



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

## **Inspection report**

# **St Paul's British Primary School**

**Vossem, Brussels  
Belgium**

Date 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016  
Inspection number 20161123

Contents		page
1	Purpose and scope on the inspection	2
2	Compliance with regulatory requirements	2
3	Overall effectiveness of the school	3
	3.1 What the school does well	3
	3.2 Points for improvement	4
4	The context of the school	5
	4.1 The British nature of the school	7
5	<b>Standard 1</b> The quality of education provided by the school	8
	5.1 Curriculum	8
	5.2 Teaching and assessment	10
	5.3 Standards achieved by students	12
6	<b>Standard 2</b> The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students	13
7	<b>Standard 3</b> The welfare, health and safety of students	15
8	<b>Standard 4</b> The suitability of the proprietor and staff	16
9	<b>Standard 5</b> The premises and accommodation	17
10	<b>Standard 6</b> The provision of information for parents, carers and others	19
11	<b>Standard 7</b> The school's procedures for handling complaints	20
12	<b>Standard 8</b> The quality of provision for boarding	-
13	<b>Standard 9</b> Leadership and management of the school	21
Annex	Letter to pupils	22

## 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, 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, the whole of the first day and much of the second day were spent in classrooms with the pupil and the teachers. All teachers were observed and many learning walks took place during the visit. School documentation and policies were analysed and pupil data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the head, the senior staff, teachers, other school staff, representatives of the Board of Directors, parents and groups of students. The team was in school on three days.

The lead inspector was Mark Evans. The team member was Sue Croft.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

St Paul's British Primary School, Brussels meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

St Paul's British Primary school ('St Paul's') is an excellent school. It provides an outstanding quality of education and care. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is of the highest quality. It is an important and integral part of the local community: the parents and the pupils are very supportive indeed of the school. It has made excellent progress in the last three years, especially in terms of further improving the quality of active learning and sharpening the way that pupils' attainment and progress is reported to the parents.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at St Paul's.

- The school is inviting and staff very approachable: they work hard to make sure children and their families are treated as individuals.
- The school is a welcoming place for expatriate families, to such an extent, that many parents can be seen with their children at the end of the day chatting and relaxing on the school field, even in November.
- Pupils work at their own pace academically, but are kept with their peers chronologically – those with special educational needs are very well provided for.
- Class teachers send copious information home to parents about what the class has been up to and individual students work, sometimes on a daily basis.
- On WOW Wednesdays each week, pupils participate in activities that are not specified in the National Curriculum, giving them opportunities to develop a broad range of interests and a more flexible approach to learning
- The standards of attainment, especially in literacy, speaking and listening, are very high.
- The ethos of the school, strongly informed by the mission statement *The best possible start in life*, is a key strength.
- There is very high quality leadership and governance: the head teacher provides strong, sensitive leadership, has a clear and creative vision, and is very popular with staff, pupils and parents.

- The personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- Relationships within the school, and with parents and the local community, are exceptionally good;
- The quality of teaching is excellent, especially in terms of creativity and innovation.
- There is high quality assistance throughout the school from the teaching and non-teaching support staff.
- The attitudes, friendliness, behaviour and personal development of the pupils are outstanding.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

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

- review the displays in classrooms, to ensure there is a suitable balance between informational, decorative and pupils' work;
- embed the increasingly high profile of visual arts, for example during Wow Wednesday workshops;
- confirm the values-based PSHE programme and its links to the RE schemes of work.

## 4. The context of the school

Full name of school	St Paul's British Primary School VZW				
Address	Stationsstraat 3 3080 Vosseme-Tervuren Belgium				
Telephone number	+32 (0) 2 767 3098				
Fax number	+32 (0) 2 767 0351				
Website	www.stpaulsbps.com				
Email address	info@stpaulsbps.com				
Head	Mr Brett Neilson				
Chairman of Board of Governors	Mr Roger Morgan				
Age range	3 to 11 years				
Total number of pupils	68	Boys	40	Girls	28
Numbers by age	0-2 years	0	11-16 years	0	
	3-5 years	18	16-18 years	0	
	5-11 years	50	18+ years	0	
Total number of part-time children	9				

St Paul's British Primary School is situated in the village of Vosseme, near Tervuren, a residential suburb of Brussels. It was founded in 1975 mainly to provide for the UK expatriate community.

