



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

**Inspection report**

**Renaissance  
International School**

**Ho Chi Minh City  
Vietnam**

**Date** 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016  
**Inspection number** 20161109

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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 students; 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 and care for students and students' 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, 52 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management teams, a range of teachers, parents and groups of students. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Mark Evans. The team members were Karen Hanratty and Shane O'Brien.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Renaissance International School meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Renaissance International School (RIS) is a good school with significant strengths.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths.

- The school has been making very good progress over the last few years, especially in Primary:
- The Early Years centre is excellent: the environment is lively, teaching outstanding and the pupils are well supported in their self-esteem, self-confidence and language acquisition.
- The school has strong relationships with parents: they value the information given about the attainment and progress made by their children.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a high priority for the school: the strong provision gives excellent results, through the hard work of the primary teacher and secondary tutors.
- The pupils have a good understanding of the learning objectives set in lessons, and of how well they are achieving.
- The cleanliness and day-to-day running of the school are excellent.
- Administrative and security support is of the highest quality.
- The take-up of extra-curricular activities (known as Curriculum Option Lessons COLs) is very high indeed – over 98%.
- High quality support is available from the Personal Learning Centre (PLC) for pupils in need of extra support.
- The excellent support especially in Primary, for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) enables fast access to all subjects, even for those who do not enter the school able to speak the language.
- The results of externally moderated examinations such as IB and iGCSE are excellent, exceeding world averages in many subjects.
- The vision of the board and the focussed determination of the head of school and his team are exemplary – the school is quickly becoming one of the best schools in the country.
- The stability and sheer hard work provided by the head of school, deputy and senior management team suggest a significant capacity to improve even more.
- Safeguarding procedures are strong and thorough.
- Teaching is good across the school - the majority of lessons were good and some were outstanding.
- The school provides a good range of facilities that are well able to meet pupils' needs.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is as good as the best, including by encouraging:
  - more energy and creativity
  - greater diversity in teaching techniques, especially in Secondary
  - more enquiry-based learning
  - greater emphasis on independence
  - brisker pace of delivery
  - more consistent use of IT to support learning
- Ensure that effective use of assessment informs more consistently the short and medium term planning process and further raises standards.
- Encourage and support middle leaders in the monitoring of current development projects, seeking excellence in all things, for example in addressing any inconsistencies in marking, evaluation and tracking of progress.

## 4. The context of the school

Full name of school/college	Renaissance International School Saigon				
Address	74 Nguyen Thi Thap Street, Binh Thuan Ward, District 7, HCMC, Viet Nam				
Telephone number	+84 8 3773 3171				
Fax number	+84 8 3773 3176				
Website	www.renaissance.edu.vn				
Email address	info@renaissance.edu.vn				
Head	Mr David Cole				
Chairman of Board of Governors	Mr Tuyen Nguyen				
Age range	2 – 18 years old				
Total number of pupils	472	<i>Boys</i>	246	<i>Girls</i>	226
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	21	<i>12-16 years</i>	172	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	87	<i>17-18 years</i>	29	
	<i>6-11 years</i>	163	<i>18+ years</i>	0	
Total number of part-time children	3				

Renaissance International School Saigon was founded in 2007 and is situated in an urban area, on the edge of the Phu My Hung Development District (Q7) approximately 20 minutes from the centre of HCMC. The population within the immediate catchment area is predominantly Vietnamese and Korean: the school population is 50% Vietnamese and 35% Korean. For over 90% of children English is not their first language. Many are bilingual or trilingual.

Many parents put particular emphasis on academic achievement, sometimes at the expense of their children developing wider life-skills and accessing a balanced curriculum. The school has noted attendance issues for some pupils (particularly those from the Korean community) who attend after-school academies, often for many hours at a time, leading to stress in terms of time and commitment to the school's programme of learning.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

In addition to its international nature, the British flavour of the school is evident.

The school aims to provide an education that has similar characteristics to an education in an independent school in the UK. Teaching and learning is driven by the English National Curriculum. Developments in the UK are monitored and best practice adopted.

