



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Inspection of British Schools Overseas

The Inspection Framework

September 2021

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Section A – The Work of the Independent Schools Inspectorate

The Independent Schools Inspectorate

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is accredited by the British government for the inspection of British schools overseas (BSO). Inspections result in BSO accreditation reports which are published on the Department for Education (DfE) and the ISI websites and are made available to parents by the school. If a school is deemed by ISI to meet all of the standards for British schools overseas ([British schools overseas: standards for schools](#) [BSO standards]), the DfE accepts ISI's recommendation, enters it on the national school reference system for England, *Get information about schools (GIAS)*, formerly known as *Edubase*, alongside independent schools in England and, thereby, provides it with BSO accreditation.

Where a school is found to be compliant against all the BSO standards except those which bring it into conflict with the laws of the host country, the report will state: 'The school meets all the BSO standards except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation.' In such cases, the school will gain BSO accreditation and will be listed by the DfE on GIAS.

ISI inspections of British schools overseas are designed to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and the care for their welfare;
- provide objective and reliable inspection reports, which help schools to recognise and build on their strengths, and to address any areas for development;
- report to the DfE the extent to which schools comply with the [British schools overseas: standards for schools](#) (September 2017);
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

ISI inspection is for the benefit of the pupils in the schools. In addition, the intention is to enable parents of pupils in BSOs to evaluate the school against the standards that apply to independent schools in England. An essential element of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, safeguarding, care for pupils and in pupils' achievement. By achieving BSO accreditation, participating schools will be able to demonstrate that they provide a British education that has similar characteristics to an education in an independent school in England. ISI inspections for BSOs follow a similar framework and guidance to those used for independent school inspection in England. In September 2017, the DfE implemented new standards for BSOs; these are based closely on the *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014*.

Inspection principles

ISI inspections:

- report on the extent to which the BSO standards are met and the quality of education in terms of outcomes for pupils;
- report on the fulfilment of aims and the distinctiveness of each school;
- report whether there is evidence that local requirements are met and comment on any contrary indicators apparent during the inspection;
- support school development and improvement;
- take account of any self-evaluation by those inspected;

- include clear and helpful oral feedback to schools;
- incorporate the principle of ‘peer review’;
- are carried out impartially by those with sufficient expertise, relevant professional training and current first-hand experience of teaching or inspecting in the UK.

Quality assurance measures are employed at each stage of the inspection process to ensure that these principles are met and to identify areas for further improvement. These measures include the monitoring of inspection reports during the editing process; evaluation of overseas reporting inspectors’ (ORIs) and overseas team inspectors’ (OTIs) performance on each inspection; evaluation of the inspection process by each school inspected; scrutiny of evidence bases; and on-site monitoring of inspections.

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors are required to adhere to the *Code of Conduct* set out below. They should uphold the highest professional standards in relation to all who are involved before, during and after the inspection. Inspectors should:

- act in the best interests of the pupils at the school;
- carry out their work with professionalism, integrity and courtesy;
- evaluate the work of the school objectively and impartially;
- report fairly and without favour;
- base all evaluations on clear and secure evidence;
- communicate sensitively, clearly and objectively at all times;
- respect the confidentiality of information received and judgements made before, during and after the inspection;
- declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest;
- at all times adhere to the requirements outlined in the *Inspection Framework*, associated guidance and ISI directions, including this *Code of Conduct*;
- prioritise the safeguarding of children and the promotion of their welfare;
- use their inspector designation only in relation to work conducted for ISI.

Guidelines for schools

Those involved in inspection should:

- treat inspectors with professionalism, integrity and courtesy, and take all reasonable steps to facilitate their work in school;
- provide open and objective information on the school, and communicate clearly in response to questions;
- co-operate with inspectors in the best interests of the pupils at the school, raising any concerns promptly in a constructive manner;
- respect the confidentiality of information about the inspection and inspectors;
- seek to understand the *Inspection Framework* and to assist inspectors in fulfilling its requirements;
- respect the inspectors’ need to make direct observations, and to talk with staff and pupils;
- make available, as required, supporting data and documentation.

