



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

## **Inspection report**

# **Seoul Foreign British School**

## **South Korea**

**Date** 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
**Inspection number** 20161012

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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 and 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, 54 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 Edward Pearce and Sheila Smith.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Seoul Foreign British School meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Seoul Foreign British School (SFBS) is a good school with some excellent features. It provides a good quality of education and excellent care. Provision in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) is excellent. The pupils, parents and staff are very supportive of the school, and its Christian ethos. 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 excellent lessons, especially in EYFS.
- Most pupils speak English confidently and competently, despite it being their second or third language – progress made in learning English is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent, in keeping with the school's ethos.
- Academic standards are high and pupils are well prepared for studying in the main school in year 10 onwards.
- Students with individual learning needs are well supported through specialised provision, which focusses well on what is needed to facilitate a fast and successful return to the normal class routine.
- The attention given to health, safety and keeping the pupils safe is excellent.
- The principal is a strong, astute and insightful leader, who has made important strides in ensuring there is increasing capacity to drive the school forwards towards even higher academic standards.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure that teaching at all levels and in all subjects matches the high quality of the best, including by
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons for all pupils
  - emphasising pace and rigour in teaching
  - making curriculum planning consistently effective
- Maximise the impact of tracking and assessment procedures on pupils' learning;
- Monitor the progress towards and the impact of the above recommendations, including by supporting even more creativity and innovation from the middle leadership team.

## 4. The context of the school

Full name of school/college	Seoul Foreign British School				
Address	39, Yeonhui-ro 22 gil Seodaemun-gu Seoul 03723 South Korea				
Telephone number	+82 2 330 3271				
Fax number	+82 2 332 9648				
Website	www.seoulforeign.org				
Email address	sfsoffice@seoulforeign.org				
Head	Dr Timothy Gray				
Chairman of Governors	Mr Michael DiStasio				
Age range	3-14 years				
Total number of pupils	289	<i>Boys</i>	123	<i>Girls</i>	166
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	-	<i>11-16 years</i>	124	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	16	<i>16-18 years</i>	-	
	<i>5-11 years</i>	149	<i>18+ years</i>	-	
Total number of part-time children	0				

SFBS is a school-within-a-school, being a section of a larger school, Seoul Foreign School (SFS). Pupils can start at SFBS at the age of 3 years and continue until the end of Key Stage 3, when they join the High School. SFS was founded by American missionaries in 1912, and consists of an Elementary School, Middle School and High School, as well as the British School. SFS is an institution 'centred in Christ' and most of the students are Christian.

However there is no religious requirement for entry. SFBS includes students from many other faiths, including Islam, Judaism and Hinduism.

The British School was founded in 1981, and established as part of Seoul Foreign School in 1993. SFBS is the oldest English curriculum school in Seoul, and the only international school to hold a registration number with the UK Department for Education (DfE) in Seoul.

The *Jaedan* is the legal holding foundation of the school. The SFS Council is composed of members, all of whom actively agree with and support the Christian nature of SFS as set out in the statement of its philosophy. Members are appointed by various Christian churches in Seoul, as defined by the SFS constitution. The PTA also appoints 3 members to the Council. Members are elected for two year terms.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

SFBS offers a British education, following the requirements of the English National Curriculum, but is itself part of a larger school. The other sections follow other curricula and have a different ethos: this serves to accentuate the special quality of the British school.

Strong preference is given to teachers who have experience in teaching the National Curriculum. The principal attends at least one recruitment fair in London annually. The majority of the staff currently working at SFBS were trained or have taught for a number of years in the UK, or in British schools overseas.

The school's values, as demonstrated in the motto, mission statement and 'Christ-like attitudes' overlap and support British values. The Christian values of justice, trust and responsibility plus the Christ-like Attitudes - which develop respect and compassion for others - are central to the ethos of SFBS.

