation
- the provision of information for parents, carers and others
- the school's procedures for handling complaints
- leadership and management of the school.

## Information about the school

Swans International School was founded in Marbella in 1971 as a Primary School. The Secondary School has been open since 2004. The two parts of the school are approximately 5 minutes away from each other. The school has over 600 students on the roll, from Early Years to Year 13, representing some 30 different nationalities. Year 6 is located on the Secondary School site. Spanish students account for the largest

percentage of learners at Swans school. The school is authorised by the Spanish Ministry of Education to offer a British education to children of all nationalities and is a member of the National Association of British Schools in Spain.

## Overall effectiveness

This is a good school with some outstanding features that gives its students an effective education that is aligned appropriately with the National Curriculum for England and Wales. As a result, students gain a good understanding of how British society works, enabling them to move back to the UK for further study if they so wish. The balanced focus on the Spanish curriculum also provides effective opportunities for students to enter Spanish universities.

Many children speak little English on entry with most children achieving the early learning goals before Year 1. Progress through Key Stage 1 and 2 is very good and has been improving consistently over the last three years. Achievement is in line with expectations and ensures that students are able to transition from one stage to the next effectively. The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is very effective because Year 6 begin their studies on the secondary site at the start of the academic year.

Overall, IGCSE results are average for British Schools in Spain with 82% to 85% A\* to C, with 100% gaining 5 A\* - C grades. Results in English and mathematics are consistent with these figures. However, science results are lower, with only 60% to 70% achieving A\* to C. International Baccalaureate results are consistent with world averages, with languages and humanities achievement often half a point higher whilst science results tend to be lower.

Achievement is good in most curriculum areas. Students are reaching the standards expected for similar schools and intakes. In primary, they achieve very high standards especially in literacy. In secondary there is variation according to subject, with most achieving good standards, such as in English, but there are dips in science and post-16 mathematics.

Students' welfare, health and safety are supported very effectively and this aspect of the school's provision is outstanding. Both sites are supervised well and students move around from activity to activity safely and calmly. Student behaviour is excellent. The good decorative order, attractive planting and the quality of display throughout the two sites helps the students take a real pride in their school and contributes to the very positive ethos. Students are courteous to one another and to visitors around the building and treat the excellent facilities with respect.

Teaching and learning are mostly good with outstanding features. Teachers know their students well and are keen to help them to make the very best progress they can. Relationships are good and consequentially there are excellent attitudes to learning in most lessons. Teachers are keen to support students' learning and break knowledge and

skills down into bite sized pieces but on occasions this makes students too reliant on the teacher to tell them what to do. The very best teaching makes students really think and use mistakes to strengthen their learning. Students feel they are given good support for learning and appreciate the efforts made by teachers.

The curriculum provides a good range of subjects that meets the needs of students effectively. A wide choice of extra-curricular activities, from ballet, football, Spanish, homework and yoga to Mandarin, extends considerably students' experiences. School trips, such as those to Alcazaba by the art and humanities departments, extend these opportunities further.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and they develop as well rounded, thoughtful individuals who contribute very well to the school and benefit fully from their experiences. The school ensures pupils acquire a good appreciation of and respect for the Spanish culture and for other cultures. They are proud of the many nationalities represented by pupils in the school and see this as a great opportunity to find out about the world.

Leadership and management are good. The headteachers of both schools and their leadership teams have a clear vision for the school, focussed on giving every student the very best education. Middle leaders and other members of staff share this vision and work cooperatively to support students' learning. The school developments are well chosen and thought through but not always fully understood and acted on by every member of staff. There is excellent capacity for continued improvement in senior leadership and current improvements, whilst some are not fully embedded, are taking the school in the right direction. The commitment of both headteachers to work together to share effective policies, procedures and to drive improvements forward offer an practical strategy to lead the school to further success.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

Swans International School, Marbella meets in full the requirements for British schools overseas, as laid down by the UK Department for Education. The school promotes a British education for its pupils well through its teaching, curriculum in lessons and elsewhere and the focus on IGCSE and IB Diploma examinations. It meets the requirements of the Spanish Ministry of Education.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

Improve teaching further by:

- designing tasks that challenge the learners more, especially the most able, in most lessons
- continuing with the focus on improving ways of questioning that require learners to think and not just recount information they know
- planning lessons and writing learning objectives to focus on what learners are to learn rather than what they are going to do
- continuing with the school's focus for developing students' independence in learning as currently they rely too heavily on their teachers for every step.

