

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **The British International School, Cairo**

Full Name of the School	<b>The British International School, Cairo</b>
DCSF Number	<b>703/6056</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>Licence No 2271 with the Ministry of Social Affairs</b>
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Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008</b>

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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 International School, Cairo was founded in 1976 in Mohandessen and moved one year later to the All Saints Cathedral site on the island of Zamalek. In summer 2008 it moved to its current Beverly Hills campus by the Cairo-Alexandria road, where it is part of a larger community which includes commercial areas and a university. The school is purpose-built and all the necessary school facilities including sports areas are in close proximity, as are the senior and junior sections of the school. The Arabesque architecture provides shaded courtyards, fountains, trees and shrubs. The school operates a bus service for most areas of Cairo. It is authorised by the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs and has charitable status. The school has a board of nine directors, who constitute the governing body. All the directors are parents of current pupils.
- 1.2 It is an independent day school for boys and girls from the age of three to eighteen years and it aims to provide an international education with elements of British and Egyptian culture and an English-style curriculum. The pupils include children of expatriate British and Anglo-Egyptian communities, children from Commonwealth countries, children of the English-speaking Egyptian community and other nationalities wishing to have their children taught through the medium of English. Altogether, more than 40 different nationalities are represented. The pupils are taught Arabic from Year 1 and French from Year 3. They come largely from family backgrounds in senior managerial, professional, government and diplomatic areas of work. The teaching staff are experienced and nearly all have United Kingdom (UK) qualifications. The school operates from Sunday to Thursday and all pupils from Year 1 are required to participate in the school activities programme.
- 1.3 The total number of pupils in the school is 751, of whom 304 are in the senior school and 447 in the junior school. In the senior school there are 149 boys and 155 girls, and the junior school has 244 boys and 203 girls. A hundred and thirty-four children are in the Foundation Stage, 313 pupils are in Years 1 to 6, 228 pupils are in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form has 76 students.
- 1.4 The school's aims are included in its mission statement: to be a first-class school preparing pupils for the best universities and institutions of higher education and to positions of leadership in life; to provide a stimulating British education with appreciation of Egyptian culture and competence in Arabic; to ensure equal opportunities for pupils to develop their full intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, physical and moral potential; and to provide a broadly based education within a disciplined and supportive environment with the best possible resources and facilities. It seeks to foster mutual respect and tolerance and to teach essential human values such as honesty, loyalty, compassion and charity. It places emphasis on high standards in sporting and extra-curricular activities and it aims to reach out to all its families, the local community and the wider world in a spirit of international co-operation and understanding.
- 1.5 The school is selective, with admission based on entrance examinations in English and mathematics, cognitive ability tests and a report from the current school. A significant number of pupils enter the school at different stages and special arrangements are made for applicants from other educational backgrounds. The ability of the pupils is above the average for England although for the large majority of pupils English is their second language rather than their mother tongue. If the pupils performed in line with their ability and circumstance, the primary age pupils would perform above the average for all maintained primary schools in England and those in the senior school would perform above the average

for all maintained secondary schools in England. The sixth-form students would have similar results to the world-wide average. The school has a learning resource centre and the proportion of pupils identified as needing support for learning difficulties is in the order of one in ten. Provision is also made for those needing support in English as a second language. Sixth formers proceed to Oxford, Cambridge, Ivy League and other UK, American and European universities.

- 1.6 The junior school was previously inspected in October 2007 under the arrangements of a review conducted by the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools.
- 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 offers a well-balanced and effective range of appropriate opportunities to all pupils. The educational experience is suited to the pupils' interests, aptitudes and needs and is in line with its aim of furnishing a stimulating British education with an appreciation of Egyptian culture and competence in Arabic.
- 2.2 It provides the standard subjects usually studied in English schools with the exception of religious education, and it promotes human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. It makes full provision for the acquisition of speaking and listening skills, guarantees literacy and numeracy and includes mathematical, scientific and technological areas. All areas of the curriculum are followed by all pupils and all have opportunities to enjoy the experiences provided.
- 2.3 Pupils benefit from local contacts in fund raising and charitable activities. They also have contact with other schools through their sporting fixtures and international competitions and conventions.

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- 2.4 The new facilities provide greater opportunities for practical work than were available previously on the Zamalek site. They have enabled the school to introduce challenging investigative activities, as suggested in the previous inspection report. In science, for example, pupils devised an experiment to find the best materials for muffling the sound of a clock. Design and technology has been introduced into the curriculum. New resources include electronic whiteboards in each classroom and these add a further dimension to evidence-based learning supported by the programme of visits, such as those to El Alamein and Luxor. In discussions and presentations, pupils are articulate and keen to share their experiences.
- 2.5 In the Foundation Stage, children experience the six learning areas, which meet all their needs and make a strong contribution to linguistic development in English. The educational experiences provided make pupils feel well looked after and happy in Beverly Hills and Zamalek.
- 2.6 Pupils' experience of personal, social and health education is good. All pupils can choose from a wide range of clubs on Wednesday afternoon. Extra-curricular sporting activities take place after school using the new facilities. These include team practices for matches and opportunities for pupils to participate in sport for recreational purposes. The school places great importance on the development of a healthy life style and this is promoted visually around the school and included in the personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) programme, as in a lesson to explore the types of exercise the pupils take in the school day.
- 2.7 Preparation for the next stage of education is good. All pupils spend time in their new class before they move up and the Foundation Stage children visit the new school from their base in Zamalek. Pupils' records are transferred to inform the next stage of their education and the PSHCE programme throughout the junior school includes a section on 'new beginnings' in the autumn term and 'moving on' in the summer term. Pupils moving to the senior school have a special induction day to prepare them for transfer.

