



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

**Byron College
Athens
Greece**

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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, 39 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Mark Evans. The team members were Sue Croft and Colin Dyson.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Byron College meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Byron College is a good school with some excellent features. It provides a good quality of education and excellent care. It is highly inclusive. The quality of learning, teaching and leadership are good. The pupils, parents and staff are highly committed to the school, and to its unusual ethos which focusses on developing critical thinking. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths, which include:

- Teaching is good: there are many excellent lessons.
- There is an outstanding emphasis given to meeting pupils' individual social and personal needs: Byron College gives great emphasis to being inclusive, which means that pupils are confident and learn with enjoyment.
- Almost all pupils speak English confidently and competently, despite it being their second or third language.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent: they are outstanding ambassadors for the school.
- Academic standards are high: pupils consistently beat UK national averages in GCSEs and A levels, and many go on to study at the best universities in the world.
- The highly effective and efficient use of the accommodation results in the school offering a broad and balanced curriculum: this meets the needs of pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- The attention given to health, safety and keeping the pupils safe is excellent.
- The recently introduced distributed leadership structure, led strongly by the headteacher, ensures there is an increasing capacity for innovation and progress within the school.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure that provision at all levels and in all subjects is informed by best teaching practice from the UK and elsewhere, including in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in Greek;
- Refine the tracking and assessment procedures further, to maximise the impact they have on pupils' learning, including by seeking greater consistency in the quality of marking;
- Build further on the distributive leadership model currently in place to encourage even more innovation, and to secure firmly the school's future.

4. The context of the school

Byron College has been established since 1986, set up by a group of idealistic parents and teachers. They believed that there was a need for a school in Athens that would provide a British education that was egalitarian and inclusive, whilst still pursuing academic excellence and the highest standards of self-discipline, behaviour and community participation. The current proprietor, who took over in 1991, embraces this vision. He has offered both financial and governance stability. Sharing the ideals and open-mindedness of the school's British identity in its early stages, his personal commitment is seen as significant in strengthening and securing the school's future life in Athens. The number of pupils on roll is now close to 300, equally divided between primary and secondary. The pupils come from nearly 50 different national backgrounds, but about half are permanent residents of Greece.

The school provides for children from the age of 3; many stay until they leave to study at university, aged 18. It is located on a single site. Pupils from Nursery to Year 9 follow a curriculum that is based on the UK's English National Curriculum. In Year 10, pupils begin a 2-year cycle of study leading to IGCSE exams. Young people in Years 12 and 13 are prepared for university and college entrance through AS and A-Level GCE subjects, which is unusual in Athens.

Given the international nature of the pupil body, there is a strong emphasis on the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL). A wide range of modern language qualifications is offered, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Greek, Russian and Spanish. The syllabuses in history and geography in particular are designed both to reflect the international character of the pupils and support the aim of the school to produce citizens with an awareness of global challenges that modern society faces.

Part of the school's unique character is that children across a range of ages mix together for much of the day. They are often involved in joint activities: the school aims to ensure that senior pupils develop a sense of responsibility toward the younger ones, becoming community leaders and positive role models.

4.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of the school is evident. Staff and pupils regularly remind themselves of the importance of the school's namesake, an important figure in Greece, because he joined the Greek War of Independence fighting the Ottoman Empire: for this act, Greeks revere him as a national hero. He died from a fever contracted while in Messolonghi in Western Greece. Last year they worked with the British Ambassador to celebrate Byron's birthday, including walking to the statue representing Byron in the National Gardens.

The school seeks to adopt UK practices, and keeps up-to-date by monitoring developments from the Department for Education. They aim to ensure that the Britishness of Byron College is up-to-date, reflecting modern British society, but without losing the best parts of a more traditional British ideal, for example of excellent manners and behaviour.

The ethos, nature and appearance of the school are recognisably British, and mirror what would be found in the UK. The school has successfully blended its Britishness with an evident respect and awareness of the host country's cultural beliefs and norms. The National Curriculum of England has been adopted from Early Years to Year 9.

Classroom management, displays of work, three term year and age-related year groups contribute to a British feel of the school. The school has established pastoral systems akin to those used in UK independent schools.

Communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, as are all publications, report letters and home-school links. There is a school uniform that varies depending on the age and activity of the pupils. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips are developing in line with the best of British practice.

Pupils who wish to enter/re-enter the UK educational system are well provided for.

