



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

**Inspection report**

**British School of  
Ulaanbaatar**

**Mongolia**

Date  
Inspection number

**5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022**  
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## 1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

During the inspection visit, nearly 30 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were seen in lessons, and discussions were held with the staff, parents and both formally and informally with students. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans. The team member was Alistair Downs, who worked online.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The British School of Ulaanbaatar (BSU) has made strong progress in the last few years, including through the difficulties of the pandemic; it is offering an effective British-style of education and high-quality care for its students.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- committed and focussed leadership team, strongly and effectively led by the head master;
- clear view of the school's vision, mission, and values;
- broad curriculum, carefully adapted for the Mongolian context, with a focus on supporting all students to achieve;
- good quality of teaching and learning;
- students who are confident, articulate and kind to one another;
- opportunities to develop students' awareness and understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects through (for example) extra-curricular activities and themed assemblies;
- family atmosphere, with a nurturing environment that provides opportunities to for academic achievement and fosters individual talents and interests;
- manner in which parents feel well informed and involved in the life of the school and highlight communication as a strength.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following development points:

1. Further support learning by ensuring the quality of teaching is as high for all and it is for the best lessons;
2. Consider the best way to provide excellent ICT support within the school, for students and as a tool for teachers to use;
3. Develop a long-term plan for the school to ensure facilities and staffing allow a high standard of education if the school expands further.

## 4. The context of the school

Full name of school	British School of Ulaanbaatar		
Address	50 Nadaamchidin Road, Khan-Uul District 4 <sup>th</sup> Khoroo, Ulaanbaatar 17081		
Telephone number	+976 7004 7788		
Website address	<a href="https://www.britishschool.edu.mn/">https://www.britishschool.edu.mn/</a>		
Main email address	general@britishschool.edu.mn		
Headteacher/principal	Jonathan Warner		
Chair of board of governors/proprietor	Shinzaya Batbold		
Age range	3 to 18 years		
Number of students	<i>Total</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
	566	267	299
Student numbers by age	<i>0-2 Years</i>	<i>3-5 Years</i>	<i>6-11 Years</i>
	0	65	293
	<i>12-16 Years</i>	<i>17-18 Years</i>	<i>18+ Years</i>
	158	49	1
Total number of part-time students	1 (Year 13, on-line, resident in South Africa)		

## 4.1 British nature of the school

BSU has many characteristics that show its British nature, including:

- a curriculum that is based on the National Curriculum of England, whilst reflecting its geographical location and the rich heritage and culture of Mongolia;
- the majority of the teaching staff who are British nationals: almost all are qualified in UK institutions and have prior experience in British or British international schools;
- the school employs the largest number of British nationals in the whole country of Mongolia, and has excellent relationships with the British Embassy;
- the range of extra-curricular activities in place which support and extend the formal curriculum;
- styles of teaching and learning which are informed by UK best practice;
- staff professional development which is used to develop consistency of approach;
- the uniforms are similar to those to be found in UK private schools;
- students can enter schools in the UK without significant disruption, if they wish to;
- the school leadership organisation which is similar to that found in British schools, with clearly described roles for leaders and teachers in both junior and senior sections of the school;
- The students are divided into year groups, Key Stages and school sections consistent with British definitions and age-groups.

## 5. *Standard 1* The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided is good.

### 5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

Students at BSU follow a broad and balanced curriculum based on the English National Curriculum. As 80% of students are Mongolian nationals, the school has carefully adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of its students whilst still ensuring the objectives of the English National Curriculum are met. For example, a Year 3 Topic on 'Vikings' has been adapted to be 'Empires', and Mongolian toys and clothes are incorporated into other topics in the primary school. In the secondary school, students pupils focus on the impact of coal on Mongolian air quality when learning about pollution.

The Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum ensures that all students have access to a wide range of opportunities in all the prime and specific areas of learning. In the primary school, specialist teachers deliver PE, swimming, IT, Mongolian and music; Mandarin is offered to Year 5 and 6 students and continues in Key Stage 3.

Dedicated STEAM and PSHE lessons have also been added to the weekly timetable to further complement core and specialist subjects. The classroom-based curriculum is enhanced through extra-curricular activities (ECAs), educational visits, internal and external competitions, and collaborative events with other schools.