Principles to ensure the quality of inspections and reports

Inspection teams must ensure that their judgements are:

- *first-hand*, in that they are based primarily on direct observation;
- *valid*, in that they are supported by the evidence gathered by the inspectors;
- *comprehensive*, in that they cover all the aspects of the school set out in the *ISI Overseas Inspection Schedule*;
- *corporate*, in that conclusions about the school as a whole reflect the collective view of the inspection team;
- *even-handed*, in that they accurately express the correct evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement;
- *consistent*, in that the evaluations from inspection evidence do not contradict one another;
- *reliable*, in that they are based on consistent application of the *Inspection Framework* and the *ISI Overseas Inspection Schedule*;
- *objective*, in that the school's compliance with the BSO standards and the fulfilment of its aims, as reflected in outcomes for pupils, are fully and fairly judged.

Use of evidence

In order that a team's judgements may meet the quality criteria, they are based as far as possible on first-hand evidence, which includes that gathered from the following activities:

- observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' written and other work;
- consultation with pupils;
- discussion with the chair of governors, the proprietor or governors' representative(s);
- in relation to educational quality, discussion with relevant individuals who have responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the school's provision;
- the analysis of evidence, including responses to questionnaires, provided by parents and pupils and (where appropriate) staff;
- the analysis of documentary evidence, including performance indicators and self-evaluation;
- the consideration of any significant changes or overt progress over the last three years;
- evidence gathered as inspectors move about the school, which may include from discussion with staff, pupils and others.

Frequency of inspections

BSO accreditation is voluntary and schools may apply to gain accreditation at any point. To maintain their accreditation, schools must be re-inspected every three years. A school which does not have BSO accreditation will no longer be listed as a BSO on *Get information about schools*.

Schools that do not meet the BSO standards may choose to be re-inspected. Re-inspection will take the form of a progress monitoring visit, which generally lasts for one day, depending on the nature of the non-compliance, and which will normally take place within three months of the original inspection. On this visit, the ORI will evaluate the progress the school has made in dealing with the action points resulting from the inspection and will then update the original inspection report to reflect the outcome of the progress

monitoring visit. If gained, BSO accreditation will run for three years from the date of the original inspection, not from the date of the progress monitoring visit.

Types of inspection

ISI's inspection consists of two components.

The first of these is an inspection against the *British schools overseas: standards for schools* which are determined by the Department for Education in England. These standards are similar to those that apply to independent schools in England. The inspection team judges solely whether a school meets or does not meet each of the standards in material respects.

Running concurrently with the inspection of compliance is an inspection of educational quality, which makes qualitative judgements on the two main outcomes for pupils:

- the quality of their learning and achievement;
- the quality of their personal development;

In addition, inspectors will evaluate the impact of a range of contributory factors on outcomes for pupils: leadership and management, the curriculum, teaching, pastoral care and, where applicable, boarding.

Inspections last for four days.

By agreement with ISI, a school may opt for a stand-alone compliance inspection lasting for two days.

Inspection teams

Inspection teams are constructed to provide appropriate coverage of the *Inspection Schedule*. They have regard to the school's educational character and priorities, including boarding. Inspections are led by a professional ORI, supported by a number of OTIs, according to the size, organisation and location of the school. Depending on the size of the primary and secondary sections, the ORI may be supported by an assistant reporting inspector. Similar support may be necessary in schools with split sites and in some more complex schools.

All ORIs are also reporting inspectors in England. All OTIs are required to have experience of working or inspecting in schools in England or in BSO-accredited schools within the last three years. OTIs are allocated according to the size of the school. All-age schools have teams with appropriate experience for their primary (preparatory/junior) and secondary (senior) sections.

For inspection of the BSO standards only, the ORI is usually accompanied by one OTI. Additional OTIs may be required for schools which have boarding, which have both primary (preparatory/junior) and secondary (senior) sections, or which are on split sites.

