



Accrediting Commission for Schools

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May 1, 2012

Mr. John Searle
Head of School
Osaka International School
4-4-16, Onohara-Nishi
Mino-shi, Osaka, 562-0032
Japan

Dear Mr. Searle:

At the April Commission meeting, the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges reviewed and approved for Osaka International School the substantive change of a new governance structure. The decision of the Commission was to reaffirm the school's accreditation status through June 30, 2013.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David E. Brown".

David E. Brown, Ph.D.
Executive Director

DEB:cl

Enclosure

cc: WASC Chairperson



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Osaka International School Substantive Change Visit February 21-22, 2012

Visiting Committee

Marilyn S. George, Ed.D.
Associate Executive Director
Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Introduction (Note: This section includes major excerpts from Substantive Change Reports prepared by Osaka International School.)

Osaka International School (OIS) was founded in 1991. With its sister school Senri International School (SIS) its founding purpose was to bring together, for the benefit of returnee, national, and international residents of the Kansai region, the best of Japanese and non-Japanese educational ideas, systems, and techniques. Senri International School is a category '1-jyo' school as defined under article 1 of Japanese education law, and as such offers a curriculum in Japanese authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The schools were founded under the governance of the Senri International School Foundation, a non-profit education foundation. These schools share a building, programs, curricula, and philosophies and vision. They are supported by statements of belief which shape the vision for the two schools.

OIS is a coeducational college preparatory school that educates students from kindergarten (age 4-5) through grade 12. OIS is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It was the first school in Japan to gain authorization to offer all three IB programmes - Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP). The school's mission is to serve the international community of Kansai (the western region of Japan, including Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe) by educating students to be informed, caring, and creative individuals contributing to a global community. OIS graduates primarily attend universities in the USA and in the UK in addition to Canada, Australia, Japan and various national universities.

Secondary students, from both schools, share classes in physical education, music and art. The students of near native fluency can take classes in English and Japanese in their respective sister school. Students from both schools also join for athletic teams, drama casts, and for choir, band, and orchestra groups. In September 2011 the enrollment at OIS was 249. SIS enrollment was 449.

OIS is a member of the Japan Council of International Schools (JCIS), the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS). SOIS was a founding member of and is a participant in the Association of International Schools Activities (AISA) – an international activities conference - along with Yokohama International School, Seoul International School, and Korea International School.

As of 1 April 2010 the foundation underwent a merger with the Kwansei Gakuin Educational Foundation leading to the dissolution of the Senri International School Foundation (SISF). The school now operates under the umbrella of Kwansei Gakuin Educational Foundation (KG).

Operating as a small educational foundation there were many challenges for SISF in running the two schools of Osaka International School (OIS) and Senri International School (SIS), which shares the same campus. Following discussions at board level between SISF and KG it was decided that a foundation merger would be mutually beneficial giving OIS and SIS a stronger educational based foundation platform from

which to operate and providing KG with the opportunity to broaden its portfolio of schools to include international education. The KG Foundation currently administers educational programs from kindergarten through to graduate school that includes seven campuses and about 27,000 students. The ideals of the KG Foundation can be summarized in the following missions statement:

“Kwansei Gakuin, as a learning community based on the principles of Christianity, inspires its members to seek their life missions, and cultivates them to be creative and capable world citizens who embody its motto, ‘Mastery for Service’ by transforming society with compassion and integrity.”

Therefore, the purpose of this substantive change was to particularly examine the change in governance.

Findings

Below are brief comments on major findings based from this visit.

Osaka International School (OIS) had its last full self-study visit in spring 2006 and the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) granted the school the maximum accreditation term of six years. As part of the ongoing school improvement process, OIS has submitted annual progress reports that included the on-site midterm visit in spring 2009. The results of the mid-term visit supported the progress OIS had made and the visiting committee felt that the upcoming change in governance as April 2010 was an excellent opportunity for OIS.

This supports what the current visiting committee found. The change as noted in the prior school report to WASC is that the merger has “offered greater clarity in operational procedure, along with a guarantee of long term stability, while allowing the school to focus on its mission and primary educational goals.” In addition, now that OIS is part of larger and more complicated structure, a different configuration for organizational operations is in place and there is a positive collaborative process of moving forward with the refinement and understanding of the roles and processes.

In preparation for this substantive change visit that OIS wanted to view as integral to the full self-study and visit that will occur in spring 2013, the leadership facilitated a process whereby teachers, leadership and other representatives moved ahead in formulating the schoolwide focus groups that analyzed the pertinent WASC criteria related to this merger. The particular criteria included School Purpose, Governance, School Leadership, School Improvement Process, Resource Management and Development. This process based on the school’s mission, vision and student learning results along with the student profile data has served as an excellent beginning to the rest of the self-study process and served to assist in greater understanding by the stakeholders of the changes as a result of the merger. The work done by these groups identified some areas that the visiting committee also noted.

