



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

**Leonardo da Vinci
Academy**

**Prague
Czechia**

Date
Inspection number

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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, over 20 lesson observations took place, as well as a series of learning walks. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, and a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. The inspection team were in school for three days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The Leonardo da Vinci Academy (LdVA), Prague meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

LDVA provides a good level of education and care.

Pastoral care is strong: the teachers know the students well, and welfare is a key school priority. The behaviour of the students is good. Teaching is good, and as a result, students make progress in their learning. The curriculum blends UK requirements with the opportunities afforded to the school, being in the centre of Prague. The leadership provided by the principal is very effective.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- clear values of the school, driven by the passion and vision of the proprietor and understood by all stakeholders;
- students, who are lively, well-behaved, inquisitive and kind to one another;
- ethos of the school, which is open, warm and welcoming, providing an emotionally safe environment for students;
- strong emphasis on cooperation and communication;
- teachers, who are committed to pupils' overall development and to providing a warm and supportive learning environment;
- high levels of pastoral care and the PSHE curriculum which leads to a safe and happy school environment in which students develop self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem;
- relationships and communications with parents, and the school's responsiveness to any concerns raised;
- use of Prague as a learning resource.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

1. further develop opportunities for all students to reach their full potential, for example by:
 - raising levels of attendance and punctuality
 - increasing the level of challenge for all, but particularly the most able students
 - developing more consistency in strategies used for the monitoring and tracking of assessment data, in order to develop a picture of attainment and progress over time
2. consider options for efficient school information, data and resource management, to ensure the school lives up to its 21st Century vision;
3. seek to enhance the middle and senior leadership capacity, as the school expands and moves to its new location.

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	Leonardo da Vinci Academy				
Address	Na Perštýně 342, 110 00/ Dloha 34 11000, Prague, Czech Republic				
Telephone Number/s	+420 234 721 721 +420 723 800 556				
Fax Number	-				
Website Address	www.lvacademy.cz				
Key Email Address/s	info@lvacademy.cz				
Headteacher/Principal	Mr Justin Kilcullen-Nichols				
Proprietor	Mrs Vera Komarova				
Age Range	10-15 years				
Total number of pupils	35	Boys	17	Girls	18
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	0	<i>12-16 years</i>	35	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	0	<i>17-18 years</i>	0	
	<i>6-11 years</i>	0	<i>18+ years</i>	0	
Total number of part-time children	0				

LDVA started in September 2021, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The owner – Mrs Vera Komarova - wanted to provide a school for her daughters which offered a high quality international education, after 18 months of school closures and distance learning. An international principal and team of teachers were recruited to form the initial teaching team. It opened with 14 students, but soon expanded to 38. Students are currently registered with a partner school, where they are awarded their Czech school diplomas following portfolio-based assessment. LDVA received Pearson Edexcel accreditation in January 2022 and has been granted accreditation by the Czech Ministry of Education and Sport, starting from September 1st 2022. It is currently in the process of moving to a new campus following the purchase of a new school building in the historic city of Prague.

4.1 British nature of the school

The ethos and nature of the school are recognisably British. The school is organised according to the normal structures found in English schools, applied to a local context. Students are taught in the English language, following British international qualifications through Pearson Edexcel (*i*Lower Secondary and IGCSE). The school has recently subscribed to the *International Primary Curriculum* for the future, and is seeking IB accreditation.

The school's curriculum closely follows the objectives of the English Natural Curriculum, but adapted for local demographics. Consequently, students can enter schools in the UK or other British international schools without significant difficulty.

School policies are based on the expectations of British schools overseas, and are beyond local expectations, especially in matters such as safeguarding.

Styles of teaching and learning are significantly UK-based, and the school makes best use of professional development and assessment platforms such as *Educare* and *GL-Learning's* CAT4. Students participate in regular school trips to enhance learning and make the best use of Prague as a classroom.

School leaders are UK-trained, with most staff having had extensive international experience. Students have been accepted to other international schools following education at LDVA, with at least one student having been accepted to a French art and design college.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided is good. As a result of an innovative curriculum and sound teaching, students make appropriate progress towards age related expectations. The school fully meets the standards for BSO.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

LDVA provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is directly relevant to students' needs. It combines local curriculum outcomes with Pearson Edexcel *iLower* Secondary, and IGCSE. The school has started planning for expansion in the primary to include a combination of local curriculum standards, with *Jolly Phonics*, Pearson *iPrimary* and the *International Primary Curriculum*. The school has also begun the process of seeking IB accreditation.

