



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

British School of Milan

November 2021

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School's Details

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|---------------------------------|---|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| School | British School of Milan | | | |
| Address | British School of Milan Via Pisani Dossi 16 20134 Milano Italy | | | |
| Telephone number | +39 02 210941 | | | |
| Email address | info@bsm.school | | | |
| Principal | Dr Chris Greenhalgh | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr John Martelli | | | |
| Age range | 3 to 18 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 715 | | | |
| | EYFS | 49 | Primary Years 1 to 6 | 275 |
| | Secondary Years 7 to 11 | 281 | Sixth Form Years 12 to 13 | 110 |
| Inspection dates | 17 to 18 November 2021 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The British School of Milan, formerly known as the Sir James Henderson School, was founded in 1969. It is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which provides the ex-patriate English-speaking community in Milan with educational provision from nursery to university entry. All ages are educated on the same site in the north-east area of the city. The school is an association comprising current parents, who are the effective shareholders and owners of the school. The board of governors, which exercises oversight of the school, comprises eight governors who are elected by association members, two ex-officio governors (the British Consul General in Milan and the President of the British Chamber of Commerce for Italy) and three independent governors, two of whom are serving heads in the UK and Spain.
- 1.2 During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school closed from 21 February 2020 until the end of the academic year in June. From October to December 2020 most of the secondary school was closed, as were different year groups in the primary school for shorter periods of time. Most of the school was closed again in March and April 2021. Various year groups went into quarantine even when the rest of the school was open. During all of these periods of closure or partial closure, the school continued to provide teaching online for all pupils who were isolating at home.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to inspire pupils to learn within a caring, creative and international community, to pursue excellence, and to challenge pupils to think critically as they prepare for the world beyond. The school's international outlook promotes the principles of tolerance and open-mindedness.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils live in or near the city of Milan. The pupil body is a mobile one, reflecting the professional and international ambitions of their parents. As such, pupil cohorts change on a regular basis, with new pupils joining each year group every year. Approximately 60 per cent of pupils are Italian, with 10 per cent British, and 30 per cent comprising over 40 nationalities, including American, Indian, and Japanese. Many pupils have parents of mixed or dual nationality. Half of all pupils speak Italian as their first language and one-quarter English. The range of languages spoken at home is broad. Pupils are of above average ability compared with English pupils. The school has identified 62 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 41 receive direct additional support.

2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO). It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements. Schools may opt for an inspection of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas. The standards represent minimum requirements, and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. In order to gain BSO accreditation, a school is required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report. If a school does not meet all of the standards, it may elect to be re-inspected once it has taken the required actions in order to gain BSO accreditation.

Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.

Accreditation as a British school overseas lasts for three years. The school's previous inspection was in November 2017.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

- 2.3 The school provides a British curriculum while operating in an international context. It provides pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. It enables them to acquire effective speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills and a good understanding of English. It provides a programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) which has recently been amended in light of the requirement in the UK for schools to teach relationships and sex education. The school offers advice on university entry and on choosing degree courses as required for the pursuit of particular careers. It also gives a broader careers guidance programme for pupils in the secondary school. Policies, plans and schemes of work for all subjects take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils. Although in response to pre-inspection questionnaires a small minority of parents stated that they do not feel the school offers a good choice of extra-curricular activities, the inspection found that there is a wide range of co-curricular activities which provide good opportunities for pupils to gain additional skills. These activities, a variety of special events throughout the year and the formal curriculum, prepare pupils well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life beyond school. This is underpinned by an understanding of fundamental British values which also reflect the value systems of many other countries.
- 2.4 The teaching throughout the school is undertaken through the medium of English. It enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress, a view endorsed by a very large majority of pupils in their responses to the questionnaire. A special programme is provided for those who join the school with little knowledge of English with the aim of integrating these pupils into normal classes as quickly as possible. Additional support is also provided for this group and for those with SEND. These arrangements work effectively. The teaching is well planned, employs effective teaching methods, uses a range of resources, demonstrates good subject knowledge and understanding, and manages behaviour well. The teaching does not discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics. The school has enabled the teaching to continue uninterrupted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing online lessons during periods of lockdown and adapting teaching methods and classroom organisation to comply with Italian government requirements.
- 2.5 The school follows a variety of curricula, each of which provides a suitable framework for assessing pupils' performance and tracking their progress. Learning in the early years is based on the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage framework. In Years 1 to 6, the school follows the English National Curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow the National Curriculum of England. In Years 10 and 11, they are prepared for a mixture of both the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations and the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) examinations. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 take the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma which prepares pupils for entry to a wide range of universities in the UK and around the world. There is effective liaison between the latter years of the primary school and the earlier years of secondary to ensure a smooth transition for all pupils. Results in the IGCSE examinations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 show that pupils' performance was above the worldwide average. Results in 2020 and 2021 were higher than in all preceding years. IB Diploma results for 2018 to 2021 have been above the worldwide average and were well above average in 2021. As a result of their education at the school, pupils gain entry to a wide range of universities in the UK, Italy, a range of other countries in Europe and the USA. These include many which demand high standards of entry.