## The quality of education provided by the school

### The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It ensures that almost all students make good or better progress as it is suitably broad and provides students with a balance of subjects that meets their needs. It follows the National Curriculum, for England and Wales and includes subjects required by the Spanish Ministry of Education.

In the Foundation Stage, called Early Years and Reception at Swans (three and four year olds), the curriculum provides generally good early years experiences and opportunities for children to develop their skills in all areas of learning including literacy, numeracy and social, personal and emotional skills. This is because planning follows closely the English guidance for the Foundation Stage. Some activities for the youngest children have a formality that they are not yet ready for as their fine-motor skills, for example, are not developed sufficiently through play activities. However, children transfer into Year 1 with a good range of skills and understanding and make brisk progress with their learning as they move through to the primary school and their achievement is outstanding.

The primary school curriculum is based securely on the English National Curriculum and makes good provision for students to develop their basic skills so they achieve very good standards. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of all the students. Clear planning of the curriculum ensures progression and continuity through primary to secondary. Year 6 students have all their classes on the secondary school site and the curriculum experiences they receive ensure they have a very good transition to the next stage of their education.



The secondary curriculum is also good with a range of subjects that enables students to have a broad and interesting experience and prepares them well for their IGCSE examinations and the requirements of the Spanish curriculum. The sixth form is developing well with increasing numbers ensuring that a broader curriculum can be offered and the students' enjoyment of and success in the IB curriculum is strengthening.

Education for personal, social and health education is outstanding in both secondary and primary stages and helps develop students' personal skills and prepares them for life outside school most effectively. Students respond well to raising money for those less fortunate than themselves and enjoy the opportunities to take part in activities to raise money such as cake sales.

The wide range of enrichment activities such as extra-curricular visits, visitors and clubs are enthusiastically taken part in by the students in both the primary and secondary schools. The range of these opportunities has a very strong impact on students' personal development.

Careers advice includes a Year 9 career day with outside speakers, work experience for Year 10. The recent careers day focussing on business and economics was seen as very successful. There is a very good handbook to help students access their strengths and interests. Teachers and students recognise that advice for universities and careers is very effective as all students are sought out and given good guidance.

The recently introduced, well-conceived strategies for working with students with special educational needs in the secondary school have not yet demonstrated their full impact in all lessons. There are some excellent case studies of outstanding support for individual pupils and their needs. The school employs its own psychological councillor who works closely with the school to support those with needs.

## **Staffing**

The quality of staffing is good; they are well qualified and have suitable experience. The changes in teaching staff, especially midyear, cause problems for continuity of learning on some occasions when staff leave without warning. The school does extremely well to fill the gaps quickly but this can cause problems, as they do not have time to secure a large pool of candidates to select the best. However, the vast majority of staff stay for a good length of time and when spoken to were extremely happy working at the school. There are good quality professional development opportunities for all and development ideas for the school are contributed to by the staff although not all are as clear about how initiatives are to be pursued.



## The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is typically good and there are some outstanding features. Where this is the case, students learn well and make good progress to achieve above average standards. The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good; however it varies in quality too much in some subjects where staff changes have slowed the improvements in teaching that the school was planning.

Where teaching is good it has the following common characteristics:

- Respectful and warm relationships encourage exemplary behaviour in lessons and consequently excellent attitudes to learning from Early Years to Year 13.
- Teachers structure carefully how they present information and tasks to students so that they understand.
- Resources are good and even when classrooms are small they are well used to enable learning.
- English is used as the medium of learning in all lessons other than Spanish, which adds to the students' fluency in the language.
- Teachers know the pupils' strengths and weaknesses and their planning effectively supports differences in their learning so all can achieve.
- Adherence to long-term planning ensures a good progression through the curriculum and the different phases.