British values are embedded in many areas at SFBS. The staff and pupils recognise they have a duty to challenge those who fail to live up to those values. The pupils are given the opportunity to practise the skills, while being sensitive to living in Korea. Democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and mutual respect are all held to be important aspects of SFBS.

SFBS pupils learn that they can influence decision-making through a democratic process. When in Key Stage 3, they have the opportunity to volunteer for roles within the student parliament. They give presentations on why they want to be a member of parliament and why they should be chosen to represent their peers. There is a vote for the head boy and head girl. Younger students have the opportunity to prepare speeches in order to be elected as house captains and student council representatives.

Mutual respect, good manners and politeness are actively emphasised and role-modelled. Students are encouraged to participate in service and charity events. The ethos of inclusivity is supported by staff and embodied in school life. Members of different faiths and cultures are welcome in the school and encouraged to share their beliefs and knowledge. SFBS is a member of FOBISIA, the regional association of British schools in Asia.

SFBS has about 40 different nationalities represented among its student body, with approximately one quarter of students from either the UK or the Commonwealth. The vast majority leave SFBS and transfer over to the High School. Currently, a small proportion of students in the HS go on to study at UK universities after completing their education at SFS, but information is provided to encourage students to consider all options. In addition, a steady number of students opt to continue their education at both private and state-funded schools in the United Kingdom, after leaving SFBS. Students who do 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 SFBS is good. Some aspects are excellent and it meets the requirements of the BSO Framework fully.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

There is full-time supervised education for students of compulsory school age, meeting host country and British regulations. The principal language of instruction is English. The school has a written curriculum policy which is a good description of what makes the British approach different; it is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work.

The school's curriculum provides the good framework for teaching, learning and assessment. In EYFS, it provides a stimulating and challenging curriculum, enabling the students to make significant progress against the early years goals. There are many opportunities that enable pupils to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. However, there are too many examples in other parts of the school where its implementation does not provide appropriate challenge for students.

The creative and physical development of the students are very much part of the holistic approach to learning. The curriculum gives pupils experience in a wide range of areas of learning, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Art, drama, design technology, physical education, swimming and music form significant parts of the students' day, as well as the core subjects of literacy, mathematics and science. Information technology is becoming more integrated into all areas of the curriculum.

The students are supported well in putting this learning into a physical and social context, so geography and history schemes of work have been adapted to reflect the international nature of students and their location in Korea. They are made aware of their place in the world, as the curriculum also includes Christian-based, comparative religious education, personal social and health education, citizenship and world languages, namely being French or Chinese in Key Stages 1 and 2, French or Chinese in Key Stage 2 and French/ Chinese/ Spanish/ Korean in Key Stage 3.

The SBFS curriculum takes into account external examinations commonly used in schools within the UK. This ensures pupils who need to enter, or re-enter the UK educational system can do so at an appropriate level, if that is what they wish to do. The subject matter is appropriate for the age and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are well supported.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory; much of the teaching is good and in EYFS, it is excellent.

The quality of teaching is good, but varies from satisfactory to excellent. It enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability. Sometimes students are not sufficiently challenged, however. Teachers encourage pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort, to show interest in their work, and to think and learn for themselves. They do increase their understanding, concentrate well and develop skills in the subjects that are taught, but some find the work set easy.

The classroom atmosphere is welcoming and conducive to learning. Resources are good: there are lots of books and students clearly love to read. Opportunities to promote and use resources from or referenced to the host country are under developed.

In the best lessons, students were self-motivated and very independent. They learned fast and guided their own studies. In one lesson in EYFS, activities included broken pieces of computers, sand and building bricks, logs and bark, bendy wires, plastic construction toys amongst others: the students were obviously used to exploring and researching, supported by the teacher as required. Often the teacher's enthusiasm was the vital ingredient that ignited learning, for example in a year 9 art lesson. The art room was well organised and students showed some independence of thought and action.