5. *Standard 1*

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at Byron College is good, and there are some aspects which are excellent. It meets the requirements of the BSO Framework fully.

5.1 Curriculum

There is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age, meeting local Greek regulations. The principal language of instruction is English. The school has a written curriculum policy which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. The policy is implemented effectively, enabling pupils to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The curriculum gives pupils experience in a wide range of areas of learning, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. There is a particularly wide range of modern languages taught, and for the size of school, the choice of subjects in Years 12 and 13 is also wide.

Byron College takes into account the types of curriculum and external examinations commonly used in schools in the UK. This enables pupils to enter, or re-enter the UK educational system at an appropriate level, if that is what they wish to do. Some aspects are not as up-to-date as others, for example practice in EYFS does not yet follow the latest guidance from the UK. Nevertheless, the subject matter is appropriate for the age and aptitudes of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Given the international nature of the pupil body, there is a strong emphasis on the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL). The syllabuses in history and geography in particular, are designed to reflect the international character of the pupils. The aim of the school is to produce citizens with an awareness of global challenges that modern society faces.

Formal external qualifications are obtained at the school through EdExcel London Examinations Board, OCR and the University of Cambridge International Examinations Board. Pupils are also entered for the exams conducted by ECDL (European Computer License), for Diplomas in French and Spanish, and those set by the Greek Ministry, Ellinomathia, as appropriate.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the standard required.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are excellent. Teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability. They increase their understanding well and develop their skills in the subjects that are taught. Teachers encourage pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort, to show interest in their work, and to think and learn for themselves. Byron College places particular emphasis on critical thinking, and this was reflected in many lessons seen.

Lessons are generally well planned and teaching methods are effective. Suitable activities are used and class time is managed properly. Teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs (including the needs of EAL learners) and prior attainments of the pupils. They mainly ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. Occasionally, lesson objectives as recorded on the planning are not fully met, but this is because teachers were reacting to the learning taking place in the actual lesson. They also demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter they teach. Teachers encourage pupils to behave responsibly: in some lesson, the emphasis pupils gave to listening to one another's points of views and ideas, was inspiring.

Classroom resources are of a good quality, quantity and range. They are mainly used effectively, but some of the younger pupils are not learning independence skills as quickly as they could.

There is a framework in place by which pupils' performance can be evaluated by reference to the school's aims, as provided to parents on the website and in the new prospectus. As children in EYFS nearly all arrive at school speaking languages other than English, the school has implemented some baseline assessment strategies, but these do not yet provide a full enough picture of the children's abilities. For older primary pupils, the school has introduced in the last year, a range of assessment strategies which enable them to be tracked more effectively: however this is at an early stage of development.

In the secondary years, teachers are developing the use of a range of tracking and monitoring systems to provide more accurate baseline data. The range of monitoring tools includes INSIGHT and Alis. Data from testing is compared to averages derived from externally accredited assessments. The information from these assessments is now being utilised to plan teaching, so that pupils can make maximum progress. There is a policy in place to guide the assessment of pupils' work in class regularly and thoroughly, but the quality and functionality of the marking is sometimes inconsistent.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The school has small numbers of children in the EYFS classes, and they nearly all arrive at school speaking a language/s other than English. Throughout the Foundation Stage, pupils make sound progress in learning to speak English although their achievements are still below the UK average at the start of Year 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, almost all meet expectations. Standards of social and personal development are good: pupils are respectful of each other and their teachers, and enjoy learning.

Pupils in the primary years continue to make progress. By the end of Key Stage 1, SATs assessment data indicates the majority of children are meeting UK national expectations: 81% of pupils are achieving in line with National Curriculum expectations in English, 76% in mathematics with 40% achieving at the higher levels. The school has started to introduce a range of assessment strategies to enable pupils to be more effectively tracked; however data is not available to track progress historically.

Test results at the end of Year 6 show pupils continue to make progress through the primary years. 80% achieved UK national expectations in 2014 in English, with 26% achieving the higher Level 5. In mathematics, 60% achieved expected levels in-line with the UK and 40% achieve the higher levels. Pupils continue to make good progress across the secondary years. Teachers are developing the use of a range of tracking and monitoring systems to provide more accurate baseline data. The monitoring tool includes PIPs, InCAS, INSIGHT and Alis: data collected over a three year period highlight improved pupil performance and high levels of achievement in A Levels.