Students in Key Stage 4 and 5 follow an individualised number of core and optional subjects the content of which is set by Cambridge Assessment International Education and leads to examination for IGCSE at Year 11 and A-Level at Year 13.

In Key Stage 5, a dedicated team of staff support the students to make good choices and help them plan for the future. The school rightly prides itself on its personalised approach to post 16 options and the support and guidance provided to parents and students. As one parent said, "we received extraordinary support for university." This is a strength of the school and one of the reasons why families join it.

Across the school, the curriculum is implemented effectively through planning which is monitored well by senior leaders. As most students (90%) are English second language learners, there is an appropriately strong focus on the development of



communication, language and literacy skills. Students who enter the school with no English benefit from dedicated English as an additional language (EAL) lessons, while ongoing support for beginners and intermediate learners is provided in small groups or within class. In Key Stage 4, EAL learners study a reduced timetable, allowing them more time to develop English skills and focus on a smaller number of subjects.

A comprehensive referral process is in place for students requiring SEND support. This support is provided by a team of SEND teachers, assistants and shadow teachers. Currently 10% of the student population are on the SEND register.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good.

Teachers use a variety of resources and teaching methods to learning. Lessons with a strong practical element are well received by students and the best lessons demonstrate this well. For example, a good ICT lesson with Year 4 students made use of a wide range of different fonts and colours: it clearly emphasised students finding the answers to questions, rather than the teacher giving them. In EYFS, the best learning was achieved when teachers set up activities, such as large rubber bricks to build with, and allowing the students to create their own 3-D shapes.

The best lessons also had effective visual and/or IT support: one Year 8 mathematics lesson on rotation, made use of a good practical aid to develop the students' understanding of the rotation of a complex geometrical figure. Learning was also supported by a useful PowerPoint presentation.

Relationships between teachers and students are harmonious and the students' high standards of behaviour for learning ensure a positive climate in classrooms. Teachers and assistant teachers are qualified in their areas of specialism; the best show great enthusiasm and commitment to both the individual progress of their students and to the ongoing success of the school. There is good planning. At its best, use of questions and answers is strong.

Teaching was mainly challenging and delivered confidently, ensuring progress is well supported. Some teachers were less successful with highly able students. Behaviour systems are well-embedded and lead to a good standard of participation and learning.

Students in EYFS are assessed 'in the moment' and misconceptions addressed and discussed. Assessment opportunities in the whole school are varied and it is evident that the teachers have a good knowledge of their students' levels and next steps. Even with the youngest students, this teaching style enables good progress to be made during most lessons: strengths and weaknesses are identified and acted upon.

A noticeable strength of lessons was the happiness and engagement of the students in their learning. Students in a Year 4 music lesson for example, were thoroughly engaged and motivated by the djembe call and response activity, which was part of a topic on drumming – there was lots of smiling and laughter, and learning proceeded at a brisk pace. Similarly, in a Year 7 geography lesson, the students really enjoyed making field sketches of the school, learning and having fun at the same time.

In a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher gave a highly effective 'walk' through how to address a hypothetical question about the initial impressions of George and Lennie

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in the novel *Of mice and men*, which supported good learning at this part of the lesson. In the less successful lessons however, routines had not been well established as yet, and therefore some students struggled to learn at a satisfactory pace.

The school utilises a range of summative and formative assessment procedures to assess students' progress and attainment. Data is used effectively to track the progress and attainment of individual students over each academic year. However, beyond transitional information sharing, as yet there is no routine longitudinal data analysis of progress over time in EYFS – Key Stage 3.

The school is adequately resourced with almost every classroom having an interactive whiteboard. Some teachers do not use these resources as well as others, though, for example with poor focus or text that is too small to actually read. Computers are easily available in three dedicated classrooms, and tablets are also in use for learning and teaching on a bookable basis – the strongest teachers use these resources well.

The staff appraisal system within the school is based around both planned and unplanned lesson observations. A new approach to continuous professional development (CPD) is being developed which aims to align to the aims of the school development plan.