A parental survey in 2016 showed that 84% of parents agreed that 'The British character of the school is embodied in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, and care for pupils and their achievements'. 40% of teachers are British trained or experienced. There is a comprehensive induction programme for those new to the National Curriculum for England, overseen by the whole-school induction leader. As part of the school appraisal process, staff must meet and maintain (as a minimum) the school teacher's standards which exactly mirror those of the UK. The school measures its pupils' performance against UK and internationally recognised levels.

The school maintains good links with the UK community in Vietnam. It is a member of the British Chamber of Commerce (BBGV) and actively support BBGV events.

The head of school attends events hosted by the UK community e.g. the Queen's birthday celebrations. The school year also incorporates celebrations or commemorations which have particular significance in the UK e.g. Remembrance Sunday.

Every year, the school actively promote visits by colleges and universities from the UK.

The school maintains and promotes organisations which are associated with the UK as part of its curriculum delivery e.g. ASDAN, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Cambridge, Kerboodle, BBC and Northern Association of Support Service for Equality and Achievement (NASSEA).

As a global member of Round Square network, the school has links with 'sister' schools in the UK, including making links via pupils' email exchanges. For example, the year 7 pupils are working on writing for a real audience, by writing letters to year 6 pupils at Dovecote Primary School in Nottingham, England. The pupils share aspects of education and culture to develop their knowledge of another country.

'Pupil voice' is developed within the school, based upon class councils, primary parliament and secondary parliament. Pupils are voted into office (after an election campaign) by their peers to stand as members of parliament. As part of the election process pupils learn about democracy in the UK and have made comparisons to democratic systems elsewhere. The school mirrors UK schools with its appointment of a head boy and girl (in Early Years, Primary and Secondary).

For the last three years, the IB Graduation ceremony and dinner has been attended by the British Consulate-General. Each year the school invites Performance Exchange, a theatre company from the UK to perform at school and invites other international schools to attend. Recent productions have included: 'Dracula', 'Of Mice and Men', 'The Gentlest Giant' and 'The Elephant Man'.

## 5. *Standard 1*

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by RIS is good. It meets the requirements of the BSO Framework fully.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum of the school is good. There is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age based on the national curriculum for England for Key Stages 1 - 3, supported by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) in Primary. Early years classes follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) programme. IGCSE and IB diploma and certificate courses are taught in Key Stages 4 and 5. The language of instruction is English: local requirements for Vietnamese language and culture are also met in full.

The school has a clear learning and teaching policy as well as supporting curriculum policies and detailed schemes of work. Team planning is a strength in Primary and planning formats are used consistently. Planned sequences of learning rather than individual lesson plans lend continuity to teaching and learning. Educational visits are well planned to support the curriculum and enhance learning, being referenced on long term plans.

In EYFS, a student-led enquiry based approach with timely intervention from staff provides a sound base for the acquisition of early skills in all areas of development. Independence skills and self-esteem are fostered through the judicious use of praise and encouragement. A similar approach to the curriculum and personal development is applied in year 1 to help ease transitions and recognise children's stages of maturity.

The curriculum in Secondary is broad, offering a good range of subject options particularly bearing in mind the small size of the school, operating with limited resources. A dedicated and experienced university counsellor is in place who advises on pathways from year 10 upwards and assists with global University applications.

The formal curriculum is augmented by an extensive extra-curricular programme (COLs) which allows children the opportunity to explore their physical, creative, social or political domains. COLs take place on four afternoons each week and are popular amongst students; whilst this is an optional programme, the take up rate is excellent at 98%.

EAL is provided on a withdrawal and in-class support basis until pupils attain a satisfactory level of English, sufficient to enable them to access the curriculum. In addition, pupils with specific learning difficulties receive support from the PLC. More

able and gifted and talented children are given opportunities to excel through curriculum enhancement and the COLs programme. The school aims to be as inclusive as possible given the resources available.

