



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

INTERNAL INSPECTION REPORT

Name of School: The International School of Central Switzerland
Lorzenparkstrasse 8, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Date of inspection: Thursday, 11th April 2024

Inspection team

- **Marcus Earnshaw**
Former School Principal and Teacher, in UK and international schools (Middle East and Spain)
- **Michael James Wickham:**
Former Head of The International School of Madrid (Retired), Former NABSS Lead inspector, with experience in BSO inspection.

RATIONALE

Reason for the Inspection

To evaluate the educational provision in Early Years (3 year olds) to Year 13 (17- to 18- year-olds) to assess whether the school meets the standards of what is expected of a British school abroad.

Inspection criteria

Overall Judgement: *To what extent are you assured that the school's strategies, initiatives, management, and expertise align with the standards required for authorisation as a British school during inspection?*

These assessments adhere to the criteria outlined in the Department of Education's inspection framework for schools, as detailed by Ofsted.

Method of inspection

The inspection entailed a thorough examination of pre-inspection documentation, which was solicited from the school several months prior and duly submitted to the inspectors in advance of the inspection date. This was followed by an on-site assessment conducted by two inspectors, each possessing expertise in primary and secondary education respectively, along with extensive leadership backgrounds within UK schools and internationally. Notably, one inspector has served as a lead inspector for British schools since 2000, amassing two decades of experience in this role.

On the inspection day, inspectors spent most of their time observing classes, as well as some interviews with staff leaders, and a visit to see all facilities.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

The International School of Central Switzerland, rebranded recently as ISCS - The British School of Zug, commenced operations in December 2008 initially as a primary school. Over time, it evolved to include secondary education, offering the IB programme. The institution was established under the legal entity International School of Central Switzerland AG, trading under the brand name International School of Central Switzerland (ISOCS). Encountering significant financial challenges, notably from 2015 to 2019, the school faced repercussions including a temporary loss of its IB licence, resulting in the final cohort of IB Diploma students graduating in Summer 2019.

In January 2019, following a financial crisis that nearly resulted in closure, the school was acquired by Necus Education SL, a Spanish company that also owns Sage College-The British International School of Jerez in Spain. At the time of acquisition, the school had 29 students. In response to the circumstances, a strategic decision was made to adopt the Cambridge International Curriculum and secure a licence from Cambridge to operate as a Cambridge school starting September 2019.

Following the acquisition by Necus Education S.L, significant actions were undertaken in 2019, including the resolution of financial debts and restructuring of the leadership team. A new Head, along with British-qualified and experienced staff, was appointed to implement the Cambridge International Curriculum (IGCSEs and AS/A levels).

The inaugural cohort of IGCSE students obtained their certificates in 2020, followed by the first A-level certificates in 2021. By January 2020, student enrolment had increased to 50, and the school developed a new logo, mission statement, values, and educational objectives. Enrollment numbers have since grown to 143.

50% of former students continue their studies in the Netherlands or Switzerland, and the UK, the US, Australia, Spain, Germany and Italy are other frequent destinations.

AREAS OF THE INSPECTION

1. Accommodation and resources

At present there are 143 students in the school, and there is room for expansion up to 230 students. The school has a multinational intake, with at least 16 nationalities represented. British and Swiss make up nearly 20% of the school population. The school has continued to expand its facilities within the present site during continued growth since 2019.

There is one class per year throughout the school, with the exception of a combined class of Years 3 and 4, which will be split in August 2024.

The premises consist of rented accommodation in two contiguous blocks of an office complex, making up part of the ground and 1st and second floors of one block, with an additional hired space nearby used as a gymnasium and examinations area, and the ground floor of the second block, used for a dining and meeting facilities, and including a theatre. An outdoor fenced off play and sports area is used exclusively by the school in school hours, and the school rents sporting facilities nearby for athletics, football and other field and team sports and a swimming pool. On days when the weather prevents outdoor play or sport indoor facilities are used.

The Primary classrooms and associated areas are situated on the ground floor of one of the blocks, with the exception of Years 5 and 6, located on the first floor opposite each other, in the same corridor as the Art Room and Computer Lab, which they use. During specialist subjects like Physical Education and Art, secondary students (Middle School and High School) are accommodated on the ground, first and second floors in designated rooms.

Under new management, considerable efforts have been dedicated to establishing an engaging and aesthetically pleasing learning environment both within classrooms and across the school premises.

Classrooms are suitably sized for current class numbers, which presently operate below capacity. They are adorned with attractive decor and well-lit. Corridors also exhibit visually appealing decorations, featuring informative displays showcasing school activities and student achievements. There is scope for more active utilisation of classroom wall space to further celebrate, reinforce, and support student work.

The Early Years Foundation Stage occupies a spacious classroom. Although outdoor play space is limited, it is effectively compensated for by a meticulously organised outdoor education program, enabling students to engage with materials and experience the natural environment beyond the classroom.