Timetable for inspection

Because the BSO scheme is voluntary, schools choose when they wish to be inspected and make their request for inspection to ISI, wherever possible, at least three months in advance of the chosen date. ISI will appoint an ORI to lead the inspection and allocate team members according to the type of inspection and size of the school. ISI provides details of the inspection team to the school as soon as possible to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. Once the composition of the team is complete, the ORI contacts the school to make preliminary arrangements and to agree how and when required documentation should be transferred to the ORI. The ORI then begins the analysis of the school's pre-inspection documentation. The inspection will also take into account any further documentation supplied by the school during the inspection as well as questionnaire responses from parents and pupils.

Schools may choose to have a pre-inspection visit from the ORI, usually lasting two days. This takes place at a time to be agreed with the school but usually around six weeks before the inspection. The focus of the pre-inspection visit is on building constructive relationships with the school, collecting relevant information and documentation from the school, making detailed arrangements for the inspection, and agreeing transportation, accommodation and, where necessary, visa arrangements for the team visit. On this visit, the ORI makes a preliminary review of compliance with the BSO standards and advises the school orally of any areas where the evidence may require clarification or development. The school is then able to prepare complete evidence in readiness for the team inspection, with the benefit of the advice received. The report reflects the position at the end of the inspection.

Schools may opt not to have a pre-inspection visit. If this is the case, the ORI will arrange a time well in advance of the inspection for an internet-based discussion with the headteacher and senior leaders. This will focus on inspection processes and requirements, and the ORI will seek to support the school in understanding how to make the best use of the inspection process. The conversation will also focus on travel arrangements including flights as well as, where necessary, discussions about visa requirements. The ORI will arrive at the school a day before the main inspection team arrives in order to complete planning for the inspection with the school's senior leaders. Team members arrive at the team hotel on the day before the inspection starts.

Reporting on inspection findings

Oral feedback: The corporately agreed findings are reported to the school orally on the afternoon of the last day of the inspection. A clear distinction is made between compliance with the BSO standards and any failure to meet them. Consequent action points are specified and explained as necessary. Recommendations for development, which arise from the findings of an educational quality inspection, are identified and explained as necessary.

Written report: The ORI has the responsibility for drafting the written report on the basis of the team's agreed findings. The wording and grades are provisional until quality-assurance procedures are completed, and so inspection findings should only be shared once the school receives its copy of the final inspection report.

Around three weeks after the end of the inspection, the school has the opportunity to point out any factual or other errors in the draft report. Copies of the published report are sent to the school within five weeks of the end of the inspection. BSO accreditation reports are published on the ISI website two weeks after being issued to a school.

On receiving the final BSO report, the school must publish a copy on its website and provide a copy to each parent and legal guardian within two weeks of receipt.

Additional guidance

In addition to this *Inspection Framework*, additional information is provided for schools and inspectors to help them prepare for the inspection.

Guidance for the inspection of British schools overseas: provides guidance to inspectors on the conduct of overseas inspections, but also provides schools with further details with regard to the conduct of overseas inspections.

Commentary on the BSO standards: although written to guide inspectors in evaluating whether or not schools meet the DfE's BSO standards, the document also provides useful guidance to schools.

Grade descriptors: criteria which provide a 'best fit' guide to help inspectors in their evaluation, taking account of pupils' ages and capabilities or starting points.

Documentation required for inspection: a list of the documentation which schools are asked to make available to inspection teams prior to the inspection.

Pre-inspection information about the school and self-evaluation form: a form which schools are asked to complete: the first part provides essential information about the school to inspectors; the second part may be used by schools to communicate their own self-evaluation to inspectors.

Section B – Inspection of BSO Standards

ISI inspects against the standards drawn up by the DfE for British schools overseas. The BSO standards are contained in the paragraphs listed below, which are divided into eight parts. Part 9 relates to schools with boarding provision and outlines the 20 minimum standards for boarding. Further details of these standards are contained in the DfE’s document [Standards for British schools overseas, departmental advice for British schools overseas, school staff, parents and prospective parents](#). Guidance for inspectors on interpreting the standards can be found in ISI’s *Commentary on the BSO standards*. This is shared with schools for the purpose of transparency.