- 2.8 Curriculum planning is thorough and is based on the requirements of the English National Curriculum. A yearly overview for each subject utilises English nationally produced guidelines, and more detailed short-term plans outline learning objectives for each lesson and strategies for learning support and extension activities. The English Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are incorporated into planning. Pupils are able to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 2.9 Provision for those pupils requiring learning support is satisfactory. A procedure has been introduced for them to be assessed by the learning support department on the recommendation of the class teacher. A programme of support is arranged in consultation with parents. Teaching involves withdrawal of individual pupils from class or working in small groups such as the study skills group. A system for recording progress has been established but is not fully implemented. A register is kept based on the assessments of the learning support department. These outline the area of need, information about English as a second language and the support provided. Educational psychologists carry out reviews when necessary. Support teaching is available in mathematics and English each morning. This involves withdrawal from class or setting across a year group.

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- 2.10 The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme reflects the caring ethos of the school. It includes a wide range and variety of topics: for example, healthy eating, use of the internet, family and friendships, and the importance of good citizenship and of community life. The curriculum is further enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, from archery to horse-riding, from bridge to economic management, and from creative writing to choir. Trips and excursions are also included, as are burgeoning links with the local community and local charities. These are of benefit to pupils, and there are satisfactory arrangements for voluntary service and optional work experience.
- 2.11 Careful and detailed attention is paid to preparing pupils for life beyond school. Preparation for university application and life is thorough, necessarily covering many nations and many different institutions. Careers advice is satisfactory and appreciated by pupils, but a more comprehensive programme is being introduced. Work experience is being developed in the sixth form.
- 2.12 The curriculum is planned effectively and described in writing for staff to consult in departmental handbooks. Through effective withdrawal from lessons, it also meets the needs of pupils with English as a second language. A new support structure for pupils with learning difficulties is beginning to provide greater help for them. Similarly, the school has begun the process of identifying gifted and talented pupils in order to provide for their needs and relevant work for these pupils has already started in some cases.
- 2.13 The pupils benefit from a wide range of trips both to local places of interest, such as a camping expedition to the desert, and further afield, such as the planned geography trip to Devon. The pupils also take part in non-sporting competitions – for example, in mathematics – against other British and international schools.

## **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.14 Pupils are successful in their learning and achievements and make good progress towards realising their full intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, physical and moral potential, as proclaimed in the school aims for a structured and challenging academic education. Throughout the school, the pupils have well-developed knowledge, understanding and skills for learning, and their attitudes are positive and productive.

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- 2.15 The pupils have maintained the good levels of attainment that were evident at the time of the previous inspection report. From the Foundation Stage onwards, they listen carefully and express themselves well. They participate willingly and think about their work at all levels. They are articulate in discussion, with a natural enthusiasm to communicate, and listen to each other's views. Pupils at the Foundation Stage become well grounded in the knowledge, skills and understanding covered by the six areas of learning. The children in Foundation Stage 2 are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals (English national targets which pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage 2 year). Pupils think carefully about their work and have creative ideas, as is evident in the attractive and informative displays around the school. This represents successful achievement in view of the fact that all of their learning is in English, which is not the native language for most.
- 2.16 Junior school pupils demonstrate well-developed knowledge and skill in English, especially by Year 6. They listen carefully, speak well and readily employ technical vocabulary across many areas of the curriculum. Pupils' mathematical competence is well developed, and they think logically, independently and creatively. This was ably demonstrated in a lesson in which pupils decided for themselves how to approach the problem of drawing a scale plan of their classroom. Pupils are competent in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), as was observed, for example, in the use of a publishing program.
- 2.17 The relative attainment of different groups of pupils, in subjects or curricular areas is consistent with their ability. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified and are supported appropriately. More able pupils exercise complex skills in more demanding writing tasks. However, they are not always sufficiently challenged, and the volume of work covered is limited in some lessons.
- 2.18 Pupils' attainment in English national tests at the age of 11 is good in relation to their abilities. In all three of English, mathematics and science, results over the last three years have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools in England. The pupils make distinct progress and this is particularly notable in English, since at the age of 7 the available results indicate that standards of writing have been below the average for English pupils.
- 2.19 Among the junior school's individual and group successes, are the three pupils who won a trip to London as part of the Chairman's Reading Challenge and the team who competed in an international Year 6 mathematics competition in Switzerland. Pupils also have successes in British Schools of the Middle East sports competitions.
- 2.20 Pupils organise their work independently on given tasks, and in the Foundation Stage the encouragement of pupils to select their own activities enables them to be independent in using classroom resources. Pupils take notes effectively, study and organise their own work well, and are efficient in studying independently and in groups or teams. For example, in a Year 1 humanities lesson the pupils took notes as they went around the campus with Barnaby Bear, looking at differences since the last time they toured the site.

