

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

The British School of Amsterdam

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Age Range	3 to 17
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	1st to 4th March 2009

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The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The British School of Amsterdam is a non-selective, co-educational international school for pupils from the ages of three to seventeen. It is situated in the southern suburbs of Amsterdam. The Lower School site consists of several buildings close to each other. It comprises the Nursery and Reception classes which form the Early Years Foundation Stage in two adjacent buildings, and Years 1, 2 and 3 of the Junior School, known as the Lower Juniors, which are in buildings close to each other. Years 4 to 6 of the Junior School, known as the Upper Juniors, are on the Upper School site, which is situated one and a half kilometres away. The site includes a new building for the Upper Juniors, opened in September 2008, and an older building for Years 7 to 12, known as the Senior School.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1978 by a small group of parents living in Amsterdam, who wished their children to receive an English style primary school education. From small beginnings, the school grew steadily in size during the 1980s and 1990s and more rapidly since 2000, so that it now has 687 pupils, of whom 597 are full-time and 90 are part-time. The school intends to expand its upper age range to eighteen in September 2009.
- 1.3 Pupils come from families with very varied cultural and religious backgrounds, and over 40 different nationalities are represented in the school. Almost two-thirds of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and over a quarter of them receive extra support for their language development. Just over a tenth of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and thirteen pupils have been assessed by psychologists as having special educational needs. Pupils come from families whose parents work predominantly in the business and commercial sector, many for multi-national companies on short-term contracts. Many younger pupils have had limited formal schooling before the ages of five or six. Many pupils, particularly higher up the school, have also attended more than one school in more than one country. On average, pupils stay at the school for two to three years and very few remain for more than six years. These factors make it difficult to judge pupils' attainment on entry to the school. However, the evidence suggests that if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their overall performance will be in line with the national average for maintained schools in England.
- 1.4 The school has two key aims: to provide a high quality English education for families of the international community in Amsterdam; and to create a stimulating and caring environment which enables all individuals to realise their potential and, by doing so, develop skills and confidence for a fulfilling and responsible life in a changing society.
- 1.5 The British School of Amsterdam is a non-profit making registered charity, of which all parents are members. The parent body elects the board of governors and receives reports from it at the annual general parents' meeting. The governing body is responsible for the strategic planning, in conjunction with the principal, and most governors are long-standing. At the most recent parents' annual general meeting, a number of extra governors were appointed who have children currently in the school. Recently, a new head was appointed to the Senior School.
- 1.6 Since the last inspection, the school has changed significantly. It has increased considerably in size, with well over a third more pupils, and has extended its age range from 11 to 17. The accommodation has increased in size, with the addition of a new Upper School site which has been developed significantly since its acquisition. This includes the new building for Years 4 to 6, the upgrading and extension of specialist science laboratories, the acquisition of new playing fields and access to a local canal for water sports. In the Lower School, a specialist

sensory room has been developed, together with increased facilities for learning support. In addition, the information and communications technology (ICT) facilities, rated very highly at the time of the last inspection, have continued to be upgraded, with interactive whiteboards in nearly all classrooms.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good education, which is consistent with its aims and philosophy. The educational experience of the youngest pupils is of a particularly high quality and the weaknesses in personal, social and health education (PSHE), identified at the time of the last inspection, have been transformed into strengths. Linguistic development, which was rated highly at the last inspection, continues to be of a high standard. The developing Senior School has a broad and balanced curriculum that also addresses the diverse needs of its pupils well.
- 2.2 The school follows closely the curriculum for schools in England, including the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum for three to five year olds, the National Curriculum for five to fourteen year olds, and GCSE and AS-level courses for fourteen to seventeen year olds. The school uses mainly an international variant of GCSE courses, which does not require coursework and so makes it easier for pupils to transfer from one international school to another, without jeopardising their chances of success.
- 2.3 Across the school, extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visiting speakers enrich the curriculum and make a valuable contribution to the educational experience of pupils.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- 2.4 The curriculum for three to five year olds is planned very carefully around the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, to ensure that all the relevant aspects of development are given due attention, with excellent documentation to support the planning process. Similarly, the careful and perceptive analysis of those children with diverse EAL needs and those with LDD is combined with thorough and effective planning to meet these needs, so that they, like other pupils, make rapid and successful progress towards the Early Learning Goals.
- 2.5 Personal, social and health education is a strong feature of the school's provision and is woven throughout it. It includes topics as a continuing theme of assemblies, regular timetabled lessons and the very effective exploitation of opportunities arising in other aspects of the curriculum. The curriculum is also enriched by visits from artists, musicians, authors and parents with specialist expertise, as well as visits to museums and other places of cultural interest.
- 2.6 Collaboration between Nursery and Reception classes, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, is now excellent in all respects. Arrangements for children moving on to Year 1 are comprehensive, ensuring that their individual learning needs, achievement and social needs are well understood.