Where teaching is less effective but with a little adaption could be improved;

- The over prescriptive structure of the lesson meant that students were 'spoon fed' information and had to do little thinking of their own.
- In too many lessons the most able found work too easy and would have relished some additional challenge.
- Sometimes the students worked extremely hard on tasks the teacher has taken great care in devising but the tasks occupied rather than helped them make progress. This was often where the teacher had planned learning intentions that focused on what students were to do rather than on what they were going to learn.

Some changes in teaching staff, particularly for the very youngest children, and in some subjects in the secondary school have left the subject knowledge in these areas with weaknesses, which impacts on the quality of learning for students. Students also say changes in staff make learning harder for them. The school is aware of the problems these changes have caused and is tackling those they can make an impact on.

On the occasions where teaching was outstanding, the teachers' excellent subject knowledge was used to set challenging tasks and to ask questions that made all the students think, and no one was afraid to get answers wrong because they knew they would learn from their mistakes.

Teachers take great care when marking to help students know what they need to do to do improve and students were grateful for this support in both the primary and secondary school. The school has correctly identified the need to continue to develop the students as independent learners.

## **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students have excellent attitudes to school and to their learning; both on the primary and secondary sites. This has an excellent impact on their learning because they behave very well, are respectful towards their teachers and their peers, and are keen to do well in their studies. There is a clear behaviour policy but teachers explained they have rarely have to use it because there is no reason to do so.

Students have thoughtful and responsible attitudes to others and are happy to talk about important issues in society with humility and care. They relish the fact that there are many different nationalities in the school and are very respectful to the views of others and interested in other customs and religions. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong and understand how to behave with, and respond to, others. The school councils on both secondary and primary sites demonstrate good evidence of their well-balanced views about the world. During the secondary school council meeting students were happy to raise the requests of their classmates but also expected to come up with realistic solutions to make these practical. The substitution of chilli con carne for stew on the menu, was one example, as was the idea of using sixth formers to supervise the basketball court at break times to allow younger students access.

Students have a good understanding of the issues related to bullying. They have recently completed an anti-bullying week that covered extensively all aspects, including cyber-bullying, and know what to do and who to go to on the rare occasions where there are issues.

Cultural development is promoted effectively though the curriculum and the range of after school and extra-curricular activities. As a result, students gain a secure understanding of both the Spanish and British cultures.

## **The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The quality of welfare, health and safety provided by the school is outstanding. Staff get to know each child well over their time at the school on both sites. They have excellent relationships with their students, high expectations of behaviour and care for them very well. Students are enthusiastic about their time in school and say they are proud to be students at Swans. They make friends quickly, often being exceptionally welcoming to new arrivals. These good relationships and very positive attitudes have a strong impact on students' academic and personal development. Students understand about how to lead healthy lives and know how to keep themselves safe. The comprehensive PHSE

curriculum including the primary school's 'Virtues curriculum' promotes these very effectively. Very effective implementation of anti-bullying policies compliments the students' caring attitudes and ensures their behaviour is excellent and that they think thoughtfully about the impact of their actions on others.

There are robust policies to ensure the wellbeing of all students on both sites, these include fire safety, first aid, risk analysis of outside visits and health and safety. Registers and attendance figures are kept diligently and checked to ensure children are safe. The policies are followed thoroughly and this helps everyone in the school community keep students safe and protected.

### **The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The proprietors ensure that rigorous measures are followed to ensure staff and volunteers who are employed have passed all the checks required by Spanish and UK governments. Details are recorded appropriately. Where relevant, the UK's DBS enhanced disclosure is used to check the suitability of British teaching staff. Procedures meet the requirements for British schools overseas.

### **The premises and accommodation**

The premises and accommodation are very good and contribute particularly well to students' well being and to the school's positive climate for learning. The primary school site uses its limited accommodation extremely effectively and the secondary site enables high quality learning to take place inside and out. Both sites are extremely well maintained and decorated. The Year 6 pupils are housed very successfully on the secondary site. The accommodation meets the needs of both the students and the curriculum. There is good accommodation for the sixth form. It is safe and welcoming with attractive displays and provides good access for disabled students. There are sufficient toilet facilities for students and staff; with appropriate medical facilities on both sites. Outside play and recreation facilities are good, constantly developed and maintained well, although the students on the secondary site complain the high netting on the court has large holes in it. There is an indoor swimming pool on the secondary school site. The premises and accommodation meets all the BSO requirements.