- 2.21 In all years, pupils understand and follow instructions well. Children as young as those in Foundation Stage 2 show an ability to work independently and also to co-operate effectively in pairs and groups. Pupils are strongly supportive of each other, as was illustrated in lessons and after-school clubs such as netball and basketball.
- 2.22 The pupils settle well to their work and show conspicuous perseverance. Standards of behaviour are consistently high and the pupils learn with confidence. They clearly enjoy their work and gain a great deal of satisfaction from it.

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- 2.23 Pupils demonstrate good levels of critical and creative thinking. Younger pupils show an ability to appraise and evaluate independently and sixth formers benefit from the Theory of Knowledge course. Creative and imaginative thinking are exercised well in all year groups, and were clearly evident in history and drama; for example, in representations of the psychological pressures on hostages. Skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing are pronounced. In all year groups, pupils show ready understanding of the distinctive concepts and vocabulary appropriate to the subjects they are studying, such as tone and texture, synoptic charts and kinetic energy. They have a developed competence in mathematics and ICT. They demonstrate good levels of logical and independent – occasionally challenging – thinking and a desire to learn through confronting arresting material, such as metaphysical poetry in the sixth form. Despite the large numbers of pupils studying through English as a second language, speaking and writing are fluent, while pupils listen and read with ease in all years. They participate willingly in classes and are keen to learn.
- 2.24 In all areas of the curriculum, boys and girls of different abilities, including the significant school population with English as a second language, make good progress towards academic goals, with no significant differences in relative attainment. Less able pupils work successfully at their individual levels. The school has information on pupils with learning difficulties, but the monitoring and recording of their progress is a new development.
- 2.25 Pupils' attainment in public examinations is good in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools and similar to those for maintained selective schools. In the International Baccalaureate, results have been above the worldwide average and similar to the average for the UK. Progress has been well maintained to GCSE and again to Year 13.
- 2.26 Pupils have recorded a number of significant achievements as individuals, groups or teams. The school's sports teams have enjoyed notable success in football (both girls' and boys'), volleyball and athletics tournaments. In 2008 three boys won the singles and doubles tennis competitions at the Alexandria Anglo-American tournament. The school is the leading delegate at the Model United Nations in Cairo, and has also sent delegates to the UK, Turkey and The Hague, where they have acquitted themselves with distinction. The school's business enterprise group won against multi-national competition in 2006, and was the runner-up in 2007. Eighty pupils have embarked on The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in 2008, fourteen of whom are working towards gold level. Pupils have gained considerable success in music examinations.
- 2.27 The work of pupils is generally well presented and efficiently organised, though there are exceptions. Note taking is of a good standard, particularly so in geography. Pupils work independently and undertake research projects with confidence. The senior annual drama production is organised and performed entirely by the pupils.

- 2.28 The pupils also work very well together in a variety of situations, collaborating with each other and sharing knowledge, skills and understanding. They study effectively in pairs or groups, focus well on the task set and are keen to complete activities to the best of their abilities. This was observed in various academic subjects, notably business studies and group presentations in geography. It is also a feature of non-academic activities, such as participating in the student council and raising funds for charity.
- 2.29 In most lessons, a business-like working atmosphere enables pupils to settle quickly to their tasks. Indeed in one class the lesson began, as the group were lining up, with a task set by the teacher for consideration while entering the class. However, there is some incidence of lateness to lessons. Pupils work hard to complete tasks to a high standard and are prepared to persevere with a difficult task, as demonstrated by a mathematics class working on parabolic curves.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.30 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities of the pupils are well developed and meet the school's declared aims of seeking to foster mutual respect, tolerance and regard for all members of society, and to teach essential human values such as honesty, loyalty, compassion and charity.

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- 2.31 The developments suggested in the previous report have been successfully carried out. The pupils are happy and confident, they feel valued, and they have a strong sense of self-esteem. They readily demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment. The pupils develop a strong sense of self-worth in an environment where success is celebrated. They gain increasing confidence as they progress through the school. The ethos of the school encourages this through the frequent use of praise and rewards, and the constructive and warm relationships between pupils and staff. The lack of religious education does mean that pupils do not have an opportunity to increase their understanding of the importance of religious spirituality in the lives of many people across the world. However, opportunities are provided in other subjects such as history and geography.
- 2.32 Pupils' moral development is advanced for their age. From the start of their schooling, their moral and social development is strongly influenced by the clear values that permeate the school. Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong at an early stage and as they grow older increasingly come to understand and accept the moral and social values on which codes of conduct and school rules are based. They understand the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and engage in charity fund raising. These values inform the civility and respect with which pupils treat each other in lessons and around the school from an early age. The school supports Anti-bullying Week to highlight this area and it is reinforced in PSHCE.
- 2.33 Courteous behaviour and positive attitudes are the norm in pupils' social development. Pupils show an awareness of the feelings of others and take initiative in giving help where needed during lessons and throughout the day. For example, pupils showed sympathy when another pupil was upset, and a pupil struggling to find an English word was helped by others in the class. They undertake responsibilities willingly and Year 6 help with younger children and act as team captains. Through the activities of the school, pupils are able to contribute to community life.
- 2.34 The school has a rich and harmonious cultural mix which successfully encourages pupils to be tolerant of different backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils thrive in a community where the

international ethos is strong and there is positive interaction between pupils from different countries during the school day. Although religious aspects of different cultural traditions are not taught within the curriculum, pupils readily make friends with others from a range of countries and cultural backgrounds and they learn about different cultures through history, PSHCE and special occasions, as in the senior school.