Junior School

- 2.7 Linguistic development is a particularly strong feature of the provision. A synthetic phonics programme guides English language development, particularly for the younger pupils, and is organised effectively to address the diverse learning needs of the many pupils for whom English is an additional language and those whose first language is English. Pupils learn Dutch from Reception and French from Year 3, which further broadens their linguistic development. For those pupils who are native speakers of these two languages, specialist provision is made. PSHE is now guided by a nationally recognised programme, so that it is woven throughout the provision, and is of a high standard.

- 2.8 The curriculum also makes good provision for mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. The careful planning, in accordance with the English National Curriculum, helps to ensure this, and the very effective cross-curricular links, such as the association of history and art through the exploration of Victorian pictures, have enhanced the process. The development of ICT skills is incorporated into the curriculum from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, and planning includes the encouragement of pupils to use ICT independently.
- 2.9 Good provision is made for the acquisition of speaking, listening and literacy skills. Lesson planning routinely includes pupils working in pairs and groups, together with peer assessment and class discussion. The development of numeracy skills is a core part of the mathematics curriculum and is also encouraged through the application of these in various other subjects, such as science and design technology.
- 2.10 The curriculum is enriched through a variety of other activities. Visiting professionals in art, music and science enhance the quality of provision in these areas of the curriculum, and outstanding work is displayed throughout the junior part of the school, resulting from workshops that they have conducted. Pupils' educational experience is further enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, ranging from sport to chess and foreign languages, visits to art galleries, museums and field centres, and residential courses.
- 2.11 Planning is of a good quality and ensures that the needs of all pupils are met well in the classroom. The enrichment programme for gifted and talented pupils, much appreciated by parents, is currently in abeyance in Years 4 to 6, while pupils settle into their new accommodation. It is scheduled to be reintroduced after the inspection.

Senior School

- 2.12 The Senior School promotes linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative development successfully through its curriculum. The time devoted to modern foreign languages enhances linguistic development and recognises a strength that many pupils bring to the school. Similarly, the enrichment programme for Years 7 to 9 provides interesting opportunities to extend pupils' development across the curriculum. The lack of design technology in the curriculum limits the range of technological development, but ICT is a core subject up to Year 11 and includes control technology, whilst art and design includes a strong focus on design.
- 2.13 Speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills are well catered for in the curriculum, and pupils make good progress in acquiring these. Diagnostic tests introduced recently provide helpful information about performance, and these are now supported by diagnoses that focus particularly on linguistic development, which provide accurate and detailed information about pupils with LDD or EAL.
- 2.14 Personal, social and health education is part of the core curriculum of the Senior School. It reinforces the school's aims and is designed carefully to address the developing needs of pupils as they progress through the school, drawing on nationally recognised schemes of guidance.
- 2.15 Extra-curricular activities are popular and varied, ranging from an EAL homework club to The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award for Young People, and musical, drama and sporting activities. Sport, music and school dramatic productions are particularly popular, and extend many pupils' educational experience through developing team and leadership skills and subject expertise, and providing life enhancing experiences.

- 2.16 Planning documentation to support the curriculum is thorough, provides a helpful framework for subject teaching and is used flexibly to address the diverse needs of pupils, including those joining the school throughout the year and part way through GCSE courses.