The school was owned and run for nearly 30 years by the person who started it. In 2004, it was sold to an international company. The following year, one of the school buildings was severely damaged by local roadwork excavations and put out of use, for safety reasons. Many parents withdrew their children at this time and in 2006, the company owning the school announced its closure.

In April of that year, a group from the local St Paul's Anglican Church bought the school and re-opened it in September 2006 under the current name. The damaged building was reconstructed and extended: it is currently the Key Stages 1 and 2 school building.

There are currently 68 pupils on roll, of whom 9 are part-time. The school is situated in a Dutch speaking commune in the Flemish-Brabant region on the outskirts of Brussels. As a British International School, St Paul's offers French as a second language to pupils, as many of the parents feel that French is a more useful language than Dutch, in the international context. However, this can raise questions with the local Dutch speaking community. This is one of the reasons that, historically, there was little interaction between the school and the local community. However, since 2009, concerted efforts to engage with neighbours, community and commune on their terms and in their own language, have opened doors to participation in many events and activities.

The school maintains good relations with local Flemish schools, social services and care groups, the commune of Tervuren and De Rand (a community action group for the entire Flemish Brabant region).

International/independent schools in Belgium are not recognised as or accredited as schools. The school therefore receives no subsidies, has no recourse to Belgian Education services, nor is it subject to Belgian school inspections or standards. The only regulations that do apply to international schools are the building regulations for schools and corporate health and safety standards.

Having no access to Education support services is considered to be a challenge, as all support for children and families has to be sourced via the family's local commune or the health services. St Paul's has built up links with a number of private specialists, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, an ADHD and autism support group, the Brussels community trust and local specialist schools, although the turnover of English speaking therapists is high, given the transient nature of the expat community in Brussels.

Professional development for staff has been limited in the past, but the school has more recently tapped into the resources of COBIS, the London Diocesan Board for Schools and the Institute for Education in London.

The school has one Belgian child on its roll, due to the high fees (Belgian schools are free) and the general lack of recognition of external curricula in Belgium.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

St Paul's was founded as 'British Primary', and the school has offered a British Education for young children since 1975. It provides the National Curriculum for England delivered by class teachers with UK Qualified Teacher Status or equivalent overseas qualifications. The red, white and blue school colours reflect this heritage and are visible everywhere, on buildings and on the (non-compulsory) school uniforms.

St Paul's British Primary School is British by name and British by nature. Although the school serves a mixed International community in Brussels, about half of the families are of British origin. Parents report that their first impression of the school often relates to a Church of England, village primary school in the UK, due to the rural village location, the quirky style and layout of the buildings and the small class sizes.

The school uses every opportunity to celebrate British heritage and regularly celebrates standing events such as Harvest and Bonfire night, as well as special festivities such as the recent Roald Dahl day.

The school's own community often provides high quality volunteers in the form of parents accompanying their spouses on an assignment to Brussels. The parent body is invariably highly educated and experienced: the principal reports benefitting from their advice in the fields of counselling, psychology, education, marketing, advertising, corporate business and IT.

The school prides itself on creating a safe and caring environment for young children and their families. The Christian identity is modelled very much on that of a UK-based church of England Primary School. There are strong links to the local Anglican Church which serves the English-speaking expat community in Brussels. The school is affiliated to the London Diocesan Board for Schools, which gives access to resources as well as annual visits from a school improvement partner.

The attacks on Paris and Brussels in November 2015 and March 2016 forced the school to revisit its emergency response plans and caused the forging of much stronger links with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Security division, and the local police. The latter approached the school to conduct a full joint emergency drill at the school.

