



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

## **Inspection report**

# **Sousse International School**

**Sousse  
Tunisia**

Date  
Inspection number

**7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022  
20221109**

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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, more than 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 informally with students. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Karen Hanratty. The team member was Simon Sharron.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas, except for those that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. These pertain to aspects of the UK Equality Act 2010. The school actively promotes tolerance and a respect for all human differences, within the confines of the law. This is embedded in the culture and ethos of the school. 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

Sousse International School is a young school, undergoing a period of rapid growth and development. Students at the school achieve well, as a result of a solid curriculum and robust teaching, much of which is good or better. The school is founded on the vision of “Inspiring students through positive education” which strongly influences all aspects of school life. Students are well cared for; they demonstrate mature attitudes to life and learning. The school’s owners and leaders have ambitious aims for the future, which are driving school developments in a positive manner.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- The students, who value the education they receive at Sousse International School and are great ambassadors for the school
- The passion and drive of the owners and principal to develop Sousse International School into a world class international school, centred on joy-based learning
- The commitment of all members of staff to the ongoing growth and development of the school
- The school’s vision: “Inspiring students through positive education” which underpins the ethos of the school
- The students’ levels of English – speaking, listening, reading and writing
- The support given to students as preparation for examinations
- The standards achieved by students, as reflected in external examination results, particularly in languages
- The values curriculum, based on a ‘Peace Culture’, which supports students personal, social and emotional development
- The focus on school improvement in all areas, particularly in teaching and learning, as the key to raising standards further
- Relationships and communications with parents, who value the unique opportunities the school provides for their children
- The high standards of cleanliness and hygiene maintained in the school.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

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

1. Ensure that all teaching and assessment across the school is as good as the best practice observed, including:
  - Specific, targeted learning objectives, which are shared with students
  - A range of well-paced activities, that stimulate and engage students in their learning
  - Appropriate challenge for all, including those with special educational needs and the most able learners
  - Regular opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers, in pairs or groups
  - Constructive feedback to students on what they are doing well and how to improve their work
  - The use of assessment data to monitor and track individual students' attainment and progress, identify gaps in learning and inform lesson planning to ensure lessons delivered meet the needs of all learners.
2. Expand the breadth of curriculum to include:
  - greater opportunities to develop creativity, always ensuring that resources are in place to effectively deliver learning
  - A range of extra-curricular enrichment activities
3. Constantly review welfare, health and safety procedures, as the school develops and grows beyond its early stages.

## The context of the school

Full name of School	Sousse International School				
Address	Rue, Issfaya, Jawhara, Sousse, Tunisia				
Telephone Number/s	+21636144599				
Website Address	www.sousseinternationalschool.com				
Key Email Address	secondary@sousseenglishacademy.com				
Headteacher/Principal	Mahfoudh El Aram				
Chair of board/Proprietor	Ulrika Andersson				
Age Range	10-20 years				
Total number of pupils	<b>139</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>68</b>
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	0	<i>12-16 years</i>	106	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	0	<i>17-18 years</i>	14	
	<i>6-11 years</i>	17	<i>18+ years</i>	2	
Total number of part-time children	0				

Sousse International School was established in 2018 by a small group of proprietors, including the principal, passionate to create a school that focused on strong values and joy in education. They felt that many students were fearful of school and that this created barriers to learning. Their vision was for greater autonomy for students, a sense of self-reliance and real pleasure in learning.

The school opened with fewer than 40 students, and has now grown to over 250 across both the primary and secondary campuses.

The secondary school is based in the Jawhara district of Sousse, in rented accommodation. The property is adequate to meet the needs of students and the curriculum offered, however, the proprietors have plans to build a new school, beside the primary campus, which will offer purpose-built facilities, more adapted to a wider curriculum offering, and facilitating further school growth.

The school is proud of its examination results, with a 100% pass rate in iGCSEs in 2022. There is a strong focus on language acquisition, with students achieving well in English, French and Arabic. Many students achieve good iGCSE passes in all three languages.

The school identifies some challenges:

- The recruitment and retention of suitably qualified teaching staff, with high standards of English
- The limitations of the current building, in terms of student numbers and curriculum offering
- The distance between the two school campuses, creating issues for parents dropping off and collecting their children
- Ministry of Education licencing requirements.