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.17 The quality of learning is good overall and includes some outstanding features. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their abilities in the Junior School and the Senior School, and is high in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils of all abilities, including those who join or leave the school during the academic year, and those with LDD or who are gifted and talented, make good progress in their learning, and the progress of pupils with EAL is often particularly strong. Pupils are diligent, attentive, and work well individually and collaboratively, with increasing independence as they grow older.
- 2.18 The good standards of learning and achievement identified at the time of the last inspection have been sustained and strengthened further. The improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage are particularly notable.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- 2.19 Children are well grounded in the knowledge and skills encompassed by the Early Learning Goals and make excellent progress in their learning. Whatever their linguistic competence when they arrive, children make rapid progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. In a Nursery class activity, where children were potting bedding plants, the discovery of a worm led to an animated discussion about how it would help the plants to grow. Similarly, in literacy work concerned with the phonic vocabulary, children made rapid progress in understanding sound syllables. In all their activities, children demonstrate critical and creative thinking of a high order, whether it is exploring what hands can do in a lesson for those with EAL, developing their ideas about landing on the moon, or participating in practical free play activities outside.
- 2.20 From a very young age, children demonstrate an excellent capacity to work and play independently. They work very well in groups, showing social skills of a high quality. They settle quickly to tasks, persevere in what they are doing with increasing determination and enjoy all their activities.

Junior School

- 2.21 Pupils are attentive listeners and articulate speakers, whose reading and writing levels are good, particularly as so many of them do not have English as their first language. Many think creatively and enjoy challenging ideas across a range of subject areas. The comprehensive and pervasive displays around the Junior School reinforce the development of literacy skills and literacy awareness in the pupils.
- 2.22 Achievement is good in numeracy. Pupils are particularly skilled in mental mathematics, including estimation, and make good progress in developing their analytical skills of investigating and problem solving. They demonstrate confidence in, and an easy command of ICT, which they use effectively across the curriculum, for example word processing packages to improve literacy skills, floor robots to develop planning and logical thought, and the school intranet and the internet for research purposes.

- 2.23 Results in standardised tests are above the average for maintained primary schools in England, indicating that pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities. Girls achieve better results than boys. Achievement in a broad range of extra-curricular activities is good. Most pupils achieve success in activities, as participation levels are high.
- 2.24 Pupils demonstrate excellent learning skills. They enjoy school and work hard in response to the teaching, which is supportive and thorough. All pupils are confident in their use of language and they listen attentively to their teachers and each other, whilst following instructions well. Pupils also organise their work effectively, with a growing sense of independence, and show great pride in their achievements, reflecting the pleasure and enjoyment they gain from their learning.

Senior School

- 2.25 Pupils achieve good standards, are keen to learn, listen attentively, take pride in their work and speak enthusiastically about their learning experiences. Their knowledge and factual recall are good, and they make brisk progress in their learning. Fluent writing generally characterises pupils' work. They speak well and listen carefully to each other, articulate their thoughts with assurance and can argue cogently. This was illustrated well in a history lesson on the English Civil War, where pupils showed powerful reasoning in analysing complex evidence as to which side people of different statuses and beliefs would support. In mathematics, pupils demonstrate good numerical skills and the capacity for logical thought. They have an easy command of ICT, which they use effectively in various areas of the curriculum. Many pupils also show good, and sometimes outstanding, skills in speaking or writing in more than one language.
- 2.26 Pupils of all abilities show a similar ambition to learn and engage in their studies. Pupils who are gifted and talented are sometimes entered early for examinations, particularly in modern foreign languages.
- 2.27 Small groups of pupils have taken standardised national tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations in Year 11, but the numbers are too small to allow any statistically significant conclusions to be drawn about the pupils' level of attainment relative to their abilities or national averages.
- 2.28 Pupils have achieved distinction in a range of activities. The school choir won their class at the Shrewsbury Eisteddfod in 2008. The school has recently staged a well-received production of *Oliver*, whilst the debating team acquitted themselves well in the Oxford Schools' debating competition. Pupils have displayed art work at two local exhibitions, and the boys' football team has qualified to play in a league with teams run by local sports clubs.
- 2.29 Pupils organise their work well, and older ones make detailed and helpful notes. They work well independently in class and when doing homework. They also make effective use of books and magazines, together with sources which can be accessed by ICT, either through the school intranet or the internet.
- 2.30 An excellent feature of pupils' learning is the quality of their collaboration. Of particular note is the quality of peer assessment, where pupils evaluate each other's oral answers with great respect and sensitivity, so that constructive advice is politely given and received. They also settle quickly to work, concentrate well and are enthusiastic, demonstrating that they enjoy their learning.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.31 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and it meets the aim of the school, to develop in pupils the skills and confidence for a fulfilling and responsible life in a changing society. An excellent feature is the speed with which new pupils are integrated into the school's culture and absorb its values, so they make rapid progress in their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This area of the school's provision has improved since the last inspection.
- 2.32 Pupils develop a strong sense of individual self-worth and respect for others in a learning environment where they are valued and feel happy and secure. Before the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have learned the importance of taking responsibility for their own conduct and of respecting different views. Their thoughtfulness is exemplary.
- 2.33 Pupils continue to grow in self-esteem and confidence. They develop a deeper understanding of each other's rich spiritual and religious heritage through sharing their experiences of personal religious observances and those relating to particular festivals. Other experiences, such as poetry and drama in English, the viewing of great works of art, the importance of religion and the spiritual to the Greeks, and lyrical aspects of life in Jamaica, as well as visits to museums and art galleries, extend and develop pupils' spiritual experiences in powerful ways.
- 2.34 By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have come to understand clearly the difference between right and wrong. As they progress through the school, pupils develop a more sophisticated understanding of right and wrong and of the importance of the moral principles underpinning these concepts. The PSHE programme for personal, social and moral development adopted by the school has been helpful in guiding this progress.
- 2.35 In the Junior School, older pupils take on a number of formal roles, supporting those younger than themselves, helping in the library and acting as monitors, through which they gain valuable experience of social responsibility to add to the informal care and help that they may provide for their own age group and younger pupils. The junior and senior school councils provide pupils with experience of representative democracy in action and contribute to their social development. Pupils show a strong interest in the well-being of others and demonstrate a great concern for the plight of those less fortunate than themselves, which they demonstrate practically through various fund-raising activities for local charitable causes and those further away, such as the school projects that they support in Belarus, Madagascar and Burkina Faso.
- 2.36 A particular feature of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School is the natural courtesy with which teachers and other adults treat pupils. This contributes to the harmonious and civilised learning community which the school has created. In the Senior School, pupils continue to develop well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Self-esteem remains high, and pupils act responsibly around the school, work well together and independently, and are respectful of each other. They continue to expand their understanding of right and wrong in the context of greater independence and the approaching responsibilities of adulthood. The PSHE programme makes a valuable contribution to this process.
- 2.37 Pupils benefit greatly from the wide variety of cultural traditions which they bring to the school, and the strong encouragement of the school to share and celebrate these, which develops in them a keen interest in and acceptance of cultural difference.