## 5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students are good.

In Key Stage 4, students sit an internal exam in October of Year 11 prior to their mock exam in November, and subsequent final exam in May. Support is then provided to target gaps in learning. Since 2019, analysis of GCSE and A-Level results against both CAT 4 and teacher predicted grades has also been introduced. Such an approach appears to be having a direct impact on student performance as results have shown an overall improvement over the past three years with the percentage of A\*-C grades awarded across all subjects at IGCSE increasing from 48% to 80%. With the exception of mathematics, physics and Chinese, the percentage of A\*-C grades increased in all subjects over the past three years. The percentage of A\*-E grades at A-Level also increased from 65% to 90% in the last three years.

In Key Stage 5, students have the option of studying for the Mongolian Diploma alongside their A-Levels. Students who sit this exam consistently exceed the state average, with some choosing to take the Mongolian University Entrance Exam.

Phonics is assessed consistently across the primary school; maths tests, which align to the curriculum being taught, are completed half termly. Writing assessments are also conducted each half term and reading is assessed using 'Bug Club'. Following assessments and subsequent analysis of data, intervention sessions are put in place for those students requiring support. Summative assessment continues in Key Stage 3 where internal exams take place which are set by the teachers. Annual CAT 4 assessments were introduced in 2020 for students in Year 2 upwards and this is beginning to be analysed in greater detail.

The school carefully tracks the progress and attainment of individual students over three terms annually and retains and shares this data with staff each year as children progress, however currently there is no analysis of data over time in EYFS, Key Stage 1, 2 and 3. SEN data is shared and developed by the SEN passport system. Parents feel their children are making academic progress and that their learning is transferable should they relocate.

Nearly all pupils arrive in EYFS with little or no English but students make progress throughout EYFS and primary. In EYFS, the online learning journal 'Tapestry' has been introduced and is being used to record observational data and track students' progress against the EYFS Learning Goals. As this system becomes more embedded, the aim for it is to support teachers to effectively plan work that meets the individual needs of students in this phase of the school.

Moderation and monitoring are being developed to ensure a consistent approach across the school and it is clear that in recent years the school has made excellent

progress in developing assessment procedures and analysing data. As a result of this the process has become more robust; however, senior leaders are aware that further development is required to ensure that data is used effectively to drive pupil performance.

## 6. *Standard 2* Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As students move through the school, they are provided opportunities to develop their awareness and understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects through PSHE lessons, extra-curricular activities, themed assemblies and the formal and informal curriculum.

The PSHE curriculum has been overhauled in recent years and now has a high priority at the school with a dedicated lesson each week. The PSHE coordinator is passionate about this area of the curriculum and has a clear plan to develop the subject further. The newly introduced curriculum provides consistency across the school and has been adapted to the needs of the students at BSU and the school's context in Mongolia. When questioned, both teachers and students highlighted the positive impact this has had.

The school offers many opportunities for students to accept responsibility and learn how to be a leader, for example secondary and primary house captains; membership of the School Council; and participation in Model United Nations (MUN) activities to learn diplomacy, international relations and the function of the United Nations.

The house system is well embedded and has been developed further recently with the introduction of primary house captains in addition to the already established senior house captains. The system focuses not only on competition, but also on the pastoral benefits through such initiatives as a Google classroom for each house to support vertical as well as horizontal integration across the school.

The school council is highly active and includes students from Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 who are democratically elected by their peers. Many students spoken to expressed their desire to be on the school council and it is clearly a very sought-after role at BSU. The council organises and co-ordinate a number of initiatives, events and charity appeals throughout the academic year, such as a 'shoe box' appeal and a river clean-up.

All students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of events and activities outside the classroom. COBIS competitions take place regularly, as do music and drama activities alongside other schools. As a founder member of the Ulaanbaatar Athletics Council (UBAC), BSU participates in numerous sporting events and has worked hard to increase the number of member schools.

During academic year 2021/22 the school introduced an 'Antibullying Week' which is now an annual event. The school actively promotes diversity and inclusivity and celebrates difference. BSU has held numerous events including 'Odd Sock Day' to highlight this at an age-appropriate level. Parents, staff and students who were questioned all highlighted the friendly, welcoming

atmosphere of the school as being key strengths. Students reported that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are incredibly rare.

Students experience other cultures and lifestyles through curriculum topics which focus on different countries and allow them to contrast different cultures in addition to whole school events such as the annual International Day lunch. Students also have the opportunity to participate in local and overseas educational visits. Respect for the culture and heritage of Mongolia is shown through the teaching of the Mongolian language from Key Stages 1-4 and the teaching of Mongolian history and culture as a discreet subject in Key Stages 2 and 3.