Dining facilities, located within a sizable hall, adequately cater to the student body. Hot meals are provided daily, with students either opting for school meals or bringing packed lunches from home under supervision. During excursions for drama classes or sports activities, students receive proper supervision. While onsite sports facilities are constrained, the school has adapted

by utilising a gym within the building, outdoor play areas, and renting external facilities for team sports, athletics, and swimming.

The school premises are well-maintained and hygienic, with easily accessible toilet facilities tailored to the ages of the students.

Secondary science facilities encompass two well-equipped laboratories, one each for Physics and Chemistry/Biology. The laboratory preparation room contains a fume cupboard, securely managed by science faculty. Adequate storage facilities with emergency ventilation cater to hazardous materials. Each lab is equipped with a spray tap for addressing chemical accidents, and toilet facilities are conveniently located nearby.

The resources and materials allocated for teaching the Primary, Middle, and High School curricula in accordance with British standards are deemed sufficient, without significant constraints hindering teachers' access to necessary books or equipment essential for curriculum delivery. Additionally, the Early Years Foundation Stage is well-equipped for indoor activities, with meticulously planned modules and developmentally appropriate activities for children.

The Computer Science laboratory boasts modern equipment, ensuring relevance and efficacy in instructional delivery. Similarly, the Physical Education department is well-provisioned with an extensive array of materials.

The school possesses four minibuses utilised for transporting students between home and school, as well as for conveying classes to sports facilities and excursions integral to the outdoor and social education program.

The implementation of the Pearson Active Learn resource in the Primary school has proven successful, while resources for the Cambridge Middle and High School Curriculum (for IGCSEs and A levels) are deemed adequate to address the learning requirements of students within these educational tiers.

2. Health, safety and welfare

The school is a clean and safe environment, with cameras in corridors, and a safe front door and reception access, although the site restrictions with a mixed use of the two blocks mean that the school must put into place clear identification badges for teachers and any visitors.

The supervision of pupils outside the classroom is good, both inside and outside of the buildings. There is a lift to all floors for access to classrooms for students who have mobility problems.

Students feel safe and know who to go to if they need help. In Primary there are student mentors in the playground, and younger children are able to go for help to older students in Primary. Year 5 and 6 prefects are elected by their peers, and part of their responsibilities is to mentor pupils in the playground. Photographs of the safeguarding staff are posted prominently in corridors.

References and criminal record checks for all staff have been made and are up to date.

Emergency evacuation practices are held termly and all classrooms have clear emergency evacuation plans posted on the exit doors. Fire extinguishers are posted throughout. Risk assessments are conducted for all major trips out although those for physical education trips to nearby areas are not included. Several policies promote health and safety in school including anti bullying, use of social media, child protection and safeguarding. Staff follow these policies and are aware of who is responsible for the different areas. Students behave extremely well and know what is expected of them. This helps to maintain the calm, safe and respectful atmosphere of the school.

3. The curriculum

Curriculum review and planning is ongoing, especially in order to adapt the subjects and content to the needs of the students and provide as much a broad education as possible for all pupils, despite the small numbers. The curriculum is balanced and well structured, despite low numbers in some subjects.

The Early Years curriculum, using the 'Tapestry' tool, is well led and delivered, matching current practice. The Primary curriculum is well planned and organised, using the Pearson Active learn system effectively. This links well to the Middle School Curriculum and the Cambridge Checkpoint assessment system is used at the end of Primary and Middle School to ensure that all students are accessing the national curriculum successfully, especially in the core areas of Mathematics, Science and English. Students are flagged by teachers and managers when there are issues and support put in place to ensure the learning of pupils does not fall behind. The tracking system put in place, following that used in the sister school in Spain, is monitored regularly.

The school is reviewing subjects continually and at present ICT is being replaced by the more demanding Computer Science in Secondary.

In Secondary the Cambridge Curriculum, with the IGCSEs and AS/A levels, ensures high academic standards for pupils, who are thus able to choose from a suitable range of universities in their search for further education.

Careers development is undertaken by the High School Head, and outside visitors, including parents, are included in order to provide career information experiences for older pupils. This includes university fairs and visiting universities. Help is provided by teachers and leaders in PSHE from Year 11 and at other times in order to be well informed, select and apply to universities, further education, vocational qualifications and work.

There are detailed schemes of work for all classes and subjects. Planning is thorough, building on previous learning. Students take part in a variety of creative activities, depending upon the age group. There are also extra-curricular enrichment or fun activities after school Mondays to Thursdays, run by teachers. A drama club has been started and the drama teacher has a rehearsal Saturday mornings, and is planning to produce a play or musical this May 2024. The PSHE program is run by teachers as part of the curriculum.

The school has implemented work experience for older students, both online and in the workplace. There is a school council in Primary and another in Secondary, run by the respective

Heads. Two representatives per class organise events and discuss ideas for improvements within the school.

The formal teaching of music, common in British schools, is absent at present and should be considered.

4. Staffing

Most teachers are native speakers or who have an adequate level of English, German, French, or Spanish to teach their subject effectively. All teachers and leaders are well qualified and are teaching their students of appropriate ages and subjects. The school gives great importance to continuing professional development in order to improve teaching standards. This has been done through regular class observations by senior leaders and, after a period of observations the school has adapted this by using its best staff to give workshops and a more informal drop in system by leaders which includes school walks.