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.38 The quality of teaching is good overall and some of it is outstanding. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable. Lessons are well planned and organised, providing learning experiences that are coherent and progressive, and that stimulate pupils. High quality questioning is a feature of the teaching and in many subjects ICT is used productively to enhance teaching and learning. Assessment is generally of good quality and is effective in supporting progress in learning.
- 2.39 The teaching makes a major contribution to pupils' learning and attainment, in support of the school's aim that they fulfil their potential. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- 2.40 The teaching is of a high quality and ensures that children of all abilities make excellent progress. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants and other adult helpers. Planning is excellent and ensures the children are given purposeful activities. The organisation of these activities is exemplary.
- 2.41 Teachers and teaching assistants provide constant encouragement to children to articulate their ideas, and to extend their vocabulary and understanding. For instance, children sweeping soil under a tree in the playground so that, in their words "it's tidy", were drawn into a dialogue about tidying and cleaning as a general activity, that extended their vocabulary and understanding from that of a particular event to a general concept. The close supervision of activities and clear understanding of their purpose in relation to the Early Learning Goals ensure that purposeful learning takes place. Children are persuaded to move on to other activities at appropriate times, so that they gain the requisite range of experiences and the pace of learning remains brisk.
- 2.42 Staff know their children well, both in terms of their personalities and their intellectual abilities, and form excellent relationships with them. Through their own conduct and a gentle but firm authority, they strongly encourage good behaviour. At the same time, their own interest in the learning and achievement of individual children helps to engender great enjoyment of learning.
- 2.43 The teaching is supported by a good range of resources, including interactive whiteboards and a generous allocation of computers.
- 2.44 Detailed and continuous assessment of children's achievement, through discussion and observation, is a strong feature of the teaching, and is combined with some excellent record keeping. Assessment is used as a natural part of future planning and regular judgements are made about progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

Junior School

- 2.45 The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and excellent relationships with them. They provide lively explanations and clear instructions, so that pupils know exactly what they have to do, as in a science lesson where those in Year 3 were instructed carefully about how to use hand lenses to investigate differences between rocks and record their findings. Interactive whiteboards are used well to enhance the learning experience, as in a Year 3 literacy lesson on performance poetry, where the technology was used to provide sound beats for the poetry.