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- 2.35 The pupils acquire a strong sense of identity and self-worth, enhanced by curricular and extra-curricular studies in which they explore differing values and beliefs. They gain sensitive spiritual awareness from their studies in art, music and literature and from living in a community with a rich cultural diversity.
- 2.36 Pupils develop a clear moral sense and show respect for the rules and conventions which promote a calm and well-regulated society. They are strongly influenced by the values that permeate the school and this is reinforced by regular assemblies, the PSHE programme and participation in overseas visits and conventions.
- 2.37 Pupils have a well-developed social awareness through the provision of many co-operative activities. They exercise leadership and responsibility through participation in the student council, and as prefects, who have a valuable role in promoting tolerance and understanding in the school community. The school's participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award scheme places an emphasis on group work and personal responsibility, which is further developed in competitive team sports. Sixth-form students reach out to the wider community through the International Baccalaureate, the Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) programme and their generous response to fund raising for charity.
- 2.38 The cultural development of pupils is a positive feature of school life. It is well advanced through contact with others in the school's multi-cultural community and through an educational experience which includes Egyptian culture and the celebration of events such as Remembrance Day and Christmas. The appreciation of Egyptian culture is through the teaching of Arabic, elements of Egyptian history and literature and the celebration of Egyptian festivals. Cultural development is further advanced through such events as International Week and Book Week.

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.39 Teaching is effective and occasionally outstanding; it is rarely less than satisfactory. It enables pupils of all abilities and those with learning difficulties or English as a second language to make successful progress in a challenging and supportive environment according to the aims of the school. In the junior and senior parts of the school, assessment is satisfactory overall but includes areas for development of which the school is aware.
- 2.40 Teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves. The facilities in the new school have opened up many exciting approaches to teaching, including the use of specialist areas and electronic whiteboards. The library is efficiently organised and well used; it encourages pupils to read for pleasure and to do research. Library sessions include free choice and guided activity.

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- 2.41 The friendly and encouraging approach of the teachers helps to create an environment where pupils learn with confidence. Support is available in mathematics, English and English as a

- second language for pupils who require it. Teachers' planning includes tasks suited to individual need. A special programme has been devised for pupils needing support for English as a second language. Examples were observed in lessons of pupils using 'writing frames' to aid recording in science and pre-printed Venn diagrams in a sorting exercise in humanities. Some extension work is available for gifted and talented pupils.
- 2.42 A range of teaching methods provides opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills. They learn to make predictions in experiments, to engage in critical appraisal of each other's ideas, and then to interpret their results. For example, pupils examined artefacts in history and drew conclusions about their usage and origin.
- 2.43 The calm and organised routine at the beginning of the school day helps pupils to settle after their journeys and prepare for the day's activities. The constant reinforcement of responsible behaviour and classroom policies, such as raising hands to answer questions, enables pupils to enjoy learning in a supportive atmosphere. In practical sessions, pupils are encouraged to select and organise their own equipment and to work co-operatively in groups.
- 2.44 The planning of teaching is effective. It follows English national guidelines as a basis for yearly overviews and for short-term planning. A range of effective teaching methods is apparent in lessons: for example, brainstorming to revise the water cycle, the use of computers and library books for research in humanities, and investigative work in mathematics to find out if the people with the biggest feet have the biggest hand span. ICT is used effectively to support the teaching of various subjects; for example, in the production of posters and newspapers.
- 2.45 In the best lessons, clear learning objectives are set and a range of stimulating activities captures the pupils' interest and maintains levels of concentration. In the few lessons where planning was less thorough and content did not match the pupils' ability, concentration wavered and learning objectives were not met. The ethos of good behaviour in the classroom enhances the learning process but teaching is occasionally less effective when behaviour issues detract from the content of the lesson.
- 2.46 Teaching shows a clear understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils. In the best lessons, learning objectives were carefully matched to the needs of the group but teaching was less effective when the concepts introduced were not closely matched to pupils' abilities and previous learning experiences.
- 2.47 The school has not adopted the suggestion in the previous report to have specialist subject teachers, but class teachers are well supported by the subject co-ordinators even though their role is underdeveloped in relation to monitoring teaching and learning in their areas. Teaching demonstrates secure subject knowledge and confident presentation of lesson content.
- 2.48 Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils' work is regularly marked according to the guidelines in the marking policy. Helpful comments are accompanied by an assessment of the stages of success in achieving the learning objective for a particular assignment. Pupils understand the meanings of the symbols used to summarise their achievements and know what they need to do to improve. It is intended that analysis of regular assessments set against National Curriculum levels will be used to help in the planning of subsequent work and in setting targets for improvement. This development is in its early stages.
- 2.49 Teaching makes satisfactory use of arrangements for pupils' performance to be evaluated against the Early Learning Goals, National Curriculum results and cognitive ability scores. A new system of assessment is to be introduced in mathematics, English and science. Record

sheets are to be compiled to track the progress of each pupil and to identify any need for individual support.

