



School name:
The British School of Barcelona (Sitges)

Address: Passeig Isaac Albéniz, s/n, 08870 Sitges, Barcelona

Date of Inspection: Friday 27th October 2017

Inspection Team:

Adrian Massam (Lead)
Angus McCormick (Team)

Overall Recommendation:

- The school is recommended for authorisation for four years, for 350 pupils from Nursery to Year 6.

1. History and context of the school.

BSB Sitges belongs to the British School of Barcelona, which is a fully accredited British school in Spain and since 2007 has formed part of the Cognita group. The school's main site is based in the nearby town of Castelldefels. The Sitges site was purchased in January 2016 at which time it was operating as a 3 to 18 international school under different ownership. Previous inspections of this school had identified a number of serious deficiencies that needed urgent attention.

The British School of Barcelona intended that the Sitges site would become a 3 to 11 school which would then act as a feeder school to the main secondary school. Pupils of secondary age already in the school were allowed to continue until June 2017, after which they were required to transfer to the Castelldefels site.

From September 2017 the school started to function as intended, with just early-years and primary pupils. It currently has 220 pupils on roll.

A building inspection took place in July 2016, confirming that the premises were adequate for the numbers and age range in the school at that time.

The purpose of this inspection is to evaluate the school for authorisation to provide British education for the 3 to 11 age range.

2. Accommodation and resources.

The school is housed on a purpose-built site which provides spacious and well-lit classrooms. Parts of the school that were previously used for secondary education have been suitably adapted and interior building works have created attractive open-plan areas next to classrooms, which are used for reading and learning support. Teaching rooms are suitably furnished and well resourced. A good range of reading and practical resources are available and the school regularly purchases new items in response to specific curriculum needs.

Specialised teaching facilities include a well-resourced information technology room, with laptops and other practical materials. There are also additional laptops and tablets available for using information technology in other lessons. A fully equipped food technology laboratory is also available, and this is a well-used and popular resource.

Sports facilities are adequate to allow coverage of the physical education curriculum and the school makes excellent use of a small theatre facility, which serves for school assemblies and also for drama classes and performances.

The early-years classrooms are of ample size and provide a suitable, safe and well-resourced learning environment. They have direct access to outdoor learning areas equipped with a good range of play materials.

The dining room, toilet facilities, offices and staff working areas are all adequate for the school's needs.

3. Health and Safety.

The school has suitable policies and procedures in place to cover health and safety requirements and these are implemented effectively. Staff receive training in health and safety as part of their induction process. Fire and evacuation procedures are checked by drills and detailed risk assessments are carried out prior to organising excursions.

The school premises provide a safe environment and clearly this has been given sufficient priority when designing and equipping the classrooms.

Safeguarding procedures are also well developed, following the policies established by the owning group. These are applied effectively and, for example, staff recruiting procedures require very detailed background information and multiple references. A register is kept to confirm that all employees have been suitably vetted.

Access to the school site from outside is well controlled.

4. Staffing.

The teaching staff is suitably qualified and experienced to be able to deliver the National Curriculum effectively in early years and primary. Due to a large increase in the number of pupils from the last academic year to the current one, the school has recruited a significant number of new staff. In total, 40% of the teaching team joined the school at the start of the current academic year.

A very comprehensive induction process, including online preparation prior to their arrival, ensures that new team members quickly become integrated into the ethos and routines of the school.

Teacher-pupil ratios are good and additional learning support staff are well used in the early years and for language reinforcement in primary.

Teachers are well motivated and enthusiastic about the school's development. They recognise that there have been significant improvements in the last two years.

5. Curriculum.

The school's curricular planning ensures effective coverage of all areas required by the National Curriculum and allows a creative and flexible approach. English and mathematics are taught as discrete subjects; science and humanities are incorporated into termly topics. Computing is covered by a specialist teacher who also provides support when information technology is being used within other areas.

The curriculum is further brought to life by the many enrichment activities that are built into the annual calendar. These include an off-site forest school, where throughout the year each class is assigned time for outdoor practical projects. Another highlight is an annual event focused on building the British School of Barcelona values. Pupils also learn cookery and chess within curriculum time.

A programme of personal and social education forms an important part of the curriculum. This is delivered in lessons and assemblies and has a strong focus on the school's aims of loyalty, equality, achievement, determination, empathy and respect. The school has been particularly successful in ensuring that new pupils integrate and adapt as quickly as possible, and that all pupils work together with confidence and mutual respect.

The local requirement to provide Spanish and Catalan language classes is covered by specialised staff and this programme is guided by the same objectives and assessment criteria that the school uses for the development of English as an additional language. This ensures similar learning styles and expectations in both the English curriculum and Spanish curriculum classes.

Pupils have access to a good range of extra-curricular opportunities at the end of the normal school day. The school transport arrangements allow pupils to transfer to the larger site in Castelldefels so that they can also participate in the extra-curricular activities programme offered there.

6. Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

Most lessons provide good, and sometimes outstanding, learning opportunities for the children in the school. They are well planned and make good use of a variety of resources.