## 7. *Standard 3* The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety of the students is good.

Students and parents report that the school is safe and that the school regards the welfare of all students as a very high priority. As one parent said, “my children are happy, they have friends and they are enthusiastic to go to school”.

The school site is secure from the general public and robust entry/exit procedures are in place which includes the use of ID cards. Once onsite a further layer of security is in place to gain access to certain areas of the school, for example the EYFS area is only accessible by a specific door code. There are 40 CCTV cameras in operation across the school which are monitored daily.

There is a clear programme of personal, social and health education which supports student development at all levels. Pastoral care is primarily provided by class teachers and tutors; a deputy head of secondary responsible for pastoral matters has recently been appointed. A full-time counsellor and a psychologist are also employed.

The school has worked hard to become more proactive rather than reactive when supporting students socially and emotionally and leaders have a clear plan for the future. Both stress testing and a dedicated wellbeing test have been introduced as part of the medical and mental health is being given high priority, particularly following the impact of Covid-19. Students are confident to approach the counsellor independently and to also refer their peers should they have concerns about their wellbeing.

The school behaviour policy is implemented effectively and students reported that there are very few instances of poor behaviour. Similarly, parents highlighted the high levels of discipline and positive behaviour as strengths of the school. A buddy system is in place for new students and there is an emphasis on togetherness and community during PSHE lessons and assemblies. Students are confident speaking to staff if they have a concern and local support telephone numbers are provided on posters throughout the school.

Safeguarding is a clear priority at the school and procedures are robust. A comprehensive policy is in place. All staff complete Educare training and the HR team provide training for Mongolian staff in their home language. The head master is the school’s child protection liaison officer (CPLO) and is supported by four members of staff serving as child protection officers (CPOs). The CPLO, CPOs and deputy head of secondary (pastoral) meet every three weeks to discuss pastoral matters in the Safeguarding Committee and designate specific actions for each child raised as a concern by members of the community. The school doctor and psychologist also attend these meetings. The school board are informed of any serious



matters and the school has established links with the Mongolian Family Court, Social Services and the Police.

Maintenance is overseen by the administrative team who ensure that both preventative and ongoing maintenance is carried out as per established schedules. Any minor matters are dealt with swiftly by the onsite team.

The school is compliant with all local requirements relating to catering, fire safety and medical matters, and regular compliance checks are carried out by the relevant authorities. A full-time school doctor and hygienist are employed. A large number of staff have completed first aid training. All requests for trips off site must be submitted to the head master. A risk assessment must be completed and the head master signs off on all trips.

## 8. *Standard 4* The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

A comprehensive recruitment process is in place led by the Headteacher and HR Director, and supported by the HR Manager. Prior to appointment all members of staff undergo rigorous checks by the school to confirm their suitability for the position. References are gathered for all staff, including at least one from the most recent employer, and all data is added onto a Central Register. Currently none of these references are verified by telephone.

Criminal background checks via the ICPC, DBS or certificates of good conduct from all countries in which expatriate teachers have previously been employed are collected. Staff from Mongolia, including all administration, operations and auxiliary staff are given a local criminal-record check with the local police agencies.

Voluntary service agreements are completed by people coming into school part time or occasionally. Third party providers, for example security, complete all checks and provide the information to the school.

Recruiting and retaining high quality staff is a significant challenge for the school, and has been especially so during Covid-19. However, the senior leadership has remained stable for a number of years which has provided continuity and consistency to the community.

The owners of the school have brought stability to BSU in recent years. They set the strategic vision and direction of the school and delegate the day to day operation to the head master and senior leadership team (SLT). The school board, consisting of the two owners, meet monthly with the head master and senior staff.

## 9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

Premise and accommodation of the school meets the standards for BSO: they are fit for purpose. The school provides a pleasant and secure environment for students and staff and appropriate priority is given to matters of health and safety, on most matters.

There is considerable attention given to planting and green spaces even though the environment is below freezing for five to six months of the year. Evacuation drills, including provision for extreme cold are drilled twice annually (and more frequently if problems occur). The HSE committee meets on a three-weekly basis to discuss and identify areas of concern and actions for development, although maintenance was put on hold during the extensive pandemic shutdowns. This is evident in some places, like the steps to the sports area.