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- 2.50 A great deal of the teaching is centred on pupils' learning and initiative; examination results are rightly regarded as decisively important, but a significant number of teachers are just as determined to imbue a love of the subject and the sponsorship of independent thinking. Strong features in the most successful teaching were a lively and rigorous approach, depth of subject expertise, lucid explanation and judicious questioning. Weaker features of the teaching were occasionally present in a slow pace of working, unexciting presentation, insufficient opportunities for pupils to contribute and problems of organisation.
- 2.51 Pupils manifestly enjoy learning and are encouraged to behave well. There is productive use of group and pair work, sponsoring co-operative learning and enriching relationships. Pupils also work effectively on their own. The pace of lessons is often vigorous and energizing, though this is sensitively adjusted for less able pupils or those with learning difficulties. An enterprising teaching approach helps to explain why pupils and sixth-form students perform well in GCSE and International Baccalaureate examinations, without over-narrow examination-oriented instruction.
- 2.52 Teaching is meticulously planned and well managed in terms of time, variety of activity and use of resources. Teaching styles are individual but effectively honed and the electronic whiteboards are well used by teachers, although their use by pupils is not developed.
- 2.53 Teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils. It instils confidence, mutual respect and valuable flexibility. Tracking of progress is effective and teachers pitch their lessons with shrewd attention to the pupils' capabilities.
- 2.54 The teaching staff are highly qualified and have a wealth of international experience, which is particularly beneficial to International Baccalaureate work. Their subject knowledge and expertise are equally developed, and they encompass a variety of style and approach.
- 2.55 Teaching is supported by a wide range of resources of high quality. Teachers are imaginative in their deployment, especially in the care taken to vary stimuli and use the most appropriate medium for the task. This was a feature in various subjects, notably Arabic and French.
- 2.56 While teaching includes regular and thorough assessment of pupils' work, it is carried out inconsistently. The school's grading system is detailed and clear, and all pupils understand it well, but marking practice varies considerably. Some work is carefully annotated, but other marking is much less meticulous, even perfunctory. And while it is recognised that work is self-marked or evaluated orally in class, it is not clear to what extent pupils absorb such debriefing. The best marking is detailed, vigorously engaged and helpful in carrying pupils' work forward with strong momentum.

- 2.57 The school has devised comprehensive arrangements for pupils' performance to be evaluated. These reflect both the school's aims as provided to parents and national norms. Standardised tests of ability set a baseline against which GCSE and International Baccalaureate results are measured.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The school has an effective system of pastoral care and achieves its aim of providing a disciplined and supportive environment. It takes great care of the welfare, health and safety of the pupils.

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- 3.2 Since the last report, the school has worked hard to review its pastoral care arrangements and this is reflected in the school improvement plan and revised policy documents. In the Foundation Stage and in the junior school, behaviour is well managed and pupils are looked after carefully both at Beverly Hills and at Zamalek. Procedures are effective for promoting pupils' social and physical well-being, regardless of need or culture. The staff know their pupils well and they are supported by the teaching assistants and adult monitors in providing support and guidance to all pupils. The junior school is currently in the process of increasing the number of teaching assistants so that each class has increased supervision and help with teaching and learning.
- 3.3 Pastoral arrangements are thorough and effective. The home-school link system enables class teachers and parents to communicate should there be a problem with work or behaviour. The senior managers of the junior department oversee the system and meet regularly; concerns for children are discussed to ensure continuity of care.
- 3.4 The school places a high level of importance on promoting good relationships. An excellent assembly for Years 3 to 6 reinforced the importance of working together; and posters around the school promoted UK national Anti-bullying Week. During lessons pupils work with partners and in groups to promote an ethos of co-operation and valuing the opinions of others. Pupils confirmed that they would approach a teacher if they had a problem with work or friendships, although, in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small proportion expressed reluctance to do this. Class representatives on the school council are in the process of compiling information for a booklet to identify what concerns pupils and what they should do or to whom they should go if they need help. Recently the work of the adult bus monitors has been extended to the play areas.
- 3.5 Policies, guidelines and procedures ensure that good behaviour is fostered. Unacceptable behaviour is challenged and recorded on an incident report form and follow-ups include actions and recommendations. A system of earning 'golden time' is used in some classes as a way of rewarding good behaviour. The highlight for the children in Years 1 and 2 is to be chosen as 'star of the week', and success across a range of areas is celebrated. Older pupils are given house points as a reward for good behaviour.