### 3.1 British nature of the school

Sousse International School has a British identity, which can be observed through the following:

- Delivery of the National Curriculum for England, through the Cambridge International Curriculum, iGCSE and A level programmes
- Year groups and Key Stages which are aligned to the British education system
- The school's timetable
- The structure of the academic year, divided into three terms
- The uniform shirt, which students wear proudly
- The newly initiated House system
- The school's emphasis on the all-round education of students, including their personal, social and emotional development
- Leadership opportunities for students, including a student council, whose members are elected via a democratic process, and the value placed on student voice
- The schools focus on its core values, which align closely to British values
- The promotion of fairness and equality
- Provision for students with special educational needs
- The union flag, which flies prominently above the students' recreation area
- University destinations, which include the United Kingdom.



## 4. Standard 1

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided meets the standard for BSO, some elements are good. A robust curriculum is in place, backed by appropriate schemes of work and planning. Teaching and regular testing are aligned to the curriculum and examination syllabi; as a result, students make good progress and attain well.

#### 4.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum meets the standard for BSO, with some good features.

The school follows the National Curriculum for England in Key Stage (KS) 3 and iGCSE and A level curricula in KS4 and 5. The excellent 'Values' curriculum, built around the concept of a 'Culture for Peace', promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and mental development of students, and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. There is provision for careers guidance which supports transition to universities.

Learning is scaffolded by the Cambridge International Curriculum, the following of which provides good progression and sequencing of lessons. A written curriculum policy and schemes of work support long, medium and short-term plans, which are recorded in 'Edupage', the school's online management system.

The small size of the school and local Tunisian requirements to teach the country's two official languages of Arabic and French limit the breadth of curriculum that the school can offer. However, students in year 11 have the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBAcc) qualification because of the focus on languages. In KS3, the creative curriculum consists only of art, which is taught without a specialist subject room, while design and technology is limited to computer studies, which is also delivered in non-specialist rooms. There is only one science lab for all three branches of the science curriculum. iGCSE options do not include any creative or technology subjects. In years 12 and 13, there are 6 and 7 A Level options respectively, with a focus on STEM and business-related subjects. Physical education lessons are delivered off-site, very near to the school.

Allocated curriculum time meets minimum requirements in all subjects, while the time allocated to A Level biology, chemistry and physics courses exceeds syllabus recommendations by 20%. For the science courses, it has been a challenge for the school to ensure that all the resources are in place to meet the requirements of the practical element of the syllabus.

iGCSE exam success is supported by a two-hour, weekly rolling programme of examination practice, under controlled exam conditions. This is integrated into the timetable. There is a strong system of remedial support for English and mathematics across the school, for students identified as falling behind in key areas. A learning support coordinator liaises with subject teachers to assist the few children with diagnosed special needs or major English language deficits.

According to students and parents, the volume and quality of homework has improved. They praised the school for its success in moving the curriculum on-line during the Covid period of restrictions. To support timetabling, some A Level Psychology and iGCSE lessons are still taught on-line.

The wider enrichment curriculum is limited, consisting of a small number of trips such as the student visits to an airshow and 'Peace Camp'. Owing to the school's focus on the after school remedial programme, there are currently no extra-curricular activities offered. The school has plans to grow its after-school enrichment curriculum in partnership with local providers, such as the youth club.

## 4.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment meets the standard for BSO. Much of the teaching is good or better.

Teachers plan lessons which align with schemes of work and meet the needs of the large majority of students. Many teachers have excellent subject and examination knowledge, which enables them to offer clear guidance to students. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of strategies which engage students, such as paired or group work, video clips and practical activities, delivered at a good pace. They share specific learning objectives and scaffold learning to build knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence. For example, in a year 10 mathematics lesson on simplifying algebraic expressions, students were given cards with different statements on, of varied complexity, which they were tasked to put into groups of similar values. When asked if they would like to know how many groups there were, students declined, clearly preferring the challenge of finding out for themselves.

When given the opportunity to collaborate in their learning, students respond in a positive and responsible manner. For example, in a year 10 English lesson, students worked in two opposing groups, exploring and exchanging views on critical themes such as the use of energy drinks for children. Students organised themselves effectively to create strong arguments, which both sides debated in a mature manner. In this way, students were able to explore and expand their learning, to develop discursive writing skills.