- 2.46 Careful attention is paid to the particular needs of pupils with LDD or EAL to ensure that these are met well. Specialist support for pupils with LDD is well focused and helps them make good progress. Support for pupils with EAL is generally a strong feature, but it is not always fully successful in challenging them in a manner that ensures progress in learning. Many teachers provide good support for the gifted and talented, and other systematic arrangements to support these pupils more generally are good in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- 2.47 The high standards of courtesy that teachers insist on aid class discussion and small group work, as does the detailed knowledge the teachers quickly assimilate about their pupils, including those new to the school, where effective induction procedures support this process very well.
- 2.48 Assessment procedures are consistent, accurate and effective. An excellent general assessment policy is in place, supported by detailed subject-specific provision. These procedures are used very effectively to identify pupils who need extra support, to set targets with groups of pupils and to inform the school's reporting to parents. Assessment in the school also guides teachers' future planning very well. Subject co-ordinators and senior managers have a clear view of the specific needs of each phase, subject, year group and individual pupil. The school has good systems for tracking pupils with respect to national norms, making effective use of National Curriculum data.

Senior School

- 2.49 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a secure command of their subjects and are enthusiastic about teaching them. They usually have high expectations of their pupils, and planning and organisation are a general strength of the teaching, with teachers devising activities that focus sharply on achieving learning objectives, often interest pupils and help them to make good progress in their learning. Most teachers use a range of teaching strategies effectively to support the learning of pupils and encourage their full participation in the learning process.
- 2.50 Teachers usually encourage discussion and debate, with well-focused and carefully organised small group work as a regular feature of the teaching. Teachers know their pupils well and have developed a secure understanding of their prior attainment and learning needs. In doing this, they have been aided by the information resulting from standardised aptitude tests recently introduced.
- 2.51 Provision for pupils with LDD or EAL is good and some of it is excellent. Subject teachers are skilful at organising their time effectively to support these pupils, so that they make good progress. In a few instances, teachers rely too much on unimaginative textbook exercises, which do not enthuse pupils and slow the pace of learning. Occasionally, modern foreign language teachers have to work hard to manage the great diversity of ability in some teaching groups, for instance where a native speaker preparing for a post-16 examination is in the same class as pupils who have a limited command of English.
- 2.52 The teaching is well supported by a generally good range of resources, including a library that is being developed to meet increasing demand, and plentiful interactive whiteboards and computers for use by pupils. The interactive whiteboards are being used with increasing confidence and effectiveness, and are becoming an established resource in teaching and learning. Similarly, increasing opportunities are being given for pupils to use ICT for research and other purposes in school and through homework.

- 2.53 Assessment is a developing strength. The assessment policy and procedures introduced at the start of the academic year allow pupils' progress to be tracked closely against national norms through standardised assessment tests and the attainment target levels of the English National Curriculum. Teachers are using these procedures effectively to identify those pupils in need of extra support, to set learning targets for all pupils and to inform their reporting to parents. The marking more generally of pupils' work has benefited from the introduction of the new tracking and assessment procedures, so that many staff clearly identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in their comments. Peer assessment is an excellent feature of some teachers' practice, with pupils gaining much from discussing and commenting on each other's work. Assessment is also used effectively to inform teachers' future planning.