Whilst there is no formal PSHE curriculum, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school, being taught in intrinsic and extrinsic ways through modelling, displays, assemblies and the school's core values.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the standard required. Some teaching is excellent, whilst some lessons are dull and uninspiring.

Lessons are mainly well planned, suitable activities are used and class time is managed properly. Not all teachers use a suitable variety of teaching methods, although they do show a good understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, EAL and SEN needs and prior attainments of pupils. Most ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. Teachers do demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter they teach, and encourage pupils to behave responsibly.

In the best lessons, pupils are engaged in a range of practical, thought-provoking activities. For example, in a year 5 IPC lesson on reflective materials, pupils were making predictions and testing a self-selected range of classroom and everyday objects. They observed the direction in which light was reflected. The teacher used the opportunity to augment learning by including a spoon (concave/convex surface) in the resources available.

Similarly, in a year 4 lesson on the classification of animals, the teacher led a lively discussion about prior learning, and used the interactive whiteboard well. The pupils were excited about their learning and there was excellent use of positive reinforcement.

In early years, pupils are given a very wide range of opportunities to be independent, and thus they learn with real interest. Use of photographs and outstanding input from the teacher on extending the relevant vocabulary on 3D shapes, helped pupils make very strong progress.

In Secondary, the best lessons were challenging for all pupils, and engaged everyone in active learning. In a year 12 lesson on the theory of knowledge, the pupils were involved in lively discussions about the recent US presidential election. The teacher made excellent use of prior learning, for instance by underlining the difference between perception and reality. All the pupils were involved and challenged by the lesson.

In a few lessons, especially in Secondary, there was too little challenge. Although the pupils were well behaved, there was little real engagement in activities, and thus learning was more limited. In one year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were not clear about the purpose of the activities set, and did not work with pace or interest. They worked quietly but without enthusiasm. Use of electronic equipment and techniques to support learning and improve engagement was very limited in some lessons.

There is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. The information from this assessment is utilised to plan teaching by most teachers, so that pupils can make progress. A few teachers do not use the data well enough to challenge pupils sufficiently.

Best practice in primary classes demonstrated constructive marking with written feedback from teachers which was responded to by the pupils. This was not always evident in secondary pupils' work. Pupil self-assessment against success criteria is common practice in some classes and subjects, supported by teacher marking against the same criteria. Peer-assessment is also widely used with pupils discussing each other's work and where appropriate questioning each other's judgements.

The styles of teaching, learning and assessment equip pupils well with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter (or re-enter) the UK educational system at an appropriate level.

Classroom resources are of a good quality, quantity and range. They are mainly used effectively.

## 5.3 Standards achieved by students

### Achievement of students at the school

Overall, the academic standards achieved by the pupils are good, especially when bearing in mind that English is an additional language for nearly all.

Attainment in Primary is good. In the EYFS, most pupils make at least the progress expected for their age. In Key Stages 1 and 2 where the quality of teaching is good, the majority of pupils are meeting or exceeding teacher expectations in English and a large majority are exceeding teacher expectations in mathematics. Progress from their starting points is good overall. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in mathematics is above the UK average, whilst attainment in English is below.

Because there is a significant influx of new pupils in Secondary, many pupils begin at the school in Key Stages 3 and 4 with little English language. This presents a considerable challenge. EAL co-ordinators in both Primary and Secondary provide strategies and training for teachers to meet this challenge. The pupils make good progress to achieve the results that they do in external examinations in Secondary.

In 2016, 87% of results at IGCSE scored A\*-C. This is consistent, with 84% and 88% A\* - C grades in 2015 and 2014 respectively. This year, 34% of grades are A\* - A. These results are above the average for UK government schools.

IB Diploma results are high. A cohort of 25 pupils sat the Diploma in 2016, gaining an average score of 33.6 points. This is 2.6 points above the world average. This is coupled with a 95% pass rate. These are excellent outcomes, especially considering the relatively low entrance criteria of 5A\* - C at IGCSE. Pass rates were also very good at 100% in 2015 and 95% in 2014. RIS pupils have achieved 40 points or above consistently over the past three years including the maximum score of 45 in 2015. Leavers join prestigious universities throughout Asia, as well as universities in the USA, UK and Australia.