Most lessons were strong in terms of the quality of relationships between students and between students and the teacher. For example in a year 1 literacy lesson, students supported each other's learning in a natural and positive way. There was good focus on learning. Similarly in a year 8 geography lesson, students concentrated well on their long project – 3 double lessons. They talked knowledgeably about what they were doing, for example about the requirements for the home page, and what they wanted to emphasise in their descriptions of climate: but there was little sense of pace or rigour.

In less inspiring lessons, the students were well behaved but passive. Their learning was evident but it did not thrill them. The activities set were mundane and did not allow for individual differences or input. Often routines were well established, but did not lead to excitement in learning.

Assessment is satisfactory. There is an assessment policy specific to the SBFS which treats assessment holistically within the context of curriculum, teaching and learning. The policy also depicts a common approach to planning in which teachers align assessment to intended learning outcomes or objectives. Students are expected to be aware of these during the lesson and to plan for success criteria to the delivery of these assessment/learning tasks. There is peer and self-assessment in students' work.

In some lessons, teaching included assessment for learning strategies. Lesson objectives and success criteria specified learning in some classrooms. Students were generally able to explain what they were learning and why. In addition, there was evidence in some classes of ongoing formative assessment and instruction changes that allowed curriculum access for the less able students within the classroom.

However, the impact of much of the assessment practice is at an early stage of development. There were few examples of assessments effecting lesson plans or prompting differentiation by task.

## 5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Many students' attainment is outstanding.

SFBS has small classes in the EYFS classes. Many of the students start school speaking a language or languages other than English. Throughout the Foundation Stage, pupils make excellent progress against the Early Years goals and are well prepared for transition to Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, almost all meet age related expectations. Standards of social and personal development are good: pupils are respectful of each other and their teachers. They enjoy learning.

Students in the primary years continue to attain well. By the end of Key Stage 1, externally validated assessment data indicates the majority of students are meeting UK national expectations: 92% of students are achieving in line with national curriculum expectations in mathematics, with 41% achieving above average. In English, 97% are achieving in line with expectations, with 45% achieving above average or higher. The school has a range of assessment strategies to enable students to be more effectively tracked; however the school is in a transition period from National Curriculum levels. Currently, the assessment strategy does not support and inform planning sufficiently well to be sure of challenge for all students.

Test results at the end of Year 6 show students continue to make progress through the Primary years. 100% achieved UK national expectations in 2016 in English, with 49% achieving above average or higher. In mathematics, 97% achieved expected levels in line with the UK and 36% achieved higher levels.

Test results at the end of year 9 demonstrate that students continue to perform well in Key Stage 3 with 100% of students achieving UK national standards in mathematics in 2016; 53% achieve above average levels or even higher. In English 94% achieved expected levels in line with the UK and 56% achieved above average.

There is as yet, limited evidence from tracking of progress to be sure that students develop as well as they could do: the school is aware of this and is improving strategies to make more effective use of assessment data to ensure rigour and challenge for all students.

## 6. Standard 2

### The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent. The Christ-like attributes used in school form a clear moral compass that supports and encourages appropriate values and behaviour.

The school enables pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence: spiritual development is excellent. Throughout the school, the students increasingly acquire an understanding of the importance of rules, to protect individuals and to promote their well-being. There is a school code of behaviour displayed in each classroom which emphasises the positive, for example 'Be polite and friendly'. In Key Stages 1 and 2, each class develops its own class rules at the start of the year. Key Stage 3 students know the list of 'Expectations', which was devised by them a few years ago. It is widely displayed on the top floor of the British School. There is particular emphasis on the legal, ethical and responsible use of technology, for example through the 'Laptop Responsible Use Agreement'.

Moral development is excellent. The students understand the importance in having laws and rules: they know they are there to protect and influence behaviour. They also understand the consequences of breaking the rules.