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- 3.6 The school provides effective pastoral care and successfully fulfils its aim of providing a disciplined and supportive environment. Pupils speak positively about the support and guidance given by their form and subject teachers. The pastoral systems ensure that the overall quality of welfare, health and safety is good.
- 3.7 The school provides effective support and guidance for all pupils through the form tutors, overseen by the heads of year and the senior management team. The pupils also receive

- specialist careers guidance and support through their PSHE lessons. They appreciate the help from heads of year in producing a calendar of coursework deadlines.
- 3.8 The heads of year co-ordinate the work of their form tutors, providing effective pastoral arrangements. The system for tracking grades is starting to be used by them to monitor progress and identify difficulties, which supports existing tracking by heads of department. It is intended to add more data to the system to increase its usefulness to the pastoral team.
- 3.9 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent. Even though in their questionnaire responses a significant minority of pupils had reservations and felt, for example, that they would not easily turn to an adult if they had a personal problem, on discussion with pupils in school, it was clear that they know adults to turn to when they have concerns and are happy that the head of year will be informed if the matter is serious. They commented favourably on the assistance given to them by subject teachers and form teachers. Relationships between pupils are cordial and relaxed in class. As in the junior school, pupils have the opportunity to put forward their views through the school council, which is consulted on such matters as the timing of the school day.
- 3.10 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against harassment and bullying, are effective and deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs. Pupils are polite and courteous. They mostly behave extremely well in the classroom and around the school, and there is a fair system of sanctions for those pupils who behave inappropriately or who do not honour their obligations in class.
- 3.11 In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a significant minority of pupils stated that the school did not deal effectively with bullying. However, inspection evidence shows that firm action has been taken and the school is rigorous in trying to eliminate any form of bullying, including insensitive comments or behaviour. It has fully embraced Anti-bullying Week. There have been many activities to raise awareness such as a poster campaign, lunch-time music, a 'Wear White for Peace' initiative and a bake sale. A highly successful assembly on bullying was presented during the inspection week, with strong participation by pupils. The sixth form has been active in introducing 'bus prefects' on school transport where tired children on long journeys have sometimes let their normal standards drop and have indulged in unacceptable behaviour.

### ***Whole School***

- 3.12 The revised child protection policy is comprehensive and thoroughly helpful. Staff have previously had training in safeguarding pupils and are ready for renewed guidance in the light of the new policy. Those with a role in child protection are aware of their responsibilities. Appropriate links have been established for contact with government agencies. The admission and attendance registers are carefully maintained and thorough arrangements are made for pupils who are ill. The first-aid policy is clear and the medical centre is well appointed and equipped. Professional medical expertise is readily available in the school and several members of staff are trained in first aid, two of them at the higher level.
- 3.13 Fire prevention policies and procedures are documented and operative. Evacuation drills are established and a practice has been held. Notices displayed in every classroom explain the procedure in case of fire or earthquake. The fire alarm system is checked regularly. Full risk assessments with careful grading for severity and likelihood of risk have been made for the various areas of the school and any difficulties are swiftly dealt with. Care is taken to ensure that out-of-school visits have full risk assessments.

- 3.14 Arrangements for the health and safety of pupils are carefully considered and effective. A governors' health and safety committee meets regularly and has meticulously documented all the requirements and actions needed to remediate any problems. These actions have been promptly carried out. Pupils are taught about healthy eating and taking regular exercise through the PSHE programme. In the cafeteria no fizzy drinks are allowed. The provision of a 'fruit boost' break encourages pupils to eat healthily.

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.15 The quality of links with parents is a highly favourable feature of the school. It successfully meets its aim to reach out to all its families, the local community and the wider world in a spirit of international co-operation and understanding. The parents contribute a great deal to the provision of resources and to the work of the school. Parents serve on governors' committees for education, finance and health and safety. Reporting is helpful, although in the senior school its quality is inconsistent, as the school is aware.
- 3.16 The vast majority of the parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire strongly endorsed almost all aspects of the school's educational provision, including the curriculum, teaching, promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views, help and guidance and the pupils' behaviour. However, a small minority of parents in the junior and senior schools expressed dissatisfaction with the help the school gives for those with learning difficulties or disabilities (termed 'special educational needs' on the questionnaire). The inspectors are in agreement with the parents' positive views and find that the school is determined to improve the provision for learning support. It has already made a new appointment for this purpose and is introducing new procedures.
- 3.17 Parents of pupils and prospective pupils are now provided with the required information about the school and have been made aware of the availability of school policy documents. There is a weekly newsletter called *BISC Bulletin* and a well-illustrated and informative termly magazine entitled *BISC Life*. In addition there is a great deal of information on the school website to enable parents to know about forthcoming events. The school has a comprehensive complaints procedure and replies from parents revealed that the large majority felt the school handled concerns appropriately.
- 3.18 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the life of the school through the active and thriving parent-teacher association, which supports the school in a wide variety of ways. These include social activities for pupils and their parents, and raising money for the benefit of the pupils; for example, in the purchase of four cameras and an ice-machine this year. The association also helps the pupils in their charity fund-raising ventures such as the sponsored run. Parents help with school productions and concerts and they are involved in enhancing the provision of books for the library. They become involved in the work and progress of their children through parents' information evenings.
- 3.19 The school succeeds in its aim to have positive links with the wider community. The curriculum is enriched by strong links with charities and by visits to local and international historical sites. Pupils have experience of different cultures and traditions through visits and demonstrations by local craftspeople and performers. The school is also successful at forging links with other international schools.