Technology is used effectively by teachers to support students learning. Projectors, PowerPoint presentations and video clips are well used to engage students and emphasise key learning points. For example, in a year 9 history lesson on the 'Roaring 20s', the teacher showed a brief video clip highlighting some of the developments enjoyed in that period. The video was played twice; after the first viewing students discussed some of the key developments and after the second made notes. Students have limited opportunities to use technology independently.

In almost all lessons in the upper secondary classes, strong relationships and mutual respect are evident. This is less apparent in the younger classes, where less well-developed teaching strategies lead to some student disengagement and low-level disruption.

Across the school there is a strong focus on language acquisition. At the point of admission, students' proficiency in English is assessed, and selection is made on this basis. However, some support is available for new students who may have EAL needs. All teachers have high levels of fluency in English. Vocabulary is taught in a structured way, to ensure students' understanding of the material covered in

lessons. Teaching in English, French and Arabic is robust, as a result students achieve well at iGCSE in all three languages.

Whilst the school is aware that differentiation in lessons is an underdeveloped area, support is provided in many classes for students with identified special educational needs (SEN). The learning support coordinator liaises with teachers regarding lesson content, reviews assessments and tests, and advises teacher on how best to support SEN students. In some of the younger classes, a teaching assistant is present to support students' learning and behaviour. In addition, remedial classes are offered to students who are identified through testing as requiring additional support, to close gaps in learning. Weekly controlled exam practice in year 10 helps students and their teachers to map out subject progress and address gaps in learning.

Resources are used well to support learning, for example, writing prompts, vocabulary sheets and video clips. The classroom environment and displays could be used more effectively to stimulate and support learning, and enable students to develop self-help and independent learning skills.

Students are regularly assessed on their learning. Diagnostic assessments in core subjects are carried out at the beginning of the year, and teachers analyse the results of entrance test for new pupils. Regular unit tests, mid-term and end of term examinations provide a clear picture of individual student's strengths and areas for development. Students receive some written feedback on their performance, together with a percentage and grade. Teacher's discuss results with the principal and individual students, however, a more formalised approach to the monitoring and track students' attainment and progress over time is not yet in place.

In the best lessons, teachers skillfully deploy assessment for learning (AfL) strategies to check learning and respond to deficits in understanding, resulting in good progress for all students. For example, in a year 11 mathematics lesson, students were invited to demonstrate their ability to calculate a circle sector area by showing their answers on mini whiteboards. Students peer assessed the answers of fellow student; some were asked to explain their calculation methods at the front of the classroom and respond to the critical comments from their peers. However, ongoing formative assessment of students' work, both by teachers and students themselves, to give students a clear understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning, is not yet a common feature of the school's assessment processes.

## 4.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students meet the standard for BSO; they are a strength of the school and are good overall.

Students' end of year reports indicate that in KS3 achievement is high and progress is strong. Apart from the small number of students newly arrived in Tunisia, the standard of English across all four linguistic skills is very high. This is achieved in part from a selective intake but also from good English language teaching and a strong system of remedial support to address language deficits.

Although the school's very small KS4 iGCSE exam cohorts of fewer than 20 students do not produce sufficient data for meaningful comparisons with standards in the UK, the indication is that students perform well in relation to their peers in the UK. The individual results for June 2022 show a strong upward trend. In June 2019 the iGCSE pass rate A-C or 7-4 stood at 67.3% and in June 2022 this rose to an impressive 95% with approximately the same number of candidates. The school is proud of its 100% iGCSE pass rate in 2022.

In June 2022, no candidates were entered by the school for A Level. In 2021, 9 students undertook a total of 24 A level examinations. Of these, 8 were passes at grade 'A' or 'A\*' and 18 passes at grade 'C' and above. All the year 13 students were successful in obtaining places at university.

Students' behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school, with the exception of some low-level disruption in lessons where the teaching does not fully engage the class. There have been no exclusions and very few serious bad behaviour incidents are recorded by the school. The staff, students and parents report that students' behaviour is generally good in the school.