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 Pastoral care in the school is of a high quality. Staff are strongly committed to the personal well-being, and social and intellectual development of pupils, and provide excellent care, support and guidance. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, class teachers and teaching assistants collaborate very effectively to ensure that all aspects of a child's personal qualities and intellectual progress are well known and fully documented. In the Junior School, class teachers play a key role in pastoral care. They know their pupils very well, and support strongly their academic progress and personal well-being. They liaise closely with other teachers and encourage good behaviour through their high expectations of pupils. Tutors play a similar role in the Senior School and liaise closely with subject teachers about pupils' performance and behaviour.
- 3.2 In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff in each class discuss children on a daily basis, and there are weekly meetings to discuss any issues and concerns related to individuals or groups, which are led by senior managers. Any difficulties are identified very early through this process, but it is also a vehicle for recognising acts of kindness and thoughtfulness by children, so that they can be praised. The pastoral arrangements in the Junior School are closely monitored by the heads of the Lower and Upper Juniors and their deputies. Regular meetings provide opportunities to promote and share good practice, as well as to improve the consistency of standards in the daily life at the school. In the Senior School, regular meetings are planned between the deputy head and tutors, at which any issues and concerns are discussed and information disseminated.
- 3.3 Relationships between teachers and pupils are always good and often excellent. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff establish a warm and nurturing environment where children are well cared for, feel very secure and greatly enjoy coming to school. In the Junior School, relationships are generally excellent; respect, trust, friendliness and good humour are clearly evident in classrooms. In the Senior School, relationships are often excellent and conducive to a good learning ethos. Across the school, relationships amongst pupils are harmonious and friendly, and a striking feature is the speed with which new pupils are made to feel welcome, so that they settle very quickly and make rapid progress.
- 3.4 The school strongly emphasises the importance of personal responsibility and courtesy in guiding behaviour and discipline. Appropriate codes of conduct are devised for pupils of different ages. These are well understood and accepted by pupils, and they are enforced consistently and fairly. Sanctions are clear and appropriate. The school has a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying, and clear and appropriate strategies and procedures for dealing with it. Pupils report that bullying is dealt with quickly and fairly. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, codes of conduct are known and understood by children, who respond well to the positive reinforcement of good behaviour and the civilised ethos which is strongly encouraged by staff. The Junior School and Senior School have effective anti-bullying policies that are discussed in PSHE programmes and assemblies, with an emphasis on good behaviour and social responsibility. An interesting example was a recent Senior School assembly where internet cyber-bullying was discussed. Teachers also, through their own conduct and through the consistent and fair application of rules, strongly encourage good behaviour and courteous conduct amongst pupils.

- 3.5 The school has a detailed and appropriate child protection policy in the school handbook and all staff have the necessary training to implement it effectively. Members of senior management have been trained as child protection officers and there is a nominated officer on each site of the school.
- 3.6 All the necessary measures have been taken to ensure that the school complies with all the relevant health and safety regulations in the Netherlands and with good English practice, including those related to fire hazard. Health and safety officers with suitable experience are in place on each school site. The principal, who has long experience of dealing with health and safety issues, also regularly inspects each site. Where health and safety issues are identified, they are dealt with expeditiously.
- 3.7 Detailed risk assessments are carried out before any school visits, or activities such as those for the International Award. Activities within the school which are likely to constitute any sort of health and safety risk are also carefully assessed. Pupils are encouraged to act responsibly and sensibly at all times to reduce the possibility of accidents. A considerable number of staff on all sites have appropriate first aid training to deal with accidents. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained carefully, in line with best practice. Healthy eating and living are encouraged throughout the school, through the PSHE programme, extra-curricular activities and the meals that the school provides.

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.8 The quality of links with parents and the community is good. Links with parents in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School are outstanding, and have improved since the last inspection. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and the way in which it supports progress in learning, with the curriculum that the school offers, the values that it espouses and the high standards of behaviour. Levels of satisfaction were particularly high amongst parents of younger pupils. Over four-fifths of parents expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision.
- 3.9 The school provides regular opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress and they receive at least one written report a year. Parents can at any time request a meeting to discuss progress. Senior managers on each site of the school hold termly meetings for parents. Extensive email communication takes place, informative parental handbooks are provided, a school calendar is produced and the school has its own website with much helpful information on it. Information evenings have been run for parents on subjects such as the new system for teaching phonics which has been introduced, keeping children safe on the internet and issues related to relocating to the Netherlands. In the Senior School, there are year group meetings with parents and an option evening to help pupils and parents decide on GCSE courses.
- 3.10 This year, on a trial basis, class representatives for each class in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School have been appointed to help liaison between the school and parents, which is proving successful. A volunteer register is also being established by parents, so that they can identify ways in which their expertise and help can be used by the school. As a result of this, they are already helping to supervise transport arrangements for pupils to and from a local swimming pool and providing some in-class support.
- 3.11 In meetings of class representatives, parents strongly endorsed the value of the consultations which take place throughout the school, and provide detailed feedback about their children's progress and clear targets for improvement. Parents also praised the written reports, which are regarded as sufficiently frequent and regular to offer a good indication of standards

achieved, rates of progress and attitudes to work. Whilst these formal structures for feedback were clearly appreciated, parents also noted and valued the accessibility of staff to answer any concerns and queries about their children's educational and social progress in the school.