While maintaining the importance of the school rules, SFBS also promotes individual liberty and moral duty: social development is excellent. Through subjects such as PSHE, RE and history, students are encouraged to be aware of their rights and duties from a legal and moral standpoint. They are given the opportunity to explore the language of feelings and responsibility. They also develop an awareness that everyone has rights and responsibilities, but they need to make safe and suitable choices. This is encouraged within lessons, for example by choosing ways (within guidelines set by the teacher) to present research finding. Students have elements of choice in the cafeteria, although this is within healthy boundaries for Key Stages 1 and 2. There is choice (in consultation with parents) which of the diverse range of extra-curricular activities students wish to join. Students suggest and set up their own clubs, which are organised and run by themselves, overseen by a member of staff, for example the Newspaper and the Drama clubs.

Cultural development is outstanding. Student choice of issue and method of research and presentation in year 9 geography guest speakers such as North Korean defectors help to raise awareness of the need for respecting human rights, in ways which cut across spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school runs a variety of field trips that are specifically linked to cultural elements of the curricula of each of the key stages. These include visits to Korean Palaces, Buddhist Temples, Namsangol Hanok Village and Taechon Beach. Celebration of Korean culture is part of the Korean Days and a Week Without Walls, both of which provide learning experiences that promote global citizenship. The after-school School Wide Educational Program (SWEP) offers British School students a way of further enriching the curriculum and the school community. The school is keen to embed service learning even more into the curriculum, such as the support they offer to Cambodia for teachers.

## 7. Standard 3

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

The school meets the standard for the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

There are sound policies that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. For example, there are policies relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school, and to promote good behaviour. The latter sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of misbehaviour. The anti-bullying policy supports students' safety.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. They are usually enthusiastic and fully engaged in lessons, concentrate and apply themselves fully to tasks set, work well together and volunteer ideas readily. Lessons proceed without disruption and pupils' consistently thoughtful behaviour helps to create a positive school ethos. School play areas are well supervised during break times, as per the school duty rota.

Fire drills are conducted each term and evacuation routes are clearly displayed in each room.

Transport safety is a high priority for the school: the arrival and dismissal procedures for those using the bus service reflect this. All buses are fitted with seatbelts and the use of these is strictly enforced. The school site is inspected regularly. Procedures are in place to ensure any health and safety issues are addressed promptly and staff are fully aware of these.

There is a medical facility available at SFBS to treat minor injuries and a health office for more serious concerns. A nurse, 2 emergency medical team personnel and a health administrator staff this.

An admission register and the attendance register are kept up-to-date, both of which conform to local regulatory requirements. Daily attendance is taken and records kept. Rates of attendance are excellent (average 98%) which was consistent during the inspection visit.

## 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 board at all levels are mindful of the requirements for safe recruitment.

Prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the host country, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references. Such information is taken into account in determining whether appointments are confirmed.

Appropriate checks on suitability to work with children, including a British enhanced criminal record check where applicable, made by the school in respect of all members of staff appointed to a position at the school before (or as soon as was practicable after) his/her appointment. This includes checks in the host country and in overseas countries where the person lived, obtaining certificates of good conduct from the relevant embassies or police forces. No member of staff or volunteer carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at school in contravention of local, overseas or British disqualification, prohibition or restriction.

The school has taken all reasonable steps, within the context of local South Korean requirements, to ensure that no person supplied by an employment business to the school begins work at the school, unless written confirmation is received that checks have been carried out in respect of the person's identity, right to work in the host country, qualifications, and suitability to work with children.

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

The British section of Seoul Foreign School has been in operation for 24 years. It is licensed, approved and registered with the South Korean Ministry of Education.

The maintenance staff are highly effective in their work and ensure that high standards are met, through regular site walks and health and safety checks. Staff register any concerns regarding health and safety on an online 'Helpdesk' system and all concerns are tracked through to completion. 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 Korean requirements regarding the safety and maintenance of the facilities.

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.

Sound insulation, air conditioning units and acoustics allow for effective teaching and communication.

There is a security station at the main access point and secure boundary walls surround the school. The security staff monitors the main entrance to ensure all visitors are checked and issued with the appropriate visitors badge.