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2¹: the curriculum

Paragraph 3: teaching

Paragraph 4: framework for the assessment of pupils’ performance

Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5: the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7: safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils

Paragraph 8: safeguarding and promoting the welfare of boarders

Paragraph 9: the promotion of good behaviour

Paragraph 10: the prevention of bullying

Paragraph 11: health and safety

Paragraph 12: compliance with fire standards

Paragraph 13: administration of first aid

Paragraph 14: supervision of pupils

Paragraph 15: admission and attendance register

Paragraph 16: risk assessments

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Paragraph 18: the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school

Paragraph 19: the suitability of supply staff at the school

Paragraph 20: the suitability of the proprietor of the school

Paragraph 21: register of staff and suitability checks

¹ Paragraphs 1, 6, 17, 22 and 31 are introductory paragraphs to the relevant Parts and do not indicate standards that are to be inspected

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23: toilet and washing facilities

Paragraph 24: accommodation for the medical and therapy needs of pupils

Paragraph 25: maintenance of accommodation and facilities

Paragraph 26: acoustic conditions and sound insulation

Paragraph 27: internal and external lighting

Paragraph 28: water supply

Paragraph 29: outdoor space for physical education and play

Paragraph 30: boarding accommodation

Part 6 – Provision of information

Paragraph 32: provision of information to parents and others

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33: complaints procedure and handling of complaints

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34: quality of leadership and management

Part 9 – Minimum standards for boarding

Standard 1: statement of boarding principles and practice

Standard 2: boarders' induction and support

Standard 3: boarders' health and well-being

Standard 4: contact with parents/carers

Standard 5: boarding accommodation

Standard 6: safety of boarders

Standard 7: fire precautions and drills

Standard 8: provision and preparation of food and drinks

Standard 9: boarders' possessions

Standard 10: activities and free time

Standard 11: child protection

Standard 12: promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Standard 13: management and development of boarding

Standard 14: staff recruitment and checks on other adults

Standard 15: staffing and supervision

Standard 16: equal opportunities

Standard 17: securing boarders' views

Standard 18: complaints

Standard 19: prefects

Standard 20: long-stay lodgings

Inspectors will also comment on the school's response to any action points from the previous inspection.

Section C – Inspection of Educational Quality Overseas

In the inspection of educational quality, inspectors will gather first-hand evidence in order to make judgements on the quality of outcomes for pupils and the factors that contribute to those outcomes. They will observe lessons, scrutinise pupils' work, have discussions with pupils and staff and observe other activities taking place during the inspection. For each of the main outcomes, key strengths and areas for development will be explained by reference to relevant areas of the school's provision, and in relation to the school's stated aims and mission. The report will not contain evaluations of all aspects of its provision but will concentrate on those that have a significant impact on outcomes for pupils.

Quality of learning and achievement

In reviewing the pupils' **learning and achievement**, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which all groups of pupils, whether grouped by age, ability or need, make progress in relation to their individual starting points in terms of:

- A1 change in their attainment levels over time, including evidence from externally standardised tests and examination results;
- A2 development of their knowledge, understanding and skills across the areas of learning (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education);
- A3 development of their English-language skills, their competence in communication (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and the application of these skills to other areas of learning;
- A4 development of their competence in numeracy and the application of their knowledge and skills in mathematics to other areas of learning;
- A5 development of their competence in information and communication technology and its application to other areas of learning;
- A6 development of their study skills, including the ability to draw upon a suitably wide range of sources and to develop higher-order skills, for example, to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise;
- A7 their achievements in scholarships and competitions, other academic distinctions, and success in sports, the performing and other arts, and other activities;
- A8 their attitudes towards learning, including their ability to demonstrate initiative and independence, their competence in working collaboratively, and the extent to which they take leadership in their learning.

Quality of personal development

In reviewing the **pupils' personal development**, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which pupils, as relevant to their age and ability:

- P1 develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience, including an understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance, so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives;
- P2 understand that the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success and well-being;
- P3 develop spiritual understanding and an appreciation of non-material aspects of life, whether religious, philosophical or other;

- P4 distinguish right from wrong, understand and respect systems of rules and laws, and accept responsibility for their own behaviour, including towards others;
- P5 are socially aware and so are able to work effectively with others, including to solve problems and achieve common goals;
- P6 fulfil responsibilities and contribute positively to the lives of others within the school, including in boarding, the local community, and wider society;
- P7 respect and value diversity within society, show respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures, and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions;
- P8 know how to stay safe and understand how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise, and a balanced lifestyle.