- 3.12 A small number of parents raised concerns about specific issues. The two supported by inspection evidence were the suspension of the programme for gifted and talented pupils in Years 4 to 6 and the lack of public knowledge about biographical details of governors and their responsibilities. The gifted and talented programme was suspended whilst pupils moved into new accommodation in September 2008. Since the inspection, this programme has been reinstated. Governors are considering providing more information about their backgrounds. A few parents also complained about the manner in which the school handled complaints that they raised. The inspection evidence showed that the school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and appropriate, and meet guidelines for dealing with formal complaints. Records show that complaints are dealt with effectively and most are resolved at an early stage. Those requiring further attention and a written response are handled with due consideration.
- 3.13 The school provides various worthwhile opportunities for parents to be involved in activities, although these largely fall within the Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School. Parents have made a valuable contribution towards the induction of new families, and the mother toddler group, which the school supports, is highly regarded by the parents.
- 3.14 Links with the local and wider community are strong, and provide a wide range of worthwhile opportunities for broadening pupils' experience and understanding of the world. For example, some older pupils carried out voluntary work at the local Montessori school, and the extensive range of educational visits carried out, particularly in the upper part of the Junior School, enhance understanding of various aspects of the local community. The school also has strong sporting links with another British international school and pupils play basketball and football in local leagues. Facilities are provided for local branches of the Royal Air Force Association and the British Society, and Christ Church Amsterdam to celebrate Sunday services at the school.
- 3.15 In keeping with the values and ethos of the school, much is done to support local and international charities, for instance through the Charity Week, which provides a focus on fund-raising activities of various kinds and raises considerable sums of money. Through such means the school has made significant contributions to local causes, such as the Vu Hospital, and supports schools in Belarus, Burkina Faso and Madagascar.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. The board of governors, working with the principal, developed a highly appropriate set of aims for the school, which they have continued to support strongly. The governing body provides effective oversight and guidance of the school.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements related to the board of governors are clear and well defined. The board of governors has a major input into strategic plans. The execution of strategic plans falls mainly to the principal, supported by senior managers, who are also responsible for the efficient and effective day-to-day running of the school. The principal is in frequent contact with the chair of governors, about both the progress of strategic plans and any concerns related to the routine running of the school.
- 4.3 Within the board of governors, there is a considerable financial, business and educational expertise on which it can and does draw. Last year several governors with children currently at the school, and one with long experience and deep knowledge of the English education system, were appointed by the annual parents' meeting. Some had previously received governor training in England, but others had not and are not fully cognisant with their roles and responsibilities. The board is intending, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that new governors receive appropriate training.
- 4.4 A key strength of the board of governors has been its formidable financial and business expertise, which has allowed the school to engage in a continuing policy of expansion and growth over many years, without compromising its financial viability or educational quality. Recent dissension within the board however threatens to reduce its effectiveness.
- 4.5 At each meeting, the governors receive a detailed report from the principal regarding finance and educational developments. They also walk the school at many meetings with the principal, which provides valuable insights into work being done and allows them to observe developments as they take place. They provide helpful guidance, which supports growth and development well.
- 4.6 The board of governors, particularly through the chair, ensures that careful attention is given to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, and governors are very alert to health and safety issues. The chair is very much involved in any child protection matters and has a good understanding of the area.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.7 Leadership and management in the school are good and provide clear educational direction. This has ensured that pupils receive a high quality education whilst being very well cared for, fully achieving the aims of the school.
- 4.8 Staff in management positions have generally been effective in analysing the needs of the school, setting appropriate priorities, planning those priorities and putting them into practice. This has allowed the school to address the issues raised at the last inspection effectively, for example improving the quality of the PSHE programme, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 4.9 Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School, the capacity to set appropriate priorities and achieve these is an outstanding feature of management. This has, for example, allowed the school to create a new building on the Upper School site for Years 4 to 6 in the remarkably short period of three months, so that teachers and pupils moved into some excellent new accommodation in September with the minimum of fuss, whilst it underpins the outstanding education provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the many excellent features identified in the Junior School.
- 4.10 In the Senior School, senior management has been effective in creating a purposeful learning ethos in classrooms, and developing a secure system for assessing and tracking the performance of pupils. A new house system has also proved successful in motivating pupils. Other key priorities are being introduced or are in the planning stage, such as the implementation of the school's continuing professional development and review policy, or training for the new English Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. The former is particularly important in providing evidence about teacher performance and identifying areas for improvement where, as in the Senior School, there is a high proportion of recently appointed staff.
- 4.11 The Early Years Foundation Stage, and junior and senior sections of the school produce clear and appropriate development plans, reflecting their current stages of development and resultant priorities. These plans are discussed by the senior management team and provide a common purpose and direction for the whole school, but they have not been formalised through a written whole-school development plan.
- 4.12 Procedures for monitoring the successful implementation of policies and new initiatives in the various sections of the school are generally effective. Monitoring and evaluation of whole-school procedures include useful strategies, such as the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work by the senior management team and the continuing professional development reviews. Nevertheless, the procedures are insufficiently comprehensive and rigorous to ensure that key policies and initiatives are being fully implemented across the whole school.
- 4.13 Senior managers individually provide effective and purposeful leadership in the various sections of the school for which they are responsible, but the senior management team as a whole does not yet operate as effectively.
- 4.14 In the senior management team, the principal takes on a broad role because of the need to negotiate on a continuing basis for the acquisition of new premises and the development of premises that the school already uses. He therefore acts as project manager for these ventures, in which role he has developed a detailed knowledge of Dutch planning regulations and law. A striking recent example has been the new building created on the Upper School site for Years 4 to 6, which he initiated and oversaw from start to finish. The school has benefited greatly from this expertise, which has been an essential element in the rapid growth