Student attendance stands at 92% which is below the standard of 96% expected in the UK. Attendance records indicate that there is a small number of students who have persistent authorised absences. The school is looking at developing a House system of rewards for good attendance to improve attendance rates. Punctuality to school and lesson is generally good.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good, and meets the standard for BSO. It is a key strength of the school.

A notable strength of the school is the 'Values' curriculum which sets out to engender a 'peace culture' in the school. It is central to the school's vision and cements the building blocks for good relationships, conflict avoidance and conflict resolution, creating an ethos and overall school atmosphere, where good behaviour for learning can thrive.

The 'Values' curriculum strongly promotes an uplifting, and genuinely spiritual sense of family and togetherness in the school. In one year 8 lesson, children were invited to examine their own prejudices and stereotyping of others, reflecting on how this unconscious bias could provoke hostile feelings to outside groups. In a group discussion led by the teacher, the students explored ideas such as 'Peacemakers honour diversity' and 'Different cultures, but good friends'.

While the 'Values' lessons aim to generate in the pupils a sense of self and an awareness of their own personal journey, the spiritual development of the students could be further enhanced by the eventual introduction of creative and performing arts in the curriculum such as music, dance, drama and art in KS4.

Students' behaviour and sense of responsibility are very good in lessons and around the school. Students of all ages are polite, helpful and confident to speak and give their opinion to peers and adults alike.

The school has a clear anti-bullying policy which, according to students, staff and parents, is well implemented with the result that issues or conflict are quickly reconciled. Young students spoke eagerly about their feeling of well-being at the school. Lesson observations revealed excellent relationships between teachers and their students, particularly in the older classes.

A student council has recently been created. Its elected representatives appreciate this opportunity to influence discussion and decision making in the school. The older student representatives believe that the school leadership and management team listen to their concerns, however, they are frustrated with the pace of change. They very much appreciate the school's efforts to promote the British values of democracy, tolerance and cultural pluralism and cite these as reasons for their attachment to the school. Examples of student independence include a survey they initiated on iGCSE options and strong requests for the creation of a multi-purpose science laboratory. The student council is currently campaigning to start the tradition of a 'school prom'.

The teaching of English literature and history opens the window on British culture and institutions. Arabic, compulsory for all students, makes the connection with Tunisian culture and traditions, while French, which is also compulsory to the end of KS4 offers cultural connections to France, modern Tunisian history and other francophone countries in north and west Africa. Students voiced their appreciation of the diversity of the school population, building understanding, tolerance and understanding of other cultures.

Since the opening of the school in 2018, which was followed in 2019/20 by the onset of the Covid pandemic and restrictions, the wider curriculum has been unable to grow and flourish. There are now plans to develop the wider curriculum and extra-curricular enrichment programme with local community partner providers. Students speak excitedly about recent trips to an airshow and participation in a residential 'peace camp'. A future school trip to London is being planned. The school would benefit from developing closer direct links and partnerships with the UK to strengthen the British nature of the school and celebrate more British cultural events.

Older students participate in local schemes to support the local community such as the collection of warm clothes to support needy members of the local community in winter.

Careers guidance and advice regarding options for KS4 and 5 have been on-line in the last years because of Covid restrictions. However, the school has an intensive programme of one-to-one guidance for A Level students, helping them to choose courses and universities, and assisting them with their applications.

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

The provision for welfare, health and safety meets the standard for BSO.

Safeguarding checks for all staff are in place and a single central register is maintained of all staff, past and present. The school is currently formalising arrangements for a fully trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to coordinate all the safeguarding activities in the school, including safer recruitment and annual safeguarding refresher training for all staff.

A core counselling team, consisting of the teachers and leaders responsible for the 'Values' curriculum, is available to students. They are very much trusted by the students who describe enjoying coming to school and feeling safe within its environs. A robust approach is taken to any issues of bullying reported; these are infrequent and dealt with efficiently.

Key policies are in place supporting all practices related to health and safety, which are reviewed regularly. Whilst access to the school is well controlled through a single supervised entry and exit point, the introduction of an identity badge system linked directly to the school management system would further enhance school security. Visitors are currently issued with identity badges. Fire safety drills are held regularly; the school should now consider introducing lock-down routines and drills at the earliest opportunity. There is a risk-assessment policy in place. Its implementation will be more effective when the school completes risk-assessment training for all staff to understand the importance of managing and reducing risk in and out of school.