Exam results from IGCSE for 2014 show that nearly 78% of Byron College pupils achieved an A – C grade, significantly above UK national levels and 10% achieved A – A*. A significant achievement was that over 80% of pupils achieve an A – C grade in English. This result highlights that many of the pupils who have been ‘long attenders’ at the college are amongst the school’s highest achievers.

A-Level examinations results highlight the positive achievements of the oldest pupils. In Byron College in the 2014 results, 42% of pupils achieved an A or A*, and 100% achieved A–E, well above what would be expected in the UK.

The school is very successful in helping pupils to develop their personal skills and qualities: pupils are thoughtful and well behaved. Pupils are highly motivated learners: as a result, by the time they leave school, they have the personal and social skills needed to move successfully to the next stage of their lives. The good use of accommodation and facilities make a strong contribution to pupils’ achievements and to their friendly positive attitudes, especially when it entails age groups mixing together, such as at playtime.

6. Standard 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils at Byron College is outstanding and is a key strength of the school.

The school enables pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence: spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are trusted by teachers and by one another: the shared playtime and playground is unusual for an all-through school, but at Byron it works very well, enhancing the feeling of togetherness and respect that pupils report feeling. Moral development is also excellent: the school enables and encourages pupils to distinguish right from wrong, and to show respect for the law. This is achieved through discussion and rarely (if ever) through raised voices or punishment: measured, logical argument and discussion is the norm. This is very effective in ensuring that pupils behave responsibly, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life, especially within school. It provides pupils with an excellent general knowledge of the responsibilities and history of citizenship in Greece, in the UK and internationally. It also promotes general knowledge and understanding of modern British life, including attitudes towards tolerance, democracy, respect for freedom of expression and other human rights. It is very effective at allowing expression of individual views, without creating conflict.

Cultural development is outstanding: Byron is a very inclusive school which helps pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. Pupils tend to greet the staff in the morning, with a cheery 'good morning' which elicits a similar response. The school is particularly proud of the manner in which it promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions and between different ages: pupils seen in the younger classes for example, did not differentiate amongst individuals with special needs and others in the classroom, holding hands, being partners and accepting each child as they are. In the Nursery, one child turned to another child and said 'good job!' after her friend had completed some mathematics work.

During the visit, not one instance of unpleasant or nasty behaviour was seen between the children. Pupils understand that they are not to shout out, and instinctively put up their hands to answer questions: this maximises learning opportunities too, because the teachers can direct questions more easily, rather than dealing with a few more confident pupils. The younger classes have an unusual way of achieving this, by 'keeping special words in your mouth' whereby the pupils covered their mouths while putting their hand up.

The School Council gives pupils a voice in the school, but the focus is not as clear to the pupils as it should be. There was some confusion over the voting system across the different classes, and about how many times it met and who should exactly meet. Pupils were unsure as to which member of staff was the point of feedback after council meetings, and whether there has been any specific training for representatives – perhaps in part because elections happened only two weeks prior to the visit.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils through the school are excellent. The school has carefully evaluated the welfare, health and safety of pupils through a detailed self-evaluation. This process has enabled them to evaluate their effectiveness and identify any areas for development in ensuring the well-being of each pupil is of a high standard.

Byron College places a high priority on ensuring that the well-being of all pupils is at the heart of school policies and practices. It is a happy learning environment: pupils are articulate, confident and kind to each other. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils feel safe and valued as individuals. Parents identify the safe and caring environment as a significant strength of the school.

The school site is kept immaculately clean throughout the day. An extensive refurbishment programme has been undertaken to improve facilities. The school complies with Greek regulatory requirements in all aspects of health and safety.

Fire drills and earthquake drills are conducted three times a year, and evacuation procedures are evident in all rooms. Transport safety is given an appropriately high priority as well as internet safety and well-being procedures. Admission and attendance registers are well maintained. Daily attendance is recorded and tracking of any daily absence is rigorous. Pupil's medical needs are well supported; the school nurse provides on-site care, support and liaises closely with parents on any medical issues.

Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy life styles with plenty of opportunities for active play and sports. Form teachers provide guidance and a Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship (PSHCE) programme supports each pupil's development.

The teaching assistants and administrative staff contribute to the safety of pupils by ensuring security procedures are followed. Every attention is given to ensuring the premises are secure and that any potential concerns are addressed immediately.