Although the security situation has stabilised, the school remains on a heightened state of alert, whilst trying to maintain an open community policy. It receives many requests from external groups to use its facilities, as a result of other schools reducing or even ceasing community links.



## 5. Standard 1

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at St Paul's British Primary School is outstanding.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum is excellent. It is broad, balanced and offers pupils a wide range of learning opportunities. Planning and implementation are tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. There are also innovative aspects, such as the *WOW Wednesday*, when teachers support learning on aspects that are a particular passion for them, which means that the pupils enjoy and benefit even more than normal.

The school offers and delivers the full extent of the National Curriculum for England and the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, with some adaptation of content to make it more relevant to living in Belgium and Europe. The Religious Education (RE) programme reflects the Christian character of the school. The values-based (personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and its links to the RE schemes of work are developing, but are not yet fully embedded. The place of visual arts in the curriculum is gradually becoming more established.

School is compulsory in Belgium only in the academic year that a child turns 6. At that stage, they are obliged to attend 4½ days per week, with no schooling provided on Wednesday afternoons after lunch. St Paul's offers access to education from the term in which a child turns 3, in the Nursery, with flexible options for morning and/or afternoon sessions. Full time education is offered from Reception (aged 4) for 4½ days a week and 5 days a week from year 1 (aged 5).

The school delivers the curriculum (including in EYFS) through the coverage of several topics per year. Each topic consists of different subject areas, including Literacy (English and French), numeracy, extended topic work (sciences, humanities, technologies) and further areas of learning (art, music, and PE), PSHE and RE.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed a strong active learning pedagogy. The school continually seeks to adopt and improve different active learning strategies to support, enable and challenge learners at every stage of their development.

Several mechanisms are used to determine and track particular areas of development to enable (if necessary) children to re-enter the UK educational system at an appropriate level. Children who join the school with no English are initially immersed in English. They are sometimes offered additional support whilst their classmates attend French lessons. These pupils are then integrated back in to the French programme once their English is at an appropriate level.

Speaking and listening are prominent features of the curriculum, followed up by reading and writing experiences at an appropriate level for each child. Despite the lack of access to local Belgium resources and support services, the school does very well at meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The small classes allow for a great deal of individual attention. Topics and activities are planned to take account of the needs of all learners and ensure that learning intentions can be accessed in a variety of ways to accommodate individual learning styles.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are excellent. Detailed understanding of the pupils' abilities and interests remain the key factors in this success, with (since the last inspection) an impressive emphasis on active learning.

The development of active learning strategies includes the application of a global approach of 'Plan, Do, Review, Learn and Apply' to all teaching and learning. At the beginning of every topic, teachers use different methods, including effective questioning, to explore pupils' prior learning and to stimulate their exploration of new ideas. Tasks and questions are intentionally open-ended so that the outcome relies on the children applying their own intellect and creativity. Most classrooms are filled with exciting and stimulating decoration, but sometimes the mixture of between pupils' work, display for information and decorative material is not balanced.

In the Foundation Stage, a mix of adult led and self-initiated tasks encourage structured learning and independent thinking. Pupils were often seen in the role play areas. Scaffolding is applied in key stages 1 and 2 to support the development of recording skills, but as pupils become more secure, tasks and activities allow the exercise of creativity and divergent thinking.

Previous work that the pupils have done is referred to regularly. For example in a year 1 PE class, students were asked to recall the building of the Ark and then to act out the animals that they knew (from previous work) were invited on to it by Noah.

The teacher and assistant in the reception class constantly asked 'where', 'what' and 'why' questions, frequently repeating individual answers, thereby reinforcing it, but leaving the question open for the pupil to then make another statement. Targets and next steps for individuals are regularly discussed, with the individual. Most of the pupils who were working independently, are confident helping other who are unsure of an answer or a skill.