Teacher-led input is generally lively and effective, and good use is often made of carefully chosen questions to challenge pupils and to encourage independent thinking skills.

Lessons provide plenty of opportunities for working on open-ended assignments that allow for creativity and for children to work at an appropriately challenging level.

In the early-years section, free-flow lesson arrangements allow children to gravitate towards the activities that most attract them and to experience a broad range of learning opportunities on a daily basis.

Children throughout the school are motivated and engaged in lessons and their behaviour is good. They enjoy learning, they feel supported and participate confidently in class discussions and assigned tasks. The school's practice of setting out clear written learning objectives and steps for success helps pupils to challenge themselves and to understand how best to focus their efforts to learn. They are given frequent opportunities to evaluate their own work and progress, and this is supported by constructive verbal and written feedback from their teachers.

One of the school's recent initiatives has been to improve language and literacy. The results of this are evident in the primary English lessons which are both challenging and well adapted to the significant range of language levels among the pupils. More-able pupils have access to enrichment activities such as creative writing workshops.

Given that the school has a significant number of new pupils, many of whom are not English native speakers, language development is currently the biggest challenge

within the teaching programme. The progress of all new pupils is well monitored from initial baseline testing on entering the school, and a specialised teacher for English as an additional language (EAL) provides extra support to help them adapt. This includes withdrawing pupils from some lessons to follow a specific learning programme. Evidence suggests that these pupils are making good progress and their language skills are developing quickly. Lack of English fluency does, occasionally, adversely affect some pupils' progress in lessons in other subjects, such as computing or mathematics. This suggests that even more EAL support could be useful, at least in the short term.

In some mathematics lessons, even though individual needs are taken into consideration within planning, teachers find it difficult to give sufficient attention to all pupils who are working at different stages and need individual guidance. As a result, some pupils make less progress than they could have done. This suggests either the need for in-class support or for differentiated tasks that can be carried out more independently. Mathematics has already been chosen as the school's curriculum development focus for the current academic year and therefore, as part of this process, lesson observations should look closely at making differentiation as successful as possible.

The school effectively monitors pupils' learning in all subjects, and makes use of standardised test materials for tracking progress in the core subjects. This allows for meaningful target setting. The owning group also uses this data to oversee the performance of the school as a whole.

In cases where pupils' achievement falls outside the normal range, the school has well-structured procedures for defining individual targets and plans appropriate work for pupils who have special learning needs. This includes some specific provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Pupils feel that they benefit from a safe and supportive school environment. They feel positive about the working relationship they have with their teachers and show a good understanding of the importance of developing independent learning skills. They enjoy participating in the different activities that enrich the curriculum and they also value having opportunities to take on specific leadership responsibilities via the school's house system or student council.

7. Leadership and Management.

The school has undergone a significant transformation in a relatively short period of time and the success of this owes a lot to outstanding leadership and management. The impact of the leadership is evident in the fact that, after only two months of working in its current format and with almost half of the pupils and teaching staff being new, the school is already functioning as a well-established organisation.

The Head Teacher works with an extended team of middle-leaders who are responsible for distinct areas such as curriculum, assessment, pastoral care or inclusion. The fact that a relatively high proportion of the teaching staff hold leadership positions creates a good sense of involvement, and individual leaders are sufficiently empowered to be able to have a genuine influence within their area.

School development is supported by well-structured performance management of the teachers' work. Leaders are therefore aware of the school's specific strengths and can establish sensible priorities for improvement, based on evidence.

Communication between the school management and parents works effectively. High quality written information clarifies the school's aims, ethos and routines, while good use of reporting systems and school diaries allows parents to be aware of their children's progress. Parents are supportive of recent changes in the school and consider that the school has a good understanding of their children's needs.

The governance arrangements which allow the owning group to monitor and support the school's performance have a positive impact on the quality of education. Frequent audits ensure the school is reaching the required standards of the group in areas such as safeguarding, and also set targets for pupils' attainment. Another benefit is that members of the leadership team are able to share good practice with leaders who hold similar positions in other schools within the group.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations.

The British School of Barcelona (Sitges) has taken over a 3 to 18 school with some serious difficulties and converted this into a very successful primary school in the space of less than two years.

The school now offers a broad and balanced early years and primary curriculum, delivered by suitably qualified staff in a safe, attractive and well-resourced learning environment. The strength of the school's leadership and the highly developed self-review and monitoring procedures, overseen by the Cognita group's governance arrangements, should ensure that the education, which is already of a very good standard, continues to improve.

Currently, a major challenge is to ensure that the large numbers of new pupils, many of whom are not first language English speakers, adapt effectively to the school and can access the curriculum. The progress that these pupils are already making indicates that the school is aware of, and responding to, their needs.

Therefore, the recommendation is for authorisation for four years from Nursery to Year 6, for a maximum of 350 pupils, valid until October 2021.

Specific recommendations

The school should:

- further support pupils with limited command of English and ensure they have access to the whole range of the curriculum.