Trends suggest that EAL pupils who arrive at the school **during** Key Stages 3 and 4 do not fare as well at IGCSE as students who have been at Renaissance for five years or more. By Years 12 and 13, improved English language skills see pupils progressing very well. The school is focussed on developing English language skills.

Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. This is evident in both sections of the school. In Primary, pupils are self-motivated and the development of independent learning skills is to the fore. In Secondary, pupils are also self-motivated and able to work independently. Sometimes however, teacher expectations of the pupils are too low in terms of presentation and work. Attendance and punctuality are excellent in all parts of the school.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils is excellent: it is a strength of the school. The school has two SMSC coordinators, which raises the profile and importance of the aspect in the day-to-day running of the school.

Spiritual development is good. The school's values are embedded in all aspects of daily life. These are shared in assemblies and referred to routinely in class. There is a shared ethos: another strength of the school. Large scale signage around the school is a very obvious means by which SMSC are supported and promoted. Self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence are developed by pupils' involvement in activities focussed on the RIS achievement as a Global Round Square school. Learning to respect other people's feelings, values, beliefs and cultures is developed through assemblies, immersion weeks, values of the week and the RIS house system.

Moral development is excellent. Parents reported that British values have a high profile, being discussed in assemblies and visible throughout school. Pupils are respectful, as remarked on by many visitors to the school.

In the best lessons, teachers capitalised on opportunities to build children's self-esteem and confidence. For example, with careful questioning and probing in a year 4 maths lesson on fractions, the teacher was able to bring a child round to the correct answer after an initial wrong answer.

Social development is also excellent. Through values assemblies, the teaching of democracy and the need to have regard for the rules and law and order, the school enables pupils to distinguish from right and wrong. Through a wide range of COL activities, pupils contribute to community life within Vietnam, such as raising money for bicycles for a rural community. Pupils also support the Save the Rhino charity.

RIS develops the knowledge, skills and understanding of participation in decisions concerning school, and for older pupils, in society. There is a primary and a secondary parliament with representatives from every year of the school. Pupils are consulted about a range of matters and views collected by the individual primary or secondary parliament class representatives. The primary and secondary parliament class representatives also feed back to their classes.

Cultural development is excellent. The school celebrates a range of cultural and religious festivals, for example the Moon Festival, a significant cultural event in Vietnam. Renaissance also celebrates Tet and ensures that both pupils and staff have sufficient time with their families to celebrate this important festival together. Every year the school organises a Global Arts and Culture Week. The school librarian has a range of literature from a wide variety of cultures, including books written in Vietnamese and Korean.

## 7. Standard 3

### The welfare, health and safety of the students

The welfare, health and safety of students across the school are good, with some excellent aspects.

Pupils' attitudes towards one other are outstanding. RIS promotes a warm, friendly and respectful environment. Pupils are supported by a strong pastoral system. Good relationships between them and the teachers are very evident. Pupils speak glowingly about the level of support and care that teachers give.

Policies regarding anti-bullying and anti-discrimination are in place, as befits the positive atmosphere of the school, more focus is given to the Positive Behaviour Policy. It underpins the proactive approach promoting good behaviour and mutual respect. Any behavioural issues that do occur are dealt with in line with this policy. Any issues are normally resolved at the lowest level. There is no evidence of any bullying and ethnic groups co-exist harmoniously. There is a happy learning environment across all levels of the school.

A well-equipped health clinic is open during school hours manned by a qualified nurse. There is also a significant number of staff, both teaching and admin, who are first-aid trained.

A comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place. Checks on staff and record keeping are thorough and exceed BSO standards. Staff do not start working at the school unless all relevant checks and documentation are in place and notarised. Local hire (teaching and non-teaching) are subject to the same level of scrutiny. A notarised Permanent Resident Booklet must be produced which includes police check, health check, local ID and a family booklet. Systems are in place to respond to Safeguarding issues. These are managed by a newly appointed member of the teaching staff who acts as the designated child protection person. She is well supported by senior leadership and is receiving external training. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated.