Teachers ask questions which are open ended, and explain what they are doing. When year 3 pupils were shown a Mondrian picture in a WOW lesson, they were asked what they see – most became animated as they looked at the picture for longer, offering many answers, all of which could (of course) be correct. After a detailed discussion, they made their own picture based on the colours and shapes of Mondrian, and demonstrated a clear understanding of the concepts involved.

In another WOW class, pupils were making flags. The teacher encouraged them to look at pictures in books, then to make the shape of the flag and put glue over the entire model. She constantly showed and explained, but never intervened. Pupils were able to explain about why they had chosen the different flags to model, and why the design of their own flag was as it was.

Planning is excellent. Topic planning is often the result of collaboration between teachers in the key stages. EYFS do all planning, including weekly planning as a whole team, which includes the Foundation Stage teacher and the support staff. A range of activities and differentiated tasks are organised and plans circulated to support staff in advance to allow for comments, suggestions or questions to be raised.

In the Foundation Stage, sessions are planned to allow longer sustained periods of topic immersion. Nursery and Reception are combined as a single Foundation Stage unit which allows staff to take advantage of the range of skills and expertise available in EYFS to create enhanced immersion sessions for pupils across the age range. In the Key Stages 1 and 2 classes, timetabling overtly minimises disruption between the transitions for French, EAL and PE. Class time is managed for maximum effectiveness, often allowing for extended sessions of topic work.

Assessment is ongoing and mainly formative. The assessment process is ongoing and individual: trends are hard to establish in this highly mobile community with a turnover of pupils of roughly 30% per annum.

Pupil progress is tracked through the use of 2Simple software and pupil records in EYFS. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers collect evidence of pupil progress in individual assessment folders, as well as using Seesaw in Key Stage 1 as an electronic resource for assessing progress. Spelling and reading ages are tracked bi-annually and writing is assessed termly. Reading book levels are tracked for each pupil. Mathematics assessments are carried out termly. The school is currently moving from the summative end-of-term assessment to an ongoing portfolio of evidence for each child, collated termly.

## 5.3 Standards achieved by students

The standards achieved are excellent.

The pupils are consistently achieving academic standards above the expectation for their age group. Language development is particularly strong, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Many have limited English language when they join the school, but within a few months, are fluent speakers. Standardised assessments such as baseline assessments in the Foundation Stage, and reading and spelling tests in Key Stages 1 and 2 suggest the majority of pupils are ahead or well ahead of UK averages.

On entry, pupils soon become enthusiastic learners: they enjoy lessons and engage actively with their own learning. They gradually become adept at thinking and learning for themselves. They often do projects at home to bring in and show their teachers and friends. They are highly motivated.

Pupil performance is evaluated against the old standards set for the National Curriculum for England. Reading and spelling ages are recorded twice annually and writing is assessed using a standardised progressive system across the school. Mathematics and numeracy are assessed as pupils complete units: these assessments are recorded and stored in the children's assessment folders. The assessments suggest that most pupils are working at levels above what that expected. A significant proportion enter or re-enter the education systems of the UK, other British International schools and/or other English language systems like the USA and Australia. They are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to allow seamless transition into an age-appropriate year group.

The pupils have a very positive attitude towards their learning and towards being in school. They report that they love being in school and many parents commented on how much their children enjoy coming to school in the morning. Standards of behaviour are very high and the children respond appropriately to each other and to adults. All at school are on first name terms with each other.

Levels of attendance at the school are good, although there are exceptions. The school keeps a daily electronic register of attendance and monitors it carefully over time. The register is taken at 9:00 each morning. By 9:30, an absence list for the day is printed for the purposes of emergency evacuation. Registers are then closed. Lateness and early leaving are recorded appropriately. Absences are followed up with a telephone call by the administrative staff if no note has been received from parents. The main reason for absence is illness, although there is a high incidence of authorised holiday leave, due to the nature of families' expat lifestyle and travelling schedules. Lateness is not an issue for the school: there is a 20-minute arrival window, to allow for traffic and travelling conditions.