There are excellent facilities for pupils who are, or become, ill. There is a medical facility within the British School to treat minor injuries, whilst there is a fully staffed health office on site staffed by a full time nurse, two Emergency Medical Team staff and a health administrator. Many staff have received First Aid training.

The teaching areas are resourced with interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. The furniture and fittings are mostly appropriate for the majority of age and needs of all pupils registered at the school and are replaced as part of a school wide rotation and maintenance programme. Students at the British school have access to the excellent range of facilities on site shared with the other three schools, including an indoor Olympic size swimming pool, 700-seat amphitheatre and specialist music facilities.



## 10. Standard 6

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

The quality of information provided by the school for parents, prospective parents, and other interested parties is good. Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with a booklet containing appropriate information, including the school's address and important contact details. There is a clear statement of the school's mission and ethos. The booklet contains statements summarising the school's approach to a number of areas including admissions, discipline and exclusions. Similarly, particulars are available of educational and welfare provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Particulars of the curriculum offered by the school and statements relating to bullying, child protection, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving are also contained in the booklet.

There are two scheduled parent/teacher conferences during the academic year. Short, formative reports are sent to parents prior to each of these meetings. At the end of the year, a narrative, summative report is sent home to parents. Teachers use the homework notebook or personal organiser to make parents aware of their child's progress. A weekly e-letter is sent to parents. The principal's coffee mornings are another opportunity for parents to communicate with the school. Parents spoken to felt confident in the direction the school was taking.

## 11. Standard 7

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

Complaints are very rare. The school nevertheless has a clear policy and a three stage 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 updated, as required. Appropriate written records of any complaints are maintained and confidentiality assured.

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.

If an issue does become formal, the handling of complaints mirrors the structure of the school. The class or subject teacher is consulted first, but if not resolved, it can be raised with the subject, year and senior leaders. The principal of the school or the head of school become involved in the complaint as and when required.

The policy is clear and transparent about timeframes; it provides appropriate details about confidentiality. Its focus is on finding a resolution.

## 12. Standard 8

### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

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

The leadership and management at SFBS are good, and meet the standard.

There is a multi-layered governance structure, mainly as required by Korean law. The SFS Council appoints board and *Jaidan* members, receives audited financial statements, approves the school budget, examines mission and philosophy changes and maintains SFS constitution and byelaws.

The SFS school board, operating for and in the name of the SFS council, is responsible for the total programme of the whole school, including all aspects of its operation. The board develops strategic plans, and hires and oversees the Head of School. It comprises a minimum of six members who are a parent of at least one child currently enrolled in the school. Full board meetings take place five times during the school year. The SFBS board is a sub-set of the main school board.

The school's mission statement is prominently displayed around the school and in school documents, informing policy and practice. There is a copy of the mission statement on the school website.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis supported by high quality administrative and support staff. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and exceed statutory requirements.

The principal provides caring and supportive leadership, underpinned by a clear understanding of the school's ethos. Regular meetings of key stage co-ordinators, principal and his deputy take place and facilitate the opportunity for dialogue. This structure anticipates that these middle leaders will monitor standards and outcomes, in their areas of responsibility. Key stage co-ordinators are not yet fully enabled in this role, although they are keen to develop their professional capacity enough to support and better hold others to account. The development of a whole school approach to monitoring that has a clear focus on learning outcomes and consistency of best practice, will provide a greater level of clarity.

Whilst there is evidence of effective communication between team members, the lack of a consistent, whole school approach to practices such as marking, planning and assessment are missed opportunities to ensure a greater cohesiveness in whole school planning. Good practice already in place is not yet fully shared, to model school expectations in meeting its desire to achieve the best for all its students. The school has identified a need to use the large amount of data it has more strategically, to set more challenging individual student targets, and to support and monitor teacher effectiveness. Key assessment data is not yet widely enough understood to provide staff with information necessary to plan effectively to meet the needs of all the students in their classes.