The dedicated Special Needs team is an asset to the school. They provide a valued service in helping to support a number of pupils with special educational needs. Assessment strategies are effective: the support provided is helpful and highly valued by pupils and parents alike.

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

The suitability of the owners of the school and of the staff appointed to work there is excellent. The proprietors are fully mindful of the requirements for safer recruitment.

Foreign schools need a special license in Greece: Byron College received its licence in 1986 after a request from the British Embassy. Greek law does not require a school proprietor to be an education specialist. All members of the proprietorial body are also shareholders of both the school's UK and Greek companies and therefore the police checks described below apply to them equally. The law does require that the head of a school is a qualified teacher with relevant years of experience: in the case of the headteacher at Byron, he qualified and taught in the UK.

In order to obtain the license to work from the Ministry, all staff must offer for scrutiny their passport or ID, educational qualifications, teaching qualifications, criminal record information and health check to the local authority. Foreign nationals must obtain certification from the cultural attaché of the relevant embassy that they are qualified to teach a particular subject to a particular age group. The canteen manager is required (and holds) a valid health book certifying that she is capable of, and suitable for working with food. She has to undergo rigorous medical tests and is required to have a separate certification for this. All other members of staff are required to hand in proof of identify, a curriculum vitae, and at least two references before their employment is confirmed by the school. Reference letters are obtained from at least two sources.

All staff members are required to bring a criminal record whether from Greece (if already resident), or CRB record from the UK or country of origin. All supply staff are initially interviewed by the Head of School and are required to provide the same documentation as a regular teacher at Byron. Moreover, they are required to undergo the Educare training as well; compulsory modules are: First Aid, Child Protection and Child Exploitation.

The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure that staff employed are UK qualified and/or trained or have at least worked in a British curriculum school in the UK or abroad. Of the 35 teachers, 60% hold UK qualifications. All teachers are employed in the year groups for which they received training.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The accommodation, staffing levels and resources at Byron College are good.

The campus comprises of a main classroom and administration block with good use made of open areas to meet a wide range of sporting and play activities. Extensive renovation this year has enabled the school to provide a good range of extra facilities. External shaded areas have been developed and curriculum delivery enhanced by a redesigned ICT facility.

Space has been used creatively to maximise the number and range of teaching areas. For example the outdoor learning areas for the EYFS, provides a highly stimulation learning area, which is very well resourced and maintained, as is the sports area which supports the delivery of the physical education (PE) curriculum.

The teaching areas are well-resourced with interactive whiteboards in most classrooms. The furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for the age and needs of all pupils registered at the school, including those with special needs. Specialist teaching areas including those for science, library, drama, ICT and PE are well equipped. There are sufficient areas for shade during non-contact time and sufficient bathrooms. There is no common room for Year 12 and 13 pupils, to support their independent studies, so many use the library instead.

The facilities manager along with her team ensures that regular site walks and health and safety checks are carried out. Staff contact the facilities team with any concerns regarding health and safety. This ensures that all members of the school are involved in looking after the school grounds. The local regulatory authority conducts frequent inspections to ensure the school complies with all requirements for an educational establishment. The school successfully meets all Greek requirements regarding the safety and maintenance of the facilities.

There are security stations at the main access point and the school is surrounded by secure boundary walls. The security staff monitor the main entrance and ensure all visitors are checked and issued with the appropriate security badge. The leadership team and staff monitor at the start and the end of the day. Health and safety provision is good, all members of staff are First Aid trained, which means that each time pupils are out of school, they can be accompanied by a trained First-aider. The school is well-staffed and resourced to deliver the curriculum offered. Qualifications, subject-specialisms, background and health checks meet local requirements and regulations.

There is no reason to believe that the water supply does not meet local regulatory requirements. Drainage is appropriate for hygienic purposes, for the disposal of waste water and occasional surface water – when it does rain, any excess water is quickly dealt with.

There are excellent facilities for pupils who are, or become, ill. Sound insulation, air conditioning units and acoustics allow for effective teaching and communication.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is excellent. The school mission and aims are stated on the website and all other required information posted there too. A new prospectus gives the information in another format. Many parents related that they chose the school especially for its English system of education, not for its exam results: but the results and subsequent university placements were commended. Parents interviewed reported that they were happy with the education provided for their children and the information about it. They did not feel it had to be supplemented. They suggested that the school is very approachable and that the staff have a good understanding of their children's needs. Support for children and parents alike was felt to be good. For example, a parent with a child with challenging educational issues, said he had settled quickly, was happy and achieving well. Another felt that they were well supported by the school when their child had started, both for the child, and for them as parents. They reported that the introduction of the homework diary was a good development and that homework set, and time taken to complete it, was acceptable.