Efforts to improve attendance have been moderately successful. An attendance merit award is given each term and an annual attendance prize. Holiday requests in term time are often refused by the school, in which case the pupil's absence is recorded as unauthorised.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent: it is a strength of the school.

The vision at St Paul's British Primary School is to 'give the best possible start in life': the main school rule is to 'be kind, be fair and be careful'. These aims are delivered very effectively. Pupils are well aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and talk about their successes and shortcomings without fear or embarrassment. For example, year 5 and 6 pupils, talk about their attitudes to 'the learning pit', a concept the school uses to describe the way that learning can be challenging. They have high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Many pupils, especially those who have been at school for a year or more, are emotionally mature and intelligent: they have significant levels of empathy and understanding that they display towards one another. For example, in the dining hall, where the whole school eats together, a mature understanding of others has been fostered: pupils understand that there is no sharing of food (as others might have a food intolerance), food is eaten directly and carefully from the lunch box and crumbs kept to a minimum. Rubbish is put in the bin, and students help themselves to water from the cooler if their bottle is empty. When/if their chatting becomes too loud, the midday supervisor merely flashes the lights: this has an immediate effect.

At play time all but the youngest children are allowed onto the field together, and they show respect and understanding of each other that is more akin to that seen in a family. This togetherness even extends to parents and siblings, as can be witnessed at the end of the day when many gather on the school grounds (even in November!).

Pupils relate very well to staff and to each other, on the grounds of mutual respect and strong moral development. There is no separate set of school rules, other than that given above. Teachers report that everyone works on the basis of common sense and courtesy. There is no formal school council, which may be a missed opportunity to help pupils to understand democracy and the requirement needed to represent others even when their thoughts might not be the same as one's own. There is a house system which is used to good effect on sports day: some parents would like to see it extended more into everyday use.

Cultural development is also very strong. The pupils are often involved in considering their own needs, even providing ideas for the development of the curriculum and the facilities. The levelling of the school field, the pirate ship in the Foundation Stage and the development of the 'Small change, Big change' project were all initiated by the pupils. They contributed ideas to the activities on offer on *WOWednesdays*. Every child contributes to harvest collections, which is not a Belgian tradition, but was reportedly well received by the local community. Year 5 and 6 pupils are working on an idea they proposed, which will see older children helping younger children to engage in games during play times. They also promote positive behaviour by nominating each other for celebration assembly awards. The pupils embrace different cultures through a range of activities such as making 3D maps of all countries represented in the school, from papier-mâché.

The cultural diversity of the school changes regularly, due to the high turnover of families. Although the school has adopted a Christian ethos in its approach to spiritual and moral development, there are families from many different faiths, as well as families of no faith. The school takes opportunities to explore and celebrate the religious festivals and beliefs of others, often involving families in sharing their views with the pupils.

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

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are excellent. Written policies and actual practice ensure that pupils are secure and well cared for. The general health and safety policy safeguards and promotes the welfare of pupils and staff. The school ensures that the appropriate safety measures are in place and that they are regularly reviewed. The policy is implemented throughout the school. Staff are aware of their responsibility and ensure that good safety practice is encouraged, both in their teaching and by personal example.

A written policy to prevent bullying underpins the effective social and emotional education that children receive at St Paul's. There have been very few incidents of bullying at the school and any that do arise are dealt with by the head teacher: parents and children are always involved in the resolution of the conflict.

The current child protection policy is appropriate and regularly reviewed. It is informed by current UK policy on safeguarding children and safer recruitment, and also by the Church of England policy 'Protecting all God's Children'. The head teacher is the child protection officer: he has completed advanced child protection training and a certificated course on safer recruitment in education.