***Junior School***

- 3.20 Since the last inspection, the school has continued to monitor its reporting system to parents and during this inspection the complaints from parents, kept centrally, were seen to be handled well, although a small number of parents had expressed a contrary view in their questionnaire responses.
- 3.21 The school attaches great importance to providing informative and effective contact with parents. In the Foundation Stage, home-school diaries and reading books regularly go home to further communication between home and school. This good practice continues throughout the junior school and is much appreciated by the parents.
- 3.22 All parents receive a comprehensive school handbook and over the year have the opportunity to attend information evenings, curriculum evenings, assemblies and open days to keep informed about the type of work their children are covering. Open days and tours of the school are organised to introduce prospective parents to the school and on these occasions they are provided with information on the admissions procedure.

***Senior School***

- 3.23 Parents receive regular reports about their children's work and progress. Reports are in a well-conceived format and contain many thoughtful and helpful comments. However, many of them are not precise in identifying performance in subject-specific skills or providing clearly defined targets to enable improvements to be made.
- 3.24 The school takes parental concerns seriously. Complaints receive professional and sympathetic replies. The school reports to the complainants any necessary remedial action in respect of their complaints. Copies of complaints are kept centrally to facilitate monitoring.
- 3.25 The school has worthwhile links with local charities such as an orphanage where pupils undertake community service for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, and the CAS component of the International Baccalaureate. The school council initiated a bake sale and a 'mufti day' in aid of the victims of the local rockfall disaster in addition to collecting food and blankets for the survivors. The school regularly raises money for local and international charities. The students gain much personal development from the Model United Nations initiative. At these conventions, they represent a country and gain a realistic insight into the difficulties facing that country within the world. The pupils benefit from participation in regional inter-school competitions. At the time of the inspection both the girls' and the boys' football teams were playing in international matches in Abu Dhabi.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The governing body is highly effective in its progress towards meeting its aim to provide a first-class education. It keeps well informed about the school through close contact with the principal, the work of its monthly education and health and safety sub-committees and the designated duties of specific governors. The principal and heads of school and business manager attend governors' meetings. The governing body has been most successful in developing the school as a parent-run initiative, with purposeful developments in academic and welfare areas, the promotion of quality in the selection and retention of teachers and the satisfaction of a diverse clientele.
- 4.2 The governing body is fully committed to its responsibilities and has clear objectives for the development of the school in academic, sporting, musical and welfare areas, with a blend of Western and Arabic culture. It takes particular care to provide support for overseas staff working in Egypt and seeks to maintain teaching quality through its contract of employment and its support of in-service training and performance management. However, it has little direct contact with the staff of the school. It has presided over the financial arrangements and the realisation of the excellent accommodation, facilities and equipment at the new school site. It gives attention to the whole institution including sixth form, senior and junior schools and the Foundation Stage.
- 4.3 The governors, all of whom are parents of current pupils at the school, keep closely in touch with the parent-teacher association and plan the development of the school in conjunction with the senior staff. Their support for the school is strong and they ensure that progress is made towards the achievement of their priorities, including those for the welfare, health and safety of staff and pupils. The governing body has benefited from close association with the government development of safeguarding provision in Egypt. It takes particular interest in academic standards and matters of finance, and it carefully considers the quality of the school's examination results, comparing them with those of other schools and reviewing the pupils' successes in gaining places for higher education.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.4 The senior leadership of the school is strong and provides clear and purposeful direction. The senior management team is highly capable and has responded rapidly to the issues that have arisen from the move to the new school site. The management teams of the junior and senior schools are together successful in promoting the school's aim to be a first-class school which provides the best possible resources and facilities for teaching and learning. This success is reflected in the quality of the educational experience, the pastoral care of the pupils, which is of paramount concern to the school, and the realisation of the school's distinctive ethos. Senior management is aware that the school's well-conceived policies need time for full implementation.
- 4.5 The school has entered a dynamic phase of development and, through a series of new policies and procedures, has begun to promote important issues of curriculum development including 'assessment for learning'. These policies and procedures when totally embedded are intended to ensure that the school can fulfil its aims.
- 4.6 The school has well-qualified, hard-working and fully committed staff. With the relocation of the school and the growth in numbers, many new staff have recently joined the school

following their appointment according to a thorough recruitment procedure involving a comprehensive checklist including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and detailed local police checking. The central register of staff appointments has been rigorously revised and is fully complete.