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

2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

2.7 The school promotes values which are fundamental to life in Britain as well as many other countries through its PSHE programme, assemblies, form tutor sessions and other activities which take place throughout the year. The school encourages pupils to have respect for other people regardless of their background or the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. A very large majority of parents and pupils confirmed this through their responses to the questionnaires, although a very small number of parents and pupils commented on occasional incidents of unkind and racially insensitive comments by pupils. The school has brought in training from the UK to raise awareness of both pupils and staff to such issues and to assist in its efforts to promote tolerance and harmony between the many different nationalities represented within the school. Despite the isolated incidents which occur, the vast majority of pupils enjoy school and speak warmly of the friendly atmosphere, a feature that was also noted by the inspection team. Pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. The school prepares pupils for the responsibilities of citizenship in the UK, Italy and the wider world. It encourages respect for democracy and the democratic process and helps pupils to develop balanced views on political issues. It provides opportunities for pupils to make meaningful contributions to the lives of others within the school, the local community and globally. This is particularly well focused in the involvement of sixth-form pupils as they engage in a wide variety of service to the school, local and global communities.

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

2.8 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16] are met.

2.9 The school makes appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. The school's safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and is implemented effectively. The procedures outlined therein are based largely on guidance provided for schools in England but also take local requirements into account. Safeguarding matters are overseen by two designated safeguarding leads (DSL), one for primary and one for secondary, both of whom are members of the senior leadership team and are supported by the principal who acts as a deputy DSL. All three have undertaken advanced safeguarding training and have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The governing body has appointed a lead governor to oversee safeguarding, to verify that procedures are carried out appropriately and to ensure that an annual review of policy and procedures is undertaken. Staff are thoroughly trained in the school's procedures, not only when they join the school, but through training sessions at the start of each school year and regular updates. They have recently received specific training in peer-on-peer abuse. In their responses to the questionnaires, the vast majority of staff expressed confidence in the school's safeguarding procedures and the training and guidance they receive and almost every parent acknowledged that the school does all it can to ensure their children learn in a healthy and safe environment. Staff know what to do should they become aware of any safeguarding concern about a pupil or if there is an allegation against a member of staff. The school maintains confidential records of all child protection concerns; these contain sufficient detail and record any discussions, decisions and action taken. Pupils are made fully aware of issues that might affect their welfare, health and safety, particularly with regard to online safety, through assemblies and topics covered in the school's PSHE programme.

2.10 The school has appropriate policies in place to promote good behaviour and to prevent bullying. Through its comprehensive PSHE programme, pupils are taught the importance of kindness and establishing good relationships. In the primary school, staff take time to help pupils understand the consequences of their actions should they misbehave, thus preparing the way for secondary school, where a graduated scale of sanctions is effective in dealing with any misbehaviour. Throughout the school, pupils are taught about bullying, how to prevent it and what to do should they encounter it.

In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils disagreed that the school deals effectively with bullying, although this was not the view expressed by those pupils who were interviewed by inspectors. The findings of the inspection are that the school deals appropriately with bullying in so far as reasonably practicable. The school's records, which are appropriately maintained and fit for purpose, show that bullying is rare and that actions taken by the school are proportionate and give due consideration to both victim and perpetrator.

