

## Inspection Report



### **British School of Córdoba**

Calle México, 4  
14012 Córdoba

#### **School's regional authorisation number:**

BOE 14000173 (main site) 14012746 (Foundation Site)

#### **Date of Inspection:**

26<sup>th</sup> February 2019

#### **Inspection Team:**

Lead Inspector: Jocelyn Shimell

Team Inspector: Steve Evans

#### **Reason for the Inspection:**

for authorisation to provide a British education from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Key Stage 5 (KS5).

#### **Overall Recommendation:**

The school is recommended for authorisation from Early Years Foundation Stage (3 years old) to Year 13 (18 years old) for a period of 4 years for 100 pupils on the Foundation site and 600 pupils on the main site.

The next inspection is due in February 2023.

*Schools are **authorised** by regional authorities after **inspection** by NABSS (or another recognised inspection service) and **certification** by the British Council.*

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## **History and Context of the School:**

The British School of Córdoba was founded in 1998. In 2003 the school moved to its current site in a suburb of the city and acquired an additional property to house the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Construction was completed last year on a new building on the main site. There are currently 548 pupils on roll.

## **Accommodation and Resources:**

The Early Years site is equipped with two ample-sized outdoor play areas, four classrooms, sufficient toilet facilities, staff and resources areas, and a kitchen that serves the same menu as the main school.

The primary and secondary departments are located on a large, purpose-built site that has good-sized, bright classrooms equipped with projectors. The original building houses four laboratories and a large auditorium used for assemblies and examinations. A well-equipped, spacious gym includes an office space for physical education staff and clean, adequately sized changing rooms for pupils. There are two large information and communications technology (ICT) suites equipped with 25 computers for primary and secondary ICT lessons to take place. There are 14 computers available for key stage 5 students' private study. Forty additional devices are accessible for primary and secondary teachers through a booking system.

Construction of the new building has provided additional spacious classrooms, a meeting/oral examination room and music practice rooms, all of which are fully soundproofed. There are two art rooms, one of which also houses a photography studio for pupils who are studying Advanced Level Photography. The staffroom provides an impressive space for teachers to work. It has 12 computers and offers sufficient storage space for teachers' belongings and resources. A healthy lunch is provided daily for staff in the social/ dining room located near to the staffroom. An exceptionally large playground offers secondary pupils plenty of space to play safely. It has a retractable canvas roof to create shade in the warmer months.

Displays in classrooms and around the school reflect the school's values. Each corridor is named after a public figure, for example Malala Yousafzai, and the value they inspire such as self-belief. Further displays have been generated by the pupils to promote consideration and respect for others, a reflection of the strong ethos of the school. Some display areas reflect activities happening in the school such as the interschool science competition and the edible garden. In classrooms, there is a good balance between examples of pupils' work and informative posters that are used as a resource in lessons. For example in a primary English classroom, a poster of key literary terms is used as a reference to support pupils in their learning.

There is disabled access at the entrance and lifts to all floors inside both buildings. Disabled toilets are located on the ground floor in both buildings. There is an adequate number of toilets for staff and pupils.

## **Health, Safety and Welfare:**

Both sites are clean and well maintained. The entrance to the main site is secure and all visitors sign in at reception and receive a visitor's badge. The EYFS building is secured with a videophone entrance.

The school has a good health and safety policy. The head teacher is the safeguarding officer. Teachers and managers have recently completed courses about safeguarding children. There is a fully qualified First Aider available and a well-equipped sick bay with a hospital bed, shower and a fridge for storing medication. Some members of staff have completed first aid courses. A defibrillator is also available and seven members of staff have been trained how to use it.

Emergency evacuation procedures are displayed in every classroom and a fire drill takes place once a year. Fire extinguishers are strategically placed around the school.

The school prepares meals on site that are healthy and well-balanced. The dining room provides ample seating for pupils who eat in two lunch time sessions to avoid over-crowding.

## **The Curriculum:**

The English National Curriculum is strongly evident throughout the school. Time allowances for each subject are appropriate. Relevant and effective planning is in place and ensures the curriculum is delivered successfully. Suitable resources are used to prepare pupils for examinations and creative teaching in lessons makes good use of these resources. For example, projectors displayed interactive presentations which engaged the children and gave structure to the teacher-led sessions in many observed lessons.

Pupils are mostly of Spanish nationality, but the level of English is good in the classroom and around the school. For example, in a secondary English lesson, a pupil asked his classmate to explain what a word from the poem being studied meant and instead of translating, he explained in English exactly what it meant and its context in the poem. In primary lessons, pupils can be given a stop and think card if they use Spanish and pupils work together to encourage each other to use English.

The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Teachers from a nearby language academy offer Chinese and German, and pupils are involved in many musical and sporting activities. Uptake for these activities is very good. For example, 60 pupils signed up for a running club at lunchtime. Older pupils are encouraged to support and work with younger pupils, creating a strong sense of community. Key stage 5 pupils offer creative writing and debating workshops to pupils lower down the school and have successfully participated in the European Youth Parliament debating competition.

## **Staffing:**

Staff are suitably qualified to deliver the National Curriculum effectively in all areas of the school. Classroom assistants support learning well and are used effectively. A full time educational psychologist offers support to pupils with special needs and works with staff using an efficient referral system.

## **Teaching and Learning:**

The standard of teaching ranges from good to outstanding. Overall, teaching is good. In all classes there is a positive learning environment, excellent standards of behaviour and strong relationships between pupils and teachers. The teachers encourage pupils to discuss their work, to reflect on their learning and to identify their own targets for improvement. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher used a traffic light stamp that the pupils coloured in to show how well they have understood the work; that is, red if they are having difficulty, green if they have understood.