- 4.7 Under a recent development, overseas applicants for posts travel to Cairo for the selection procedure, and thus have direct experience of their potential new location. The induction programme is of a high standard. It includes time in departments, introductions to the school's computerised record-keeping system, and health and safety. A significant development in 2007 was the introduction of a policy of structured performance management which includes observation and review. This policy is being introduced in stages. Existing reviews are well linked to departmental issues, but currently there is not enough emphasis on personal development.
- 4.8 The school benefits from outstanding accommodation. Large airy classrooms, ample storage facilities, comfortable carpeted areas, new furniture, specialist teaching rooms and excellent outside facilities including swimming pools, tennis courts and football pitches ensure that a wide range of activities can take place. The school is very well resourced and a high quality of maintenance is apparent. The networked ICT suites are well equipped and additional computers are provided in classrooms. The libraries are spacious and well resourced with fiction and non-fiction books and on-line computers.
- 4.9 Financial resources are managed with great care to secure helpful facilities, services and resources in support of the school's educational aims.
- 4.10 Administrators, business personnel and other non-teaching staff are effective in facilitating the smooth running of the school and ensuring the welfare of teachers and pupils alike.

### ***Junior School***

- 4.11 The leadership and management of the junior school are well defined and responsibilities are accepted willingly and enthusiastically. The happy, confident attitudes of the pupils are testament to the successful creation of an environment where all pupils feel secure, happy and respected. The junior management team has a clear vision for the school's direction and is aware of the improvements that can be made. The school has responded well to the recommendations of the previous report, and has developed the subject responsibility posts. They have an increasing role in observation and monitoring, for which additional time is planned.
- 4.12 Analysis of the school's needs is co-operative and effective. Appropriate priorities have been identified. Decision making is well considered and the school's improvement plan is detailed. Careful monitoring of these developments is envisaged, together with formal observations at all levels of management across the junior school, to complement the valuable interaction between colleagues; for example, in the purposeful work towards a system of tracking pupils' progress through assessment against set criteria. In the Foundation Stage, the staff at the Beverly Hills and Zamalek sites have a common sense of purpose. They work together and successfully promote the progress of the children on both sites.
- 4.13 There is a particularly favourable staff-pupil ratio in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Staff benefit from whole-school in-service training. Staff are either qualified teachers, teaching assistants who are graduates with good English language skills, or assistants who speak Arabic if required.

*Senior School*

- 4.14 The highly capable senior management team has undertaken a perceptive analysis of school needs and the school improvement plan and performance management system have been developed in response to these needs. Well-chosen priorities have been established and the principles for implementing policies and procedures have been clearly proclaimed by senior management. Well-directed policies and procedures are being advanced by management at all levels, in the areas of teaching, learning, assessment and learning support. Where possible, taking into account the demands of the move, decisions are being put into practice, but awareness and concentrated action by middle managers and staff more generally are matters for continued emphasis to achieve evenness of implementation. As in the junior school, the monitoring, evaluation and review of revised procedures are ready to take place on a systematic basis.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Firmly established on its new site in Beverly Hills, the school is forging ahead in its aim to develop the pupils' full potential with the personal qualities to fit them for positions of leadership in life. The pupils themselves appreciate the school, with comments such as "I like it" and "It makes me feel at home." They have a high level of achievement in academic study and extra-curricular activities. This is strongly promoted by effective teaching and the pupils' own purposeful attitudes within the framework of a broadly based and effective curriculum. Their personal development progresses well as they pass through the school so that they become confident, reflective young people with a strong sense of responsibility. These qualities are fostered by the effectiveness of the school's pastoral care, and the opportunities it provides to exercise leadership in the house and prefect systems and in activities within and beyond the school. The overall development of the school is strongly supported by the governing body and the school's senior leadership and management. It is well placed for further development in the practical implementation and monitoring of its policies and arrangements for teaching, staff management, assessment, learning support and reporting to parents.

### *Junior School*

- 5.2 Since the last inspection, the junior school has maintained the good level of pupils' achievement and made considerable progress in improving its educational provision; for example, in the development of posts of subject responsibility. It is successful in exploiting the opportunities of the new site for specialist and investigative activities and it has improved its pastoral arrangements and many of its policies.

## **Next Steps**

- 5.3 The school has no major weaknesses but to make further progress it should take the following action.

### ***Junior School***

1. Ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, are set appropriately paced and challenging tasks.
2. Ensure that staff performance management is fully embedded within the school, so that all staff benefit from the professional review and development programme.
3. Strengthen the procedures for assessment, to provide information to help in planning future work and to ensure that pupils make further progress.

### ***Senior School***

1. Ensure that all managers and members of staff fully appreciate and implement the learning, teaching and assessment priorities.
2. Support teachers in raising the overall standard of marking to the level of the best.
3. Improve the overall quality of reporting to parents so that all reports include subject-specific analysis and manageable targets for improvement.
4. Ensure that the new arrangements for learning support are fully implemented so that all staff contribute to the progress of the pupils identified for support and enrichment.

### ***Whole School***

- 5.4 No action is required in respect of the English regulatory requirements as they apply in the Egyptian context.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008. 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 the chairman of the board of directors, 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

#### *Senior School*

Mr Richard Shannon	Reporting Inspector
Mr Steven Hardes	Head, COBIS school
Mr Malcolm Hebden	Head of Learning Support, COBIS school
Dr Richard Palmer	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Kirsten Jackson	Headmistress, GSA school

#### *Junior School*

Mrs Linda Donowho	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Head of Junior Department, GSA school
Mr Andy Falconer	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Anne Robinson	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mrs Val Weakley	Deputy Head, ISA school