A written curriculum outline is available on the website. Schemes of work are based on Pearson Edexcel *iSecondary* and the Czech National Curriculum outcomes adapted to the needs of current students. Students study English language, Czech, mathematics, science, art, music, drama, physical education and humanities. Information technology (IT) is used throughout the school in an integrated manner to ensure students learn in context by using the technology.

Every Monday, student have health education and personality development sessions taught by a psychologist. These are taught by external specialists, delivering focussed training on certain topics such as eating disorders, sexual education and anti-bullying.

Most students are non-native speakers of English and thus the curriculum and lessons are adapted to focus on their literacy: the stated goal for all students is being able to sit English Language as a First Language at IGCSE. Czech students also have regular mother tongue lesson; students are also given the choice of studying French, German or Spanish. Students who require additional practice in English have additional English classes. There is an appropriate inclusive education policy which is posted on the school website.

The school places great emphasis on the curriculum and learning opportunities afforded by being in the centre of Prague.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good.

Teaching takes place in small-sized classes, ensuring that students receive appropriate attention during lessons. Students are happy to come to school and happy in school, not afraid to ask questions or seek help. Teachers are very aware of the differences seen between students and assist students in building confidence as well as planning challenging, engaging lessons.

Detailed lesson plans, including learning objectives and opportunities of differentiation criteria, are in place. These ensure consistency and progression over time. Learning behaviours are excellent: students say that they enjoy school here and that learning is fun. Calm class management and good relationships support and promote effective learning.

In the best lessons, teachers scaffold learning well using a variety of teaching techniques. In a year 7 and 8 English lesson, for example the focus was on concrete poems. The lesson was effectively planned and the students enjoyed learning, especially the poem about a cat.

Lessons involve teachers demonstrating and explaining lesson content. In the best lessons, teachers explained well and followed up with individuals students as necessary. For instance in a year 9 lesson on whisker and box diagrams, maybe students found the work straightforward, but others needed further detailed explanation, which was done well. Extended opportunities to talk challenged students in the best lessons, for example in the Czech language on *větné členy* (parts of speech).

Some teaching really challenged the students at an appropriate level, for example the years 7 and 8 lesson on common confusions: words/phrases such as accept/except, efficient/effective and bring/take was an excellent opportunity for the students to think deeply. Opportunities for working together and discussion enabled students to think whilst developing skills of collaboration, independent learning, tolerance and mutual respect.

A LDVA staff code of conduct ensures that staff leave personal political beliefs out of the classroom. The school promotes the values of democracy, rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance through its mission statement, civics education, and student voice schemes. The school accepts students of all backgrounds and does not discriminate. Guest speakers are invited into the school to discuss issues related to fundamental universal values.

With the express permission of the parents, the school gives the students a high degree of independence, producing self-organising and self-managing young people. Students

are engaged in their lessons, given freedom to explore given topics, and encouraged to continuously evaluate their own progress. Open ended project based activities allow students to explore a topic as deeply as they wish to. They write formal self-assessment reports in each subject, and participate in student, parent, teacher meetings where they are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.

An appropriate assessment policy is in place which meets the requirements of the local ministry of education. Students are formally assessed twice a year in line with local regulations. Teachers create a range of assessment opportunities to assess student work and deliver feedback. As illustrated above, teachers adapt their teaching to suit the needs of students if/when obstacles to student progress are encountered. There is currently no formal marking/feedback policy, but this does not currently limit learning.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students meets the standard for BSO. Students in the school make good progress from their starting points. Attainment is acceptable, with many students working above or well above age-related expectations.

Students' behaviour across the school is good. As a result of a strong ethos at the school, students are polite and enjoy positive relationships, both with their peers and with the teachers. Attitudes to learning are positive, although a lack of confidence impacts of the achievement of some pupils. Attendance and punctuality is not always as good as the school's leaders hopeful: steps are being taken to improve these.

No students have yet taken externally moderated examinations, but attainment in classes is good. In one English lesson with mainly English as a second/third language students, they were able to use words and phrases such as 'malnourishment', 'at bay' and 'crisis averted'. In a computer science lesson, the students were keen to learn and understand rainbow tables and the place of generating a value or values from a string using a mathematical function, i.e. cracking hash algorithms.

Students are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education and life.

6. Standard 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good: it is a key strength.

The students develop awareness and understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects partly through a planned curriculum programme, morning meetings and extra-curricular activities, but mainly through the close relationships they have within the school. Students are, in general, confident in the school and articulate. They demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and self-knowledge: many are happy to step up to take responsibilities, such as organising a whole school trip to a local trampoline park.

There is a strong focus on the promotion of fundamental British and European values. Students engage enthusiastically in civics classes, personality development and cultural trips. The behaviour principles promote tolerance and mutual respect for all. The school's mission statement explicitly spells out values based on intercultural understanding and respect. Fundamental values are present in the staff code of conduct.