- 2.11 The school's approach to health and safety is thorough; its policies and practice meet the requirements of the Italian authorities and are in accordance with expectations for schools in England. Detailed records are kept of all health and safety checks, most of which are undertaken by external specialists. The school has been stringent in complying with health and safety measures required by the Italian government during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching arrangements have been reorganised to minimise movement around the school and to maintain social distancing. Additional staff have been employed to clean and sanitise the school. Arrangements to protect pupils in case of fire are thorough. A new warning system with speakers in every room has been installed alongside the existing fire alarms and extinguishers throughout the school. There are regular fire drills. An external company carries out an annual fire risk assessment and checks that previously identified issues have been rectified, which they customarily are. Hazardous materials, such as those used by cleaners or in the science laboratories, are stored securely. The school has an appropriate risk assessment policy and ensures that risks which may affect pupils' welfare, health and safety are identified and mitigated. In response to their questionnaire, the vast majority of parents agree that the school does all it can to ensure their children learn in a healthy and safe environment.
- 2.12 The school has appropriate policies for first aid and related matters. It provides good cover for pupils who are ill or injured and suitable care for children in the EYFS. An appropriately equipped medical centre is staffed by a qualified nurse who is on duty whenever pupils are on site. In addition, many staff are trained in first aid. Appropriate records are kept of any medical incidents or consultations. Medicines are stored securely. First-aid kits are available in different locations around the school and are provided for school sports events and trips. A small minority of pupils stated that they do not feel that suitable first aid is given quickly if they are ill or injured. The inspection findings indicate that this is largely due to extra precautions taken as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the school's arrangements for dealings with such incidents are more than adequate.
- 2.13 Rotas provide for members of staff to be on duty at breaks and lunchtimes at various locations around the school, and additional support staff are employed at these times to ensure that pupils are supervised appropriately. Supervision in the EYFS ensures appropriate ratios of staff to children. Admission and attendance registers meet local and UK requirements, are backed up electronically every day and are maintained for the requisite period of time.

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.14 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**
- 2.15 The required checks are carried out on staff and proprietors to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school verifies each person's identity and previous employment history and carries out a criminal record check with the Italian authorities and, where relevant, overseas authorities. New staff complete a self-declaration that they are fit for work prior to undergoing mandatory health checks once in work. The school checks each person's right to work in Italy. Checks ensure that no staff appointed from the UK have been prohibited from teaching or from managing a school. All checks are recorded on a single central register of appointments (SCR). Staff files contain copies of relevant documentation used to carry out suitability checks and indicate that the information recorded on the SCR is accurate.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.16 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

2.17 The school's accommodation is fit for purpose and well maintained. Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for pupils in different locations around the school, and separate, clearly labelled facilities are available for staff and visitors. Changing rooms and showers are normally available for pupils taking physical education (PE), though these have not been used since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The school's medical centre provides appropriate accommodation and facilities for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. The buildings are maintained in good condition and are checked regularly for any issues that might compromise the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Any identified issues are rectified quickly. The lighting and acoustics in teaching rooms are suitable. Drinking water dispensers are available for pupils throughout the school and the water supply is regulated appropriately. There is adequate space for outdoor play and for PE and games for pupils in the primary school. Pupils from Year 2 upwards in primary and all students in the secondary school have access to external facilities for PE and games.

Part 6 – Provision of information

2.18 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

2.19 In their response to the questionnaire, the vast majority of parents said that information about the school's routines and policies is readily available. A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and relevant local authorities. This information includes details about the proprietor, the aims of the school and the curriculum offered. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. Arrangements and policies for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, complaints, health and safety, first aid, provision for pupils with SEND and those with EAL are available on the school's website as well as copies of the school's most recent inspection reports. Particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year and its results in public examinations are published. The school provides a full written report at least annually on each child's attainment and progress, as well as holding parent-teacher meetings and providing progress reports at various times during the year.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.20 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

2.21 The school's complaints policy sets out arrangements for parents to raise concerns or complaints with the school using a three-stage process. It sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint. The process seeks to resolve any complaint informally in the first instance. If concerns are not resolved in this way, parents may proceed to lodge a formal complaint in writing. If the complaint remains unresolved, the school makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor. This consists of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and it includes at least one person independent of the management and running of the school. The complainant may attend this hearing, accompanied if they wish. The panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. No complaints have reached this stage for a number of years. A confidential record is kept of all complaints and findings, including action taken by the school whether or not the complaint is upheld. The school's records show that complaints are handled promptly and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the complaints policy.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.22 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

2.23 The proprietors ensure that the leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards for British Schools Overseas are met consistently, and the well-being of pupils is actively promoted. The vast majority of parents, in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, agreed that the school is governed, led and managed well. Inspection evidence confirms this view.

3 Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Sims

Reporting inspector

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