The teachers have a good awareness of pace and timing in lessons. For example, a quiz in science finished earlier than expected, so pupils were asked to make up their own questions for the opposing team. Pupils had to collaborate and revise lesson content to create new questions, and so the activity resulted in valuable learning.

Most lessons include a variety of different activities including pair and group work, practical activities and fun learning games.

Differentiation by task is evident in every lesson observed and reflects how well the teachers understand their pupils' abilities and use individual target grades to inform their planning. The more challenging tasks encouraged children to think independently and extend their learning by solving problems. For example, in a Year 3 English lesson the more able writers could create their own similes, encouraging them to make appropriate comparisons - where other groups had a more structured framework from which to produce a piece of writing.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. Pupils leave lessons in an orderly fashion and lessons start punctually.

The teachers set homework on the school's online platform and this enables pupils and parents to access homework tasks from home. In the primary department, marking is consistent and constructive. In the secondary department, pupils' work is marked regularly in some subjects like history and English. In these subjects, feedback is detailed and constructive, but it is inconsistent in other subjects.

## **Assessment:**

In the primary department, pupils are formally assessed in writing, reading and mathematics every half term. Marking is based on the National Curriculum and identifies those working below, at and beyond age-related expectations. A

useful note is recorded in exercise books when a teacher has given verbal feedback.

In some secondary subjects such as English, the pupils respond well to constructive feedback by correcting and improving aspects of their own work. This is good practice that could be used more consistently across all subjects in order to inform pupils of their strengths and areas for improvement.

On the whole, however, the teachers assess learning effectively.

Good public examination results in key stages 4 and 5 indicate that pupils perform well and 4 pupils have already received offers from both Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

Tracking of pupils' progress within departments is good and individual target grades are clearly recorded so that teachers can easily identify any pupils who need extra support. Mock examinations take place in Years 11 and 13 and the results are used to inform teachers when establishing target grades for their students. There are plans to introduce mock examinations in Year 12 this year as a way of tracking pupils more effectively in key stage 5.

In the secondary department, no assessment system is currently in place to measure progress against national levels lower down the school as recommended in the last report. However, there are plans to introduce some form of standardised testing in the future.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development:**

The strong core values of the school's ethos are introduced through the head teacher's assemblies and reinforced by teachers. A year 3 class, learning to use effective similes, were encouraged to challenge gender stereotypes referring to a previous assembly topic. The stereotype example was a simile: 'Cries like a little girl'. The teacher referred to the assembly about gender equality and asked the children to think of a better example on the basis that anyone can cry, not just girls.

The school's core values are successfully achieved: the pupils are happy, keen to learn and respect each other.

Personal, social and health education is embedded in the curriculum and reinforced in lessons where pupils behave well, collaborate and support each other in their learning.

There are strong links to the community. For example, members of the sixth form participate in a food bank run by local supermarkets.

Communication with parents is very good. Detailed reports are issued termly and parents are encouraged to come in to school to discuss any issues relating to their child. Some parents come in to give talks about their professions and sometimes offer work experience to KS5 pupils.

## **Leadership and Management:**

The members of the school leadership team (SLT) work well together, forming a strong management team which prioritises both pupils' needs and the needs of their staff. The head teacher is fully involved in the day-to-day running of the school and keenly cares about the welfare of the pupils and the staff.

The SLT ensures that staff are suitably qualified and that all criminal checks are in place. The SLT has introduced a performance management system that is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Each teacher is assigned a mentor and peer observations take place to share good practice and offer support.

The head of secondary was appointed in September. He frequently meets with the head teacher and ensures that any daily issues are addressed quickly. He works closely with middle leaders by consulting with them and informing himself of the strengths of the school and the areas for improvement. As a consequence, he has developed a detailed school improvement plan with realistic expectations for the time needed to address these areas.

The head of primary is a charismatic leader who, having taken on the role just over a year ago, is working closely with staff to create comprehensive policies and promote consistency in assessment and planning. The primary staff are a strong team and she is clearly a well-respected leader. Informal class 'drop in' observations take place, but more systematic observations would enable her to pinpoint the more effective teaching strategies, particularly across year groups.

Strong ties are evident between SLT and parents; if a pupil is not fulfilling expectations in terms of behaviour or academic performance, a meeting is arranged with parents to discuss the way forward.

The SLT has worked hard with staff to produce whole school policies that are relevant and comprehensive. The safeguarding policy was updated this year and members of staff completed safeguarding training as well as courses in numeracy and thinking skills.

Staff briefings and meetings are held weekly. This facilitates communication among the staff and allows teachers to have an input into management decisions. For example, in the primary department, staff are encouraged to lead the meeting, playing to their different strengths and sharing good practice.

## **Response to the previous inspection reports:**

In lessons, tasks and expectations are now well adapted to suit the needs of the pupils. The teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to undertake more challenging tasks.

There is a wide range of teaching styles and lessons are interesting and well-paced.

The school improvement plan includes deadlines for completion, proposes clear outcomes and is focused appropriately on the impact of the actions on teaching and learning.

A performance management system has been introduced which encourages teachers to share good practice.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue the effective sharing of good practice regarding differentiation and teaching styles through the performance management system.
- Formalise the observation of teaching and learning in the primary department to ensure greater consistency of practice across the year groups.
- Maintain the existing high standards of pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and achievement.
- Make marking in the secondary department more consistent in effectiveness by ensuring detailed and constructive feedback is given in all subjects.