Chemicals in the science laboratory are securely stored at all times; whilst adequate now, this storage and the disposal of chemicals, will need to be reinforced when more hazardous substances are added. The school would benefit from an inventory logging all hazardous substances in the school.

Medical records for the students are thorough and essential medical information is passed on to teaching staff and school trip leaders. Students receive vaccinations and medical check-ups from local authority school doctors and nurses. Two administrative staff are fully trained as qualified first aiders, as too is the physical education (PE) teacher. There are several first aid kits in school and one is always provided for school trips.

The off-site sports facilities are well-supervised and students remain under the safe direct supervision of school staff, however, great care has to be taken on the short walk across two busy roads from and back to the school.

The school buildings and grounds are well maintained, and kept clean to a very high standard. Procedures around reporting and recording maintenance issues are in place. A number of minor health and safety issues were discussed with the principal and will be rectified shortly.



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

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

The school recruits teachers through a variety of means, including advertising, outreach on social media and a recruitment day. The majority of teachers are Tunisian nationals, in line with Tunisian labour law, however, some teachers are recruited internationally, mainly through personal recommendation. A significant number of teachers work part-time in the school, often with other commitments elsewhere. The school is keen to recruit and retain more full-time teachers, to build greater consistency in the teaching body, and hence in teaching practices, as part of its improvement plan. Interviews are conducted and background checks carried out, including qualifications, professional references, medical checks, police clearance and the right to work in Tunisia, where applicable, to ensure staff are suitable to work with children. The owners, administration and ancillary staff also undergo background checks. The school maintains a central register of all current and past staff and proprietors; this was made available to the inspection team.

At the start of the year, all teachers receive a training programme, which outlines the school's ethos and key policies. A staff handbook outlines the vision and aims of the school, and provides detailed information regarding responsibilities, expectations and the school's code of conduct. Training on safeguarding has been delivered and there are plans to develop this area further. Job descriptions are available for some key roles, the school is currently working on creating job descriptions for all employees.

Lesson observations are conducted on a regular basis, which allow senior leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A programme of professional development is in place, which focuses on school priorities and the development of teaching and learning; this is linked to needs identified through observations. An external specialist has been recruited to support lesson observations and lead regular training sessions.

The owners provide strategic direction for the school, with an ambitious programme of development. A recently formed governing body, which comprises a balance of education and financial expertise, will guide school developments further.

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

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

The school premises are small and rented. Classroom space is mostly adequate. The rooms are well lit and ventilated. All are equipped with air-conditioning and a projector. There is a specialist science laboratory and a room dedicated as a small library. PE is conducted off-site due to a lack of appropriate accommodation on campus.

Although limited, the accommodation is adequate for the school at this time and the curriculum it aims to deliver. Since its inception, the school has produced good academic results in these premises. There are now firm plans in place to move to new, purpose-built accommodation in the near future.

Classrooms provide a clean and comfortable environment for learning. They could be further enhanced with displays which would support teaching, develop students' self-reliance, and track and celebrate learning.

Play areas are safe and well supervised. The school maintains an exceptionally high quality of hygiene and cleanliness with a cleaner employed all day, every day to ensure these exemplary standards. There are sufficient toilets for female and male students as well as adequate toilets for staff. Students would benefit from easier access to filtered drinking water.

Certificates are available to demonstrate that the school meets all the local standards for fire, electricity, water and structural safety. Fire extinguishers are situated on every floor and regularly checked. The perimeter security is generally very good.

## 9. *Standard 6* The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, carers and others meets the standard for BSO. Parents comment that they are very satisfied with the information and method of communications they receive from the school.

The school's website provides information in English and French, on many aspects of school life. This includes details of the British education system, approaches to teaching and learning and the curriculum at all key stages, providing helpful background information to a largely Tunisian population. Contact details for the school's leaders, proprietors and the admissions team are readily available, along with key school policies. The school is aware of the need to keep the website as up to date as possible.

The school uses 'Edupage' as a school management system and key means of communication with parents. Parents report that this is convenient, particularly as it includes a mobile application. Notices and general information are sent to all parents, in English and French, while messages specific to their child can be securely sent to individual parents. Parents are able to contact class teachers through Edupage as necessary with any queries or concerns. Homework is also set through Edupage, and detailed information regarding the curriculum can be accessed there.