### **The provision of information for parents, carers and others**

Provision is outstanding. The school provides clear information for parents including a high quality joint monthly newsletter. They are given regular information including several written reports a year and open evenings three times a year so that parents can talk to teachers about their child's progress. There are occasional workshop meetings exploring various aspects of the curriculum. They are given a complaints procedure and policies for admissions and attendance. The information provided by the school for parents meets

the requirements for British schools overseas. Good attendance to parents meetings and surveys of parents' views indicate they are very supportive of the school. Case studies of the support given to vulnerable children show the great appreciation of their parents.

## **The school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school meets the BSO requirements for handling complaints in full. There are few parents who raise any concerns but those that do are acted upon with thoughtfulness and speed. During the inspection a parent, concerned about a school uniform issue, was courteously and immediately supported by a member of the administrative staff and the matter dealt with successfully.

## **Leadership and management of the school**

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteachers of both the primary and the secondary school provide clear direction and their strategic leadership, ensures that all staff share their high expectations for continual development and improvement. They are increasingly working together to ensure common policies and to share best practice across both schools. The primary school has been in existence for many more years than the secondary school and therefore has some well-embedded policies, practices and effective systems. The secondary school has a much larger site and newer buildings that give additional experiences such as swimming and specialist accommodation and subject expertise. Both headteachers are keen that all students benefit from these.

There is an extensive range of posts of responsibility across the school which results in a strong shared vision and successful delegation. Senior leaders are effective and work together for the benefit of the students. The impact of this is demonstrated by the high standards achieved by students and the good progress they make from Early Years to Year 13. Middle leaders also make an effective contribution to the school and play an active part in the good day-to-day provision and experience given to students as well as other whole school priorities. The effectiveness of some head's of subject in both the primary and secondary school has been affected by mid year staff turnover, although senior management has worked quickly to ensure coverage. Robust processes are followed consistently to ensure safe recruitment.

Staff are regularly observed teaching and this information is used to bring about improvement in practice. Other checks on effectiveness take place in addition to lesson observations; these include work scrutiny, moderation of assessment and reviews of student progress. Where these are used together they provide a clear profile of where a teacher is successfully helping students to make progress and can pinpoint exactly what needs to be addressed to improve teaching. However, some observation records focus too much on teaching without recourse to how successful it is in helping the students learn.

The school development priorities come from a good range of information collected through the schools' regular on-going systems for review, including mini department inspections and are appropriate as they focus on improving the students' outcomes. The plans drawn up are clear in both schools and the process in the primary school are well embedded and followed through. Secondary school staff were clear about the school development priorities but some who were spoken to were not so clear about the stage the work on each one had got to, and said they were waiting for senior management to tell them what they had to do.

School leaders are generally effective in improving the high quality experience given to students and in continuing their success in achieving well in tests and examinations. The school has a very positive ethos on both sites with students and teachers striving for

excellent personal and academic development. There is a strong capacity for improvement in both the primary and the secondary school with well-focussed and determined leadership who have the full backing of their staff.

## Glossary of terms

### What inspection judgements mean

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		<input type="checkbox"/>		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		<input type="checkbox"/>		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		<input type="checkbox"/>		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		<input type="checkbox"/>		

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

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<input type="checkbox"/>			
The behaviour of pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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### Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management		<input type="checkbox"/>		
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent, day		
<b>Type of school</b>	All through, 3 – 18 years		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1971		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 – 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys:	Girls:	Total:
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	6,027€ - 11,956€		
<b>Address of school</b>	<p><b>Swans International Primary School</b> Urb. El Capricho, s/n Marbella, 29602 Malaga, Spain</p> <p><b>Swans International Sierra Blanca</b> C/Lago de los Cisnes, s/n 29602 Marbella Malaga, Spain</p>		
<b>Telephone number</b>	Primary (+34) 952 773 248 Sierra Blanca (+34) 952 902 755		
<b>Fax number</b>	Primary (+34) 952 776 431 Sierra Blanca (+34) 952 900 914		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@swansschool.net">admin@swansschool.net</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Kearns (Primary) Catherine Davies (Secondary)		