Primary teaching assistants are provided adequately. Both in Primary and Secondary regular meetings take place, with a daily morning briefing before classes start, weekly staff meetings and online and in-house workshops for outside specialists and trainers. Teachers feel supported by this emphasis on high teaching standards and personal improvement, which has a clear aim of improving the learning of all pupils.

Teachers have adequate planning time, although the section Heads may well benefit from more non class teaching time to support and plan, especially as the school expands.

Continuing professional development is planned through the school following the Senior Management Team's priorities.

5. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching throughout the school is good to very good, with only occasional evidence of teaching which is only just adequate. There are some examples of outstanding teaching. The pace in most classes was very good, and pupils were engaged and well behaved. Where students were more distracted this was due to evident less effective group teaching strategies.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), child observations are systematically documented and shared with parents. Primary assessment procedures are consistently administered utilising the Active Learn tracking tool, encompassing the Phonics program. In the Middle and Secondary sections, ongoing assessments are conducted through regular testing, with results promptly updated within the tracking system. Checkpoint assessments are employed in Years 6 and 9 within the secondary phase to gauge progress in core subjects. School leadership anticipates the incorporation of Assessment for Learning Strategies, noting their partial implementation within the school.

While a marking policy is established, adherence to it is inconsistent. Some instances of poor presentation of work, particularly among newly enrolled students, have been observed. In the Primary phase, the consistency of written evidence and work presentation across classrooms

and year groups varies. Within the secondary phase, the school is encouraged to deliberate on the utility and suitability of homework assignments in reinforcing learning objectives and ensure adherence to the school's homework policy.

Overall, students demonstrate engagement and comprehension of instructional content. However, there is a suggestion for the school to explore methods for accurately documenting verbal learning outcomes within written assignments. Progress reports are issued to parents termly in Primary and every six weeks in Middle and High School, detailing advancements in critical domains. These reports consistently feature informative comments for parental guidance and are complemented by scheduled parent-teacher meetings.

Within the Primary Stage, educators adeptly employ effective behaviour management strategies to foster pupil engagement within the classroom setting. Teachers conscientiously identify observed learning needs among their students, directing them to the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) for further assessment. The SENCo conducts classroom observations and offers recommendations for tailored support interventions. However, with current timetable allocations dedicated to SEN provision at 20%, and considering the school's expansion, it is recommended that the school reassess the provision of in-class support to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all students.

6. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students at ISCS are well behaved and friendly, and have good relationships with their teachers. The social needs of pupils are provided for through caring and motivated teachers and leaders who involve pupils in non-teaching activities related to the local environment or festivals related to different cultures. Special topics on national days (such as recent events related to the Ukraine and Palestine conflicts and issues of suffering take place and parents are very much included in the life and activities of the school, especially in Primary. In Primary, Dojo is used to link directly with parents on a daily basis. There are class assemblies in Primary twice a week, where other teachers can work on training and preparation, and a monthly whole school assembly.

Students in Year six go through a secondary induction programme for secondary, which is also used for new students. The house system promotes cohesion and a competitive spirit, and house points are used as a motivational tool in the classroom. This is inconsistent throughout the school, especially in secondary, where some teachers use it well, and others ignore this motivational tool.

7. Leadership and management

The appointment in September 2023 of an academic director and the three section leaders (Primary, Middle and High School) has been successful, and reflects a desire for high educational standards, good leadership, and continued review of the working of the school in all areas. The three Stage leaders are young, experienced and enthusiastic and work very well

together as a team, and the effects of these appointments are clearly visible in the school and account for its growth.

The development and continued growth of the school is due to the clear vision, enthusiasm and effort of the owners, who are involved daily on site with the school. Their vision of high academic standards in the context of a family environment, with excellent relationships with parents, who are well informed with personal contact and weekly newsletter and meetings, aims to motivate teachers through example, and this has a positive effect on the children, regardless of their level of academic or other ability, background or origin. There is an international feeling in the school, where differences in nationality and culture are celebrated equally.

The owners are dedicated to fostering the continuous development and expansion of the school in the forthcoming years while preserving its familial atmosphere and steadfast commitment to providing personalised attention to each student. Their vision emphasises maintaining close-knit relationships among all pupils and staff, cultivating an environment where individuals can thrive in a nurturing and intellectually stimulating setting.

CONCLUSION

The International School of Central Switzerland has successfully managed the development, almost from scratch, of what was a failing school, and is now providing a good, well balanced international education in a safe, family environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitor the consistency of school homework and marking policies.
- Ensure all adults have clear identity tags.
- Consider the increased provision of support time by the special needs department.
- Consider the provision of Music throughout the school.
- Consider the provision of other subjects such as Geography, PE, Drama, Media Studies and Economics in IGCSE and A level in the High School and History (in the Middle School), as numbers grow.
- As the school grows, continue to work towards the possibility of a new, more appropriate school site, which would provide fewer challenges for the school.



Lead Inspector's Signature