Through the meetings of the visiting committee with KG leadership and OIS leadership , staff, and parents, the overwhelming support and willingness to have OIS and SIS as part of the Kwansai Gakuin Educational Foundation (KG) was very apparent. As expressed at the meetings, this is a process of learning for both parties as the KG foundation now officially has an international school within its group that supports KG's original very strong commitment to developing students as world citizens. There is clear evidence that the KG's mission and the OIS mission, vision and student learning results are aligned and support exists by the KG Board of Trustees for the mission and student learning results of OIS that guide the work of the OIS leadership.

The leadership structure of OIS has been modified based on the KG policies that guide the operation of the schools. With the structure of a KG appointed supervisor and a campus head there is a direct link to the broader governing structure of KG as areas related to facility management, payment and personnel issues and policy are part of a larger foundational system. In the policies that have been translated, there is a delineation of the role of the supervisor compared to the head of school, who oversees the educational activities of the school based on the school's vision and mission and student learning results. The evidence supported that the KG Board of Trustees trusts the leadership of the school to act in accordance with the school's mission and student learning results and therefore has autonomy to do so. The interaction of the decisions occurs in matters relating to finance, personnel and facilities.

The KG policies that now apply to OIS are in the process of being translated. This will be very helpful to the ongoing understanding by the OIS stakeholders as continual refinement regarding the details of roles, responsibilities and operations occur. The visiting committee was provided excerpts of the policies such as the role of the supervisor compared to the head of school and the explanations of the Academic Planning Meeting and the Executive Committee. In addition, an organizational chart proved helpful to understand the governance and decision-making process.

The Academic Planning Meeting and the Executive Committees as required under the KG policies will be very viable groups in advisory and the decision-making processes. The Academic Planning Meeting that includes the two heads of schools, the campus supervisor, the principals from both OIS and its sister school SIS and the business manager can serve as a vehicle to gather ideas and information from the broader constituency. The Executive Committee, whose composition includes the two heads of schools, the campus supervisor, the campus head, the officer manager and the business manager, has been charged with the confirming and ratifying of decisions related to personnel, financial allocation and management, policy implementation and the sharing of reports and proposals to the next level of KG governance through the campus supervisor and campus head. Further defining of the roles of these committees and the assurance of stakeholder understanding of these committees will be important.

The KG foundation has already moved forward in addressing facility and infrastructure areas. The feedback from the school community has been positive for the stability and support provided by KG. In addition, KG and OIS leadership are working together on

the review of longer range concerns to ensure a sound financial base for the school. This may involve an increase in school fees; such a decision would be made after discussion through the academic and executive committees prior to action by the KG Board of Trustees.

The WASC international criterion on governance has been reviewed by the OIS stakeholders and the visiting committee with the clear understanding that there are various models of governance. There are policies consistent with the school purpose and the student learning results and the delegation of the implementation of these to the professional staff and the monitoring of the results is occurring. The greater understanding of the OIS community regarding the change in governance is evolving. The OIS leadership has moved ahead in an evaluation process.

As noted in the report from the OIS substantive change report, the self-study process that will be completed is an excellent platform to refine further a schoolwide action plan. This will guide OIS for 3-5 years with annual review and refinement in relationship to the overall KG foundation's mission and OIS's mission, student learning results, WASC and IB criteria/standards. This schoolwide action plan will guide the school in addressing the identified major growth areas and will serve as a helpful tool in the work of the committees in this refined structure and the decisions made by the KG Board of Trustees.

Conclusion

The Visiting Committee found that Osaka International School has already benefitted from the change in governance structure. There is clearly an extremely strong commitment from both the leadership of KG and OIS and its sister school SIS to move forward in collaboration and dedication to serve the students of these schools in high quality achievement based on the school's mission, vision, core values, student learning results in alignment with the broader KG mission.

The OIS school community is united by its mission and student outcomes in providing a unique international school experience with its sister school. OIS has the capacity, knowledge and expertise, commitment and dedication necessary for the further work to establish its role within the overall organizational structure of KG. The school leadership has been diligent in working with the faculty, parent and broader school community regarding the changes and the evolving operational aspects.

With the forthcoming full WASC/IB accreditation visit in spring 2013, the accreditation team will be able to further review the OIS governance, organizational systems and processes, and the resource management and development based on the accreditation criteria and the mission of the Kwansai Gakuin Educational Foundation. As the school completes the school's self-study for WASC/IB, there is the opportunity to develop a strong schoolwide development plan that will further enhance the desired student learning based on the school's mission, student learning results that also address the IB learner profile and is aligned with the mission and goals of the Kwansai Gakuin Educational Foundation.