RIS meets all local and national requirements for health and safety. The school's security is well managed by a director of operations, supported by a facilities supervisor. The site is secure. Visitors must sign in and wear visible identification. An exhaustive list of maintenance and health and safety checks are carried out either weekly or half termly.

Staff are deployed efficiently and effectively to carry out duties across the school. Designated adults supervise early arrival and late departure students. EYFS and Primary areas are generously staffed during breaks and lunchtimes. The secondary areas are also appropriately covered by duty teachers. Staff-to-pupil ratios are very good. This is a strength of the school.

The school operates a cafeteria with a very comprehensive range of healthy options that are popular with the students.

## 8. *Standard 4*

### The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding and welfare of students are clearly understood and effectively discharged. Business licences are granted by the local People Committee's Department of Planning and Investment. They check the investor's ID and history. They only award licences to those of 'Good Standing'.

A clear policy has been implemented to ensure staff appointment processes meet best practices regarding safe recruitment procedures. Board members have a clear understanding of their individual and collective responsibilities. The school carries out a series of thorough checks to ensure they meet the relevant criteria.

Identity for foreign staff is checked through passport verification and for local staff through ID permanent residence booklets. All foreign staff have to meet Vietnamese employment requirements which cover qualifications, medical fitness and a criminal record check. References are followed up and the school has recently redrafted its Recruitment Policy to ensure that they are even more rigorous, for example speaking directly to previous schools instead of accepting emails.

Screening of candidate applications to ensure they are suitable for the position is based upon meeting the job description, person specifications, experience, references and face-to-face (or Skype) interviews. All interviews are conducted with a minimum of two interviewers.

All offers of employment are subject to satisfactory references and checks. All foreign staff are required to provide a satisfactory police check from the previous country of residence/work as well as one from their home country. This is supported by HR contacting the previous employer to confirm there are no child protection or disciplinary issues. For Vietnamese staff, the check is made through the local authorities.

All staff, including those working at Summer school or as peripatetic teachers, have the same checks as permanent hires.

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

The premises and accommodation at RIS are good.

The buildings are designed specifically for purpose. They provide a safe, secure environment which accommodates the number of pupils and supports learning effectively. The school operates on a reasonably compact site, but with external corridors it does not feel crowded and allows for a comfortable flow of students. All areas of the school are easily accessible and navigation is straightforward, apart from one crossover point between the Primary and Secondary buildings, which requires pupils to be on a specific floor. The various sections of the school are accommodated sensibly so there is no invasion of space.

The design of the school allows for adequate outdoor playing spaces, most of which are shared by Primary and Secondary. Staggered break and lunchtimes allow the use of these spaces to be maximised.

Specialist facilities exist in both section of the school. The Primary building has its own ICT suite and also has a spacious and well stocked library which serves Secondary as well. There is a sensory room and a learner swimming/splash pool. Specialist facilities exist in Secondary for science, art, and design and technology. The 320 seat auditorium has the capacity to house the entire Secondary or Primary sections. Years 12 and 13 benefit from their own common rooms. Sporting facilities also include an impressive sports hall, indoor swimming pool and gym area. All sports facilities are well maintained, meet safety requirements and are well used.

Washrooms and toilet facilities are located on every floor and easily available for staff and students. There is no evidence that buildings, drainage systems and water supply standards do not conform to local regulatory and BSO standards.

All facilities are kept scrupulously clean, due to cleaning schedules supervised by the facilities supervisor. A very efficient director of operations oversees all management and maintenance of all facilities and buildings.

## 10. Standard 6

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

The provision of information to parents, carers and others is excellent.

The school goes to great lengths to ensure that it communicates as widely and as efficiently with parents as possible using a range of media including pupils' diaries, SMS, email and the parent portal. The content available on the school's website is extensive, containing all required key contact information together with curricular details, the school's vision and mission, staffing, admission arrangements, calendar, etc. Printed marketing materials available to prospective parents are also of a very high standard, together with a comprehensive and attractive year book celebrating the life of the school.

Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress. Across the school, parents receive a written report of their child's academic progress, effort and attainment three times a year, which also include targets for improvements and suggestions of how parents can support learning at home. These reports are followed up with a parent teacher meeting giving parents an opportunity to discuss the details of the report with teachers. Parents may also make an appointment to see a class teacher or member of the leadership team to discuss any matters of concern at any time. Workshops are held for parents of children in Primary covering a range of relevant topics relating to the curriculum and teaching and learning.

Parents are welcome to read school policies that may be of relevance. A list of the policies available on request for parents is published on the website, including those relating to behaviour, safeguarding, language and complaints procedures for parents and pupils. An overview of outcomes at IGCSE and IBDP is included on the website.

A focus group of parents spoke very positively about the clarity and ease of communication with the school, accessibility to staff at all levels and the expeditious handling of any issues or concerns.

## 11. Standard 7

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

RIS has a parental concerns and complaints resolution policy that is clear and transparent. Parents were given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the policy and the final draft of the document was shared with the PTA and made available before being ratified by the board of directors.

The school's admissions team make parents aware of the complaints procedure when pupils are admitted. Parents are reminded of the availability of the policy through the website and periodically through school publications such as *Renaissance Now*, the weekly newsletter. If parents need help completing the form, the school will provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint. Similarly, there is a pupils' concerns and complaints resolution policy, the development of which they actively contributed to, through their secondary parliament.

Both procedures set out clear timescales for the management of a complaint. One of the school's expressed aims is to 'allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress'. At the current time, no complaint has ever been taken beyond the first stage of informal resolution. Nevertheless, if a parent did feel that a complaint has not been addressed through informal discussion, they can escalate the issue, by asking the board to deal with it. The board have an independent nominated person to address the complaint if this is seen as more appropriate. Any parents attending a panel hearing would be invited to be accompanied and also bring a translator, if necessary.

If the complaint is addressed by the head of school, he responds to the complainant with the outcome of the process within 10 working days. If a complaint needs to be addressed by the board, they would meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the school. The board then would write to the complainant with its final conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting.

Written records are kept of all complaints indicating whether or not they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

## 12. Standard 8

### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

### 13. Standard 9 Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management are good.

There is a very effective working relationship based on mutual trust between the head of school and the board of directors with clear delegated responsibility being assigned accordingly. They have a shared and realistic understanding of the school's current strengths and areas for further development. Middle managers are empowered to work with their teams to secure improvements in both the quality of education and care of pupils. The board has placed an emphasis on creating stability within the leadership team which has helped to ensure continuity of purpose in securing school improvement. Many middle leaders have multiple areas of responsibility, necessary because of the size of the school.

A clear vision has been established and communicated effectively to all stakeholders. This is supported by a detailed school development plan which outlines improvement steps and key performance indicators. Progress towards this has been sound and supported by all levels of leadership. Curriculum/subject development plans are created by middle leaders within their teams which feed both from and into the school development plan. Performance management and continuous professional development are also clearly linked to school needs and aspirations. Clear policies are in place in all areas which meet BSO requirements. A sensible cycle of review has been established.

There have been many new developments in the last few years, and not all middle leaders are as confident in their review and evaluation roles as others. The embedding of improvement strategies is now a key area for focus. There is evidence of consistency of practice within the Early Years and Primary which is yet to be secured in Secondary. For example, a clear focus on the use of learning objectives and success criteria linked to pupils' self-assessment and teacher assessment were major features of most lessons in Primary.

Consistent and clear senior leadership ensures that the school runs smoothly at all levels on a day-to-day basis from the classroom to all areas of administration, catering and transport. Staff are clear about their functions and how to complete them, taking a pride in their role in school.

The recruitment and retention of suitably qualified, high quality staff has been an area of focus and significant strides have been made. A continued emphasis on the retention of key staff is helping embed progress made to date.