The school has updated its school emergency plan, to respond appropriately and efficiently to any major emergency which may affect the school community. There is an effective email and text messaging system in place to ensure that parents can easily and rapidly be contacted in the event of an emergency. Since November 2015, the school has also included 'intrusion or invasion of the school premises with intent to do harm', which details specific actions in the event of a terrorist or similar attack to the school. These actions were established in collaboration with the security services for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Belgian Police, both local and the National Counter-terrorism unit.

Fire evacuation procedures are posted throughout the school and drills are carried out every term. The general safety of the school site is monitored by the school caretaker and weekly meetings take place with the head teacher to ensure that any issues arising are prioritised and resolved. The health and safety team carry out inspections on an annual basis and a report is written which is submitted to the head teacher.

The school carries out a detailed visit to each of the school journey venues: risk assessment forms are completed and filed in the school office. The school minibus is equipped with seat-belts, booster seats, statutory first aid kits and yellow 'children on boards' signs. Pupils embark and disembark in the school staff car park, away from any passing traffic.

Visitors sign in at the school office and are issued with a badge for the duration of their visit.



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

The school business, St Paul's British Primary School VZW, is a non-profit organisation, governed by the board of directors. Two executive directors, the headteacher and the financial director manage the school on behalf of the board. The board has satisfied itself of the suitability of the executive directors in that they meet all local requirements and have been subject to checks confirming their identity, their right to work in Belgium, police checks and suitable references. In addition, all appointments to the board have been approved by the church council of St Paul's Church, Tervuren as members in good standing with the church.

The staff appointment process followed by the school requires original proof of identity, original police clearance certificate from their country of origin, proof of legal residence and/or right to work in Belgium, detailed employment history, residential addresses for the past five years, and two references, one of which must be most recent employer. Maintenance staff and minibus drivers undergo a medical fitness examination, in addition. Whenever staff are appointed, and for volunteer and trainee placement, all relevant checks are carried out.

If a candidate is being appointed from the UK or has recent UK-based employment history, a certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS, previously known as CRB) is requested. All potential staff resident in Belgium are required to apply for a Model 2 Attest from the local police and/or the relevant police clearance from their host country. Appointments are not confirmed before these checks are completed satisfactorily.

The school maintains a record of all appointments including voluntary staff working in the school.

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

The premises and accommodation are good.

Security is excellent, being completely sealed off from the street. The only access to the property is by key. Access to the school office is by electronic buzzer, requiring a member of staff to allow access, with visual confirmation of identity. There is only one access point for vehicles, required by law for access by fire services. At the start and end of the day when the main entrance gate is opened, a permanent member of staff (usually the head teacher) monitors the pedestrian traffic on and off the premises.

Whilst the premises are used by several external groups, for example guides and scouts groups, these sessions are out of school hours and do not interfere with the daily running. The school community centre is used for language classes and a booking system is in place to ensure that this does not overlap with any school activity.

Evacuation procedures are prominently displayed: drills are carried out on a regular basis. The age and layout of the buildings mean that providing access for those with certain physical disabilities is not possible.

There is no reason to believe that local statutory regulations and requirements regarding water supply, drainage, waste water and loading-bearing structures are not met. The school water supply is independently checked at regular intervals and is deemed suitable for residential and educational purposes.

There are toilets and washing facilities for pupils on every floor of each building, and a staff toilet and basin in each building. Toilets are accessible from the playgrounds.

Renovation works were undertaken on a substantial part of the school's buildings in 2008-9 and a rainwater recovery system was incorporated, recuperating water for flushing toilets. Much of the underground drainage system has been rebuilt, with a new connection into the renewed public sewer. At the time of the renovation, a local structural engineer was appointed to assess the stability of the buildings in accordance with local regulations and recommendations. The hall was rebuilt on new foundations, and an existing classroom building was reinforced with steel structural columns to tie the façades back to the main structure. The renovation works were the subject of local authority planning approval.