Contributory factors

Inspectors will comment on the following contributory factors when making judgements on outcomes for pupils in the two areas: quality of learning and achievement, and personal development.

- **the impact of leadership and management** including: the impact which leaders have on outcomes for pupils by providing clear educational direction, discharging their delegated responsibilities, ensuring attention is given to the safeguarding of pupils and to their welfare, health and safety, fulfilling the aims of the school, providing appropriate resources, planning for improvement, managing information, and developing constructive links with parents; the extent to which the governing body/proprietor(s) discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, and the impact they have on outcomes for pupils through financial planning and investment, monitoring the school's procedures and provision, and providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and improvement;
- **the effectiveness of the curriculum** and other opportunities and, in particular, how well they provide for the individual needs of the pupils, including their personal, social, health, and economic education; the extra-curricular activities provided and the pupils' participation in them; opportunities for pupils to experience and develop independence, responsibility and leadership, and the ability to make informed choices that will affect their future;
- **the effectiveness of teaching**, particularly in terms of the planning for, and delivery of, learning opportunities that enhance progress for all pupils; the role models provided by teachers and other adults in the school, and the learning environment created;
- **the impact of pastoral care**, particularly the impact the school's support systems have on pupils' personal development and their attitudes to learning; the effective promotion of positive behaviour within a wider culture of welfare that has regard to identifying and responding to individuals' needs and views;
- where relevant, **the role of boarding** and the impact it has on pupils' personal development.

Inspectors will also comment on the school's response to any recommendations from the previous inspection and note any significant changes in the quality of provision in the last three years.

Section D – The Inspection Report

The compliance section of the report includes a succinct, clear explanation as to why a school has, or has not, met the BSO standards and, where applicable, the minimum standards for boarding schools. The educational quality inspection report includes an evaluation of the quality of pupils' learning and achievement and their personal development, and the factors contributing to these outcomes, such as leadership and management, the curriculum, the teaching, pastoral care and, where relevant, boarding. The responses of pupils and parents to questionnaires are taken into account in the relevant sections of the report. The report is structured as follows.

School's details

A table setting out basic information about the school, its address, contact details, the number of pupils in the different sections of the school and the dates on which the inspection took place.

1 – Background information

This section contains essential background information about the school, including: the type of school and its key features; ownership and/or governance arrangements; a very short history of the school; significant changes since the previous inspection. This is followed by a brief summary of the school's aims and information about the pupils: their backgrounds; their ability as indicated by available data; the different groups of pupils within the school; and their various needs.

2 – Inspection of standards for British schools overseas

This part of the report starts with a preface explaining the role of ISI and the nature of the inspection. This is followed by a summary indicating whether or not the school meets the BSO standards.

The report then provides a summary evaluation of compliance findings. In relation to each Part of the BSO standards, as listed in Section B, an overview is given of the main inspection findings. If the standards are met, reference may not always be made to all of the sub-parts. Where there is overlap between sections, the reporting comes in the optimum location and duplication is avoided. If a standard is not met, the report provides action points which, if completed effectively, would enable the school to meet the standard.

3 – Inspection of educational quality

This part of the report starts with a preface explaining the nature of the educational quality inspection. This is followed by key judgements on the quality of pupils' learning and achievement and the quality of pupils' personal development, followed by recommendations to improve the quality of education and outcomes for pupils.

For each of the two key outcomes, key strengths and areas for development are explained by reference to relevant areas of the school's provision, and in relation to the school's stated aims and mission. The report will not contain evaluations of all aspects of its provision but will concentrate on those that have a significant impact on outcomes for pupils.

4 – Inspection evidence

The report concludes with a short paragraph detailing the evidence used in reaching the inspection findings, together with a list of inspectors and their respective roles.