Given the extreme range of temperatures in Mongolia, heating and insulation are a priority in all areas of the school. Water, heating, lighting are appropriate throughout the school, with wiring and insulation provision having been improved and upgraded during the summer of 2022. The school campus is inspected annually for potential earthquake dangers and is deemed fit for purpose by local authorities.

BSU has the unusual situation of a large residential block being physically attached to the campus. Security employees are stationed at both access points 24 hours a day. Residential accommodation is provided for some members of the academic staff on campus, and evacuation and an effective roll-call for residents outside of working hours remains a priority for attention.

A few parents mentioned the facilities and lack of space as issues: perhaps because the student population has increased considerably over recent years.

## 10. Standard 6

### The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, carers and others

Parents feel very well informed and involved in the life of the school and highlight communication as a strength of the school. Parents report that the school is very open and staff are accessible, even outside of school hours. An annual parent's satisfaction survey is administered by the school with response rates reaching 60% for the most recent survey.

A wide range of information is available on the school's website and the school's Facebook page and YouTube channel are popular. Bilingual communication (English and Mongolian) is sent to enrolled parents and staff are available to parents, carers and visitors to the school for translation when required.

On a day to day basis, information is shared with parents and students via Tapestry in the EYFS and ClassDojo in Primary. In Key Stage 2 upwards Google Classroom is utilized regularly. The school has recently started using iSAMS and is planning on developing their parent communication further through the use of the Parental Portal. Formal progress reports are sent to parents twice each year and parent's meetings are half termly.

An active PTA group has previously been an important part of the school community but has not been operational in the last year. The school is looking to revive the PTA this year and a first meeting is scheduled for Term 1. BSU *High Tea* was established as a regular event from 2019 onwards, taking place off-campus in Ulaanbaatar city centre and provided an opportunity for parents to socialise and hear from guest speakers and other members of the parent community on issues facing their children.

## 11. Standard 7

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO.

The complaints policy was the subject of review during 2020 and a more detailed version has been drawn up by the head master and ratified by the board of directors in May 2022. The procedure itself is clear and robust, with specific routes for external and internal concerns, and proper provision for confidentiality.

It clearly demonstrates the importance the school places on reacting in a timely manner to any identified issues, and also on how the partnership between home and school can strengthen learning.

Whilst procedures vary slightly for different types of complaints, all have clear processes, which are recorded transparently by the school. The school aims for all issues to be resolved by the class, form or subject teachers, in the first instance. Open communications are encouraged to de-escalate any potential tensions. If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint, it is moved up through different stages of leadership.

The school is actively seeking an independent participant to be part of any panel that needs to be convened. Publicising this and ensuring knowledge of the process for all stakeholders is an ongoing process which benefits from the assistance of the parent-teacher association.

Realistically, complaints beyond routine matters needing clarification are rare; the positive relationships with parents and students that the school enjoys, ensure that most concerns are addressed before formal complaint is necessary.

## 12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are good.

The head master has been in place for four years and together with the head of primary and deputy head master, they have provided continuity and effective forward momentum for the school. They have worked hard to create a culture whereby all stakeholders are proud to be associated with BSU. As a team, they have an in-depth understanding of where the school is on its development journey and have clear plans for the future. Parents are fully supportive of the school's leadership team and value the school.

There is a clear staff structure in the school and regular meetings take place between all leaders. The SLT meet on a weekly basis but are joined every three weeks by members of the extended leadership team. Leaders know their staff well and are focused on securing the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom in order to meet the needs of the students. The leadership team is responsible for monitoring the performance of staff and supporting them.

The school positively encourages the professional development of staff, taking pride in devolving leadership. The SLT are actively building capacity and ensuring that succession planning is in place. In recent years, the school has invested in retaining their best staff and teachers have been supported with NPQ qualifications, in addition to support to grow and develop within the school through formal and informal responsibility.

In the primary school, subject coordinators lead both long- and short-term planning and ensure resources are appropriate and available to teachers. The head of primary meets with each year group regularly to support and monitor the planning process. In the secondary school, processes have been successfully out in place in the last few years to ensure schemes of work and planning are regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of the students.