The principal, senior leaders and teachers are available to speak to parents informally as and when the need arises. Parents report that communications of this manner help to quickly resolve any questions or concerns they may have.

Parents receive written reports on their child's academic progress, following end of term assessments three times per year. These include a mark, grade and written comment on their child's progress and attitudes to learning. Directly following receipt of the reports, parents are invited to attend a parent teacher meeting, where they are able to discuss their child's progress in greater detail. Students are also encouraged to attend these meetings. Interpreters are available to help parents who are not fluent English speakers.

A parent handbook provides helpful information at the start of the school year. This contains information on the school's vision and values, curriculum, rules, health guidelines and daily routines. A home school agreement establishes the rights of the family and of the school, which parents are expected to sign.

In the past, parents' opinions have been sought with surveys, when the school identifies a need for specific feedback. There is as yet no parents' association, however, plans to create one are in formative stage. Parents report that in the past there were social events which helped create a sense of community; they hope these may be reinstated soon.

## 10. Standard 7

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

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

A clear policy is in place, which outlines the complaints procedure, including time frames and recourse to appeal.

The school aims to resolve any issues in an efficient and informal manner, through direct conversation between parents, students and teachers, and subsequently the principal, if necessary. If this is unsuccessful, the complainant may raise the matter formally, in writing, with the board of management, comprising the school's proprietors. The board acknowledges the complaint and appoints two authorised representatives to deal with the case.

A copy of the written complaint is given to the member of staff concerned and a meeting arranged to discuss the issue. The member of staff concerned may be accompanied to the meeting should s/he wish. The meeting will take place within 10 days of receipt of the complaint. A written decision is then shared with all parties.

Should the complainant wish to pursue the matter further, they would be invited to attend a meeting with the panel, and may choose to be accompanied by a friend, if so desired. The panel will make a final decision and convey this to both parties within five days of the decision being taken.

Any subsequent disciplinary action taken against the member of staff, in the case of the complaint being upheld, will be overseen by members of the board who were not directly involved in the investigation.

The school maintains a record of complaints raised by parents. There are no evident common themes in complaints made. Any complaints raised to date have reached a satisfactory conclusion before being taken to a panel.

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

The leadership and management of the school meet the standard for BSO. Leaders provide guidance and support to staff, students and parents, and set the moral tone of the school.

The owners, including the principal, had a clear vision for the school at its inception - "Inspiring students through positive education". This vision, which is the foundation for the school's ethos and sets it apart from other schools in the area, has continued to provide clear direction for the school. The vision focuses on joy-based learning, where students' enjoyment of school is seen as central to a successful education. The vision is deeply embedded with leaders, owners and other stakeholders, who, if they cannot quote it exactly, speak with feeling about the embodiment of the vision in all aspects of school life.

Senior leaders are aware of the key strengths and areas of development for the school, and are focused on improvements, both strategically and in terms of raising standards further in teaching and learning. A programme of professional development is linked to needs identified through lesson observations; an external specialist has been appointed to lead on these areas. Workshops are delivered during the fortnightly staff meetings, on subjects such as creative lesson planning and classroom management. Policies and procedures are reviewed informally on teacher training days and in staff meetings, and reviewed formally by leaders on an annual basis.

Owing to the small size of the school, the leadership structure is still developing; the addition of core subject coordinators is a positive step towards distributed leadership. Senior leaders have a wide remit of responsibilities. There is as yet no specific training for middle leaders, however, they are given direct support in order to fulfil their roles and tackle any issues. Written job descriptions are in place for some roles, others are communicated verbally; written job descriptions for all post holders are currently being developed.

Relationships are strong between all stakeholders and morale is high. There is a team spirit and a sharp sense of togetherness. School leaders are highly visible and approachable. The small size of the school and openness of leadership encourage ease of communications and a feeling of 'family'. Parents and students appreciate the warmth and openness of the school.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis; the administration team is closely aligned to the teaching staff. Finances are carefully managed and the school is adequately resourced for the delivery of most aspects of the curriculum. The school is aware of the need to ensure all resources for the successful completion of A level examinations are in place.