Parents reported that the school was like a family, embracing, welcoming and inclusive. The headmaster interacts with parents on an informal level at the start and end of the day, and appointments with individual teachers can be made by contacting the office. Parents felt that senior leaders and staff invite feedback, and parents are happy with the way they are dealt with by staff.

Appropriate contact details are provided for parents and other stakeholders, including the e-mail contact details of the school board and the senior leaders. The website and other parent publicity material clearly outline the school's philosophy and mission. Policies for admissions, discipline and exclusions are readily available for parents and others. The school also makes it abundantly clear that it teaches the English National Curriculum. Some academic results are not on the website, because of small numbers of pupils enrolled in the exam. There are many photographs that give a clear picture of events, trips and activities that have happened: they give parents and prospective parents a good idea of the day-to-day happenings at the school.

The website and prospectus provide details of educational provision for pupils with additional learning needs. It also includes reference to key policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and the sanctions the school adopts in the event of pupils misbehaving. The complaints procedure is outlined along with details of the staff employed by the school.

Byron College reports regularly on the progress made by pupils. Internal assessments and examination marks are reported at least every term. A full report is also issued at the end of each academic year. Grades achieved by pupils are readily available at any time, if requested.

Engagement with the local community is at an early stage at the moment, although outside teachers are brought in for extracurricular activities. Annually, pupils and staff support local

charity events, and there is participation in local tree-planting projects. It has done excellent work with overseas British schools, for example with a school in Transylvania. Direct links with more local schools are again at a developmental stage, but one of the assistant heads is in discussion with another local deputy head regarding matters of mutual interest, for example. The school participates in joint activities with other international schools, for example the Shankar art competition, Model United Nations activity and the Pan-Hellenic Forensics Competition.

The school has a thriving PTA, which, along with the school council and others, organise coffee mornings, second-hand book sales, bake days, and Bonfire night entertainment. The school also organises a summer school which includes children from other schools, and the local community.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

Complaints are very rare. The school nevertheless has a clear policy and procedures in place which reflect good practice from the UK. Parents are informed of the process through the website and the prospectus. This information is regularly updated, as required. Appropriate written records of any complaints are maintained and confidentiality assured.

The handling of complaints mirrors the management structure of the school. The class or subject teacher consulted first, but if an issue is not resolved, it can be raised with the subject, year and senior leaders. All parents have easy access to class teachers and senior leaders at the start and end of the school day. In discussion with inspectors, parents stated they felt confident about raising concerns, should they have any.

12. Standard 8

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

13. Standard 9

Leadership and management of the school

The effectiveness of leadership and management by the proprietor, head of school, senior managers and others with delegated responsibilities is good. The board and headteacher provide excellent clear educational direction, reflected in the quality of education, the care taken of pupils, and the obvious fulfilment of the school's planned ethos. There is a very positive relationship between the headteacher, senior staff and the board.

There have been many developments at Byron College in the last few years, building on the strong foundation left by the previous leadership. These changes have been achieved without losing sight of the ethos of the school which has characterised it throughout its existence. The establishment of a clear vision and mission through a year-long process of consultation, the development and implementation of a 5-year strategic plan and the reorganisation of the school to introduce a distributed leadership model are three examples of these changes. Perhaps the most significant change introduced by head of school is the 'one-school' policy, which allows for continuity, more consistency and smoother transition across the key stages. There has also been significant development and implementation of policies and procedures, and a professional development programme introduced for all staff. Not all policies are fully embedded as yet. Premises and facilities in the school have been upgraded to support the learning of pupils.

The board is successful in securing, supporting and developing sufficient high quality staff and ensures their suitability to work with children rigorously. They provide appropriate policies and procedures, will review them regularly for effectiveness, and ensure a sufficiency of resources through careful financial control. Management at all levels is beginning to be successful in identifying appropriate priorities for improvement and planning to meet those priorities. The quality of self-evaluation followed by school improvement is developing: this leads to growth in the school across a wide range of aspects. The monitoring of those decisions and actions by the board and the head of school is good. There are increasingly sound opportunities for professional development reviews.