of the school. At the same time, the aims and ethos of the school have been maintained, so that it continues to be a vibrant and effective educational institution.

- 4.15 The school has committed considerable resources to staff development. This has included courses to train teachers in various strategies that the school is adopting, such as a particular approach to the teaching of phonics or to improve skills in particular areas. An initiative which has been especially fruitful has been the collaboration with an English university to provide a Masters level course for staff at the school. Teachers are drawing on work they have done in the course to improve practice more generally in the school, for example, the more effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning and the improvement of assessment practice in mathematics in the Junior School.
- 4.16 All staff, including temporary staff, have been Criminal Records Bureau checked, or where necessary checked through the relevant Dutch regulations.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The British School of Amsterdam meets all of its aims very well and provides a well-rounded education for its pupils, with a number of outstanding features in the well-established Early Years Foundation Stage and Junior School. The teaching is good overall across the school and sometimes it is outstanding. Pupils are very well cared for, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and junior sections of the school are outstanding. In the Senior School, leadership and management are good overall and much progress has been made since September, when the new senior managers took up their roles, but there are some key areas which require further development. Leadership of the school is vigorous and responsive to immediate need. Overall strategic planning of educational development is not as clear for the whole school as it is in its various sections, and the senior management team is not yet fully effective in providing a common thrust and direction to policy. Financial and other planning to support the growth and development of the school since the last inspection has been excellent and reflects the great strength of the governing body and the principal in this area. In the board of governors, key roles and responsibilities are carried out effectively, but the governing body has not yet provided parents with sufficient information about its members and their roles and responsibilities.
- 5.2 The school has addressed fully the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The timetable now allows distribution of subject time evenly across the week, to support teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception classes work very closely together in common pursuit of the Early Learning Goals. Assemblies make a valuable contribution to PSHE and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, whilst enhancing social cohesion in the school. The educational experience provided, learning and achievement, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and links with parents have all improved since last inspection.
- 5.3 The school meets all the English regulatory requirements either directly or through their local equivalents.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve further, the school should:
1. establish a clear written strategic plan for the whole school;
 2. ensure that governors and senior managers work together effectively to support whole-school aims and purposes;
 3. ensure that the governing body provides parents with information about its membership, and that all new governors are given appropriate training soon after their appointment.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of the English regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 1st to 4th March 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Ted Cohn	Reporting Inspector
Ms Mary Burridge	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Bailey	Head, COBIS school
Mrs Franciska Bayliss	Principal of Tutorial Academy, ISA
Mr David Bown	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mr Paul Brewster	Principal, COBIS school
Mrs Bryony Edwards	Head of Department, GSA school
Dr Nicholas England	Head, HMC school
Miss Caroline Froud	Head of Lower School, ISA school
Dr Christopher Greenfield	Head, ISA school
Mr Christian Heinrich	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Briony Long	Head of Early Years, COBIS school