The school has student-derived school rules, a clear staff code of conduct and behaviour policy. This is actively promoted. Students have the chance to take part in community events such as raising money for the *Happy Hearts Foundation* through the sale of student-produced art work, and working with an external provider who has a programme for helping homeless people. Starting from next academic year, the school will introduce IGCSE Global Citizenship as part of the mandatory curriculum which includes a 'Service' project. The civil and criminal law of Czechia, which are similar to that of England, are a fundamental feature of LDVA.

Social and personal development is strong: a good example was the PSHEE session on sex education, provided by an external agency. The students were engaged, behaved appropriately and asked genuine and apposite questions. The school provides classes on civics and law, on topics such as democracy during election times, and various aspects of law during safeguarding, drug and health education.

The school has an equality and anti-harassment policy which is published on the LDVA website. The school accepts students from all cultures and religions, and does not discriminate when recruiting staff. The curriculum enriches students' knowledge of different cultures and traditions, for example, learning about the Chinese New Year, different styles of musical or art, and during trips to art galleries and museums. The international nature of the school allows students to meet peers of many other nationalities: the school encourages students to share their experiences.

The school is a democratic school. During recent elections, they took part in a project to form their own political parties and policies. An external speaker who was a presidential candidate, came to school to talk about democracy.

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

The provision for welfare, health and safety of the students meets the standard for BSO. The school has an appropriate range of policies and practices in place. Host country requirements are exceeded.

The school is in temporary accommodation, from which it will move in a few months. In the meantime, some of the main responsibilities for health, welfare and safety rests with the landlords of the shared office space.

Nevertheless, whatever is practicable for the school to do, it does. A clear and appropriate safeguarding policy has been written and introduced. A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has been trained and appointed. The principal has had face-to-face DSL training, and the proprietor has taken part in UK provided safeguarding training for governors. The school has detailed notes of any safeguarding issues and has cooperated with local law enforcement as appropriate. All staff complete safeguarding training annually through a UK company; a copy of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* is present in a central area of the school for all to access.

Access to the school is through electronic tagging. Visitors to the building are signed in through the building management. The site is monitored by CCTV.

The staff code of conduct contains specific guidance on safeguarding expectations. The school promotes safeguarding across the community. External providers have been used to discuss safeguarding issues such as sexual consent, eating disorders and drugs.

The school promotes safe use of social media and ICT, and encourages students to speak-up, if appropriate. Parent declarations are required for students to leave the school site unsupervised. Staff escort students to and from educational trips/events.

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

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

LDVA follows a safer recruitment policy that has been approved by the owner and implemented by the principal. All staff have to complete an application form and any gaps in work history are examined and the applicant questioned as relevant. Potential candidates are interviewed by more than one person, and discussions occur to identify inconsistencies. Staff who have lived or worked in the UK are expected to provide an ICPC as well as evidence of police certificates/certificates of good conduct from countries in which the applicant was previously resident.

All staff must obtain a certificate from the Czech Republic Police, declaring any convictions; the check specifically searches databases related to safety of working with children. The school ensure that all staff members have the right to live and work in the Czech Republic and check their ID and qualifications. Czech law mandates that any labour contract includes a medical check, including psychiatric clearance.

Confidential references are taken before appointment of staff, with a confirmatory phone call made to confirm the reference. The school goes above and beyond checks required from the home country, and has established a culture of safeguarding and safer recruitment.

The proprietor of the school has undertaken the same checks expected of all staff including police certificates, references and specific safeguarding training. The proprietor is a citizen of high moral standing in local society.

As the school shifts to a board of governors, policies have been drawn up and approved to ensure that all potential governors meet the same high standards of safer recruitment as teaching staff. Policies with regards to the appointment of future governors follow the same high standards and practices as the recruitment of teaching staff.

The school maintains a single central record of all staff working at the school. The register includes (where appropriate) an ICPC check or equivalent for both local and overseas staff. This central register is well documented and stored securely. It was made available to the inspection team.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation of the school meets the standards for BSO.

The school is currently renting rooms in an office block in the centre of Prague. Albeit temporary premises, LDVA has made the best of the available spaces. Classrooms are bright and airy, making the need for artificial lighting unnecessary during most of the school day: artificial lighting when needed, is of good quality and suitable. The facilities are clean, in good working order and inspected according to local standards for health and safety. There is good external lighting on the way to the building on a public street, and in hallways, entrances and stairwells.

The resources available to teachers and students are up-to-date and useful: good use is made of IT facilities to support and extend learning. Drinking water is available at all times. Toilets have hot and cold water washing supply; the water is safe for consumption, and hot water is not scalding.

Toilet facilities are appropriate, with individual cubicles for boys and girls. Staff use different toilets on the 8th or 9th floor.

LDVA rents sites around the city for physical education. Students take part in some form of physical activity each day. There is no dedicated playground, due to the limitations of the school campus. Changing rooms for physical education are separated by sex at the facilities used. There are plans for an external play area in the new campus.

The school does not provide for students who have complex needs.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, prospective parents and its wider community is wide-ranging in style and breadth. It meets the requirements for BSO.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and the leadership. They express real satisfaction with the manner in which LdVA has integrated and supported their children, and the focus on individuals' learning. The principal is seen to be approachable and highly responsive to parental concerns or queries. Application processes are smooth, well administered and information and support is provided freely.

The school's safeguarding policy and safer recruitment is published on the website.

All parents receive written reports at least twice a year. These include a student self-assessment, teacher attainment grades, behaviour grades and effort grades. They also include a tutor comment. Parents are invited for individual meetings to clarify any outstanding issues. In addition to the detailed reports sent out to parents, there are formal and informal channels for parents to discuss these reports with teachers, such as parent teacher meetings and informal drop-ins. There is a strong emphasis on effective school/parent partnerships that supports each individual student's development.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO. A comprehensive policy is in place which guides parents and school leaders. This is available on the LDVA website or from the school itself.

Concerns are rare, but occasional parents may want to raise issues with the school. In such cases, the policy makes it clear that they will be treated fairly and privately. There is a clear and defined difference between a 'concern' and a 'complaint'. Complaints are very rare. The vast majority of items raised are concerns and are dealt with informally, through discussions, meetings, support and or explanations.

Any complaint or concern would be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and appropriate procedures are implemented. The policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services.

It is stated that it is in everyone's interest that concerns, and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints policy.

Complaints are taken seriously and every effort made to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. There is a clear set of definitions and very appropriate time scales explained in the policy.

The three stages through which a complaint may progress, are (1) informal raising of a concern (2) formal complaint and (3) consideration by the proprietor with a panel. The decision of the panel is considered to be final.

A written record are kept of any complaint made, detailing whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing. Other relevant information such as the date the issue was raised, the name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child, and a description of the issue

LdVA is also clear about timescales, while it endeavours to resolve any matter as early as possible. For example, the review panel (which consists of the three members of the school community who are not familiar with the complaint and have no conflicts of interest) will sit within 28 school days of the request, where possible. If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date and the hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school is good, offering clear direction and support to stakeholders. The professional relationship between the principal and the proprietor is excellent, as is their vision and drive. Students are happy at LdVA and make progress. Morale is high and the positivity is infectious.

The school has a clearly stated mission statement and set of values which is stated on the website. As a new school, the main priority has been to establish and realise the school aims in as short a time as possible. Within 9 months of opening, the school has opened its doors and increased its student roll significantly.

Care has been taken since the school was first established, to create a culture and ethos which is friendly, warm and welcoming: the impact of the principal has been excellent. Relationships are a strength of the school: students, parents and teachers are greeted with a smile on arrival at school every day. Students feel safe, happy and want to be at school: for many of them, after 18 months of COVID lockdown and distance learning, LdVA is a school which has reconnected them with their education and introduced them to a style of teaching which is they report is more engaging than they have encountered before.

There is a clear direction for the future of the school. The school development plan reflects the nature of a new and developing school; it is a working document. Challenges have been identified and contingency plans in place to ensure that there is no single point of failure during this crucial stage in the school's history. Leadership is embedded in the school at all levels from the proprietor all the way down to the students, who have a definite say in the development of school policies and procedures, within carefully managed scenarios.

Draft documents have been approved concerning the formation of a board of governors. The proprietor/founder has completed UK governance course and is committed to the concept of a board. The school has drafted a list of possible board members pending appropriate safeguarding checks.

BSO compliant policies and procedures have been created and introduced to the school, these will be revised as required, at least on an annual basis. Staff are consulted on some of the policies, but others (i.e. safeguarding) are drawn from established best practice. The proprietor (and soon the governors) provide appropriate checks and measures for the school, as well as support and guidance for LdVA's strategic development. Finances are managed effectively, to ensure high quality facilities, staffing and resources, to aid the school's effectiveness.

The school runs well on a day-to-day basis. Systems and procedures are in place in all aspects of school operation, and people understand their role within LdVA. Internal school lesson

observations are performed through regular informal scrutiny: a positive feedback mechanism is in place which is designed to encourage teachers to improve their practice without fear of negativity or reprimand.

Appropriate professional development opportunities are available for staff, with everyone having access to a suite of *Educare* course. Specific CPD courses are provided for staff based around school needs.