The roofs, external walls and windows are all in a good state and well maintained. The hall building has a fully insulated floor, with damp-proof membrane, and insulated panels form the roof structure. There is a heat-exchanger ventilation system, and heating is by gas-fired boilers. There is no cooling system.

If a child is taken ill whilst at school they are brought to the office where initially they will sit whilst the nurse assesses them. Standard first aid equipment is available. Depending on the severity of

the illness, a local doctor is available to contact for advice; if necessary, the emergency services are called.

Food is not served at the school, as pupils bring their own lunches. Snacks can be prepared in the school kitchen, and cooking lessons are also carried out there. There are facilities for heating food in microwave ovens and there are washing-up facilities adjacent to the dining hall. Once a month, the PTA serves a hot lunch to the children. This is prepared in a fully fitted kitchen in the community centre which is regularly serviced by the cleaning staff. The lunch is served in the dining hall where heating and warm storage facilities ensure that it is still hot at the time of consumption.

Pupils have access to a range of exciting outdoor spaces during the school day. These range from playing fields, gardens, climbing frames, cycle tracks, quiet areas and woodlands. Equipment is sourced from accredited suppliers where necessary, to ensure high standards of safety. Annual safety checks are done by the maintenance team. Pupils are supervised during outdoor play sessions with at least one staff member on duty for the Foundation Stage and another for Key Stages 1 and 2.

## 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 clearly stated, and the school's website underlines the board's understanding of vision, values and aims. It also clearly states the Christian nature of the school, and what this means. The school's contact information is provided to all current and prospective families, and is detailed on the website and on all printed documentation. The school office can be contacted during and out of term time by phone or via the school website. The headteacher's contact details are made available, including his mobile phone number and email address. The board of directors may be contacted through the school office. Executive members and the chair of the board are identified by name on the website.

There is an admissions process in place, which is communicated to all prospective parents. Each enquiry is tracked by the school administrator, from the first contact to settling the pupil and family into the school community. Information on expectations of discipline is provided in the information booklets to parents.

If English is not the first language of a prospective pupil, the family completes an EAL form and children are given the support of a specialist teacher if needed, from the point of their arrival.

If a prospective pupil is identified as having special needs, there will be meeting directly with the parents to discuss how the school can meet their child's needs. The SENCo coordinates the meetings with parents and monitors the progress of all pupils with special needs. The school does not select children on the basis of their needs, but advises parents if it is felt that the teachers could not meet the needs of a particular child or make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs.

The school advises all parents of the curriculum that is followed and how it is customised to suit the local context. Extensive information on the school structure and the National Curriculum for England is provided. Parents are also provided with information about topics at the start of each half term.

Parents are actively encouraged to engage with the school in relation to any matter that relates to their child's learning experience. Teachers are available at the beginning and end of every day and the headteacher operates an open-door policy for the whole school community. Information about bullying, child protection, health and safety, behaviour and other issues are communicated to the parent body as a whole through the parent handbook and fortnightly newsletters.

Parents receive an annual written report detailing the progress of their child throughout the year in English, French, mathematics, 'exploring the world' (history, geography, science and IT) and focussed areas of learning such as PE, art, design and technology, and music (and EAL where relevant). Additionally, parent discussions are held in November and March, regarding progress.

## 11. *Standard 7*

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school has an open door policy and all parents are encouraged to engage with staff and management of the school on any matters which may cause concern. Every morning, the headteacher is in the playground talking to the pupils and their families. All are on first name terms. Parents reported that they were very confident raising any issues they had.

On the rare occasions where a concern does escalate, complainants are directed via the school office to the complaints policy.

This policy sets out clearly the procedures for handling complaints, which are appropriate. There are clear timescales from the lodging of the complaint, through each stage and up to achieving a resolution. All complaints are initially considered on an informal basis if possible, and resolved before escalating to a formal complaint.

If parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, the procedure calls for a hearing before a panel appointed by the board of directors. It also allows for parents to attend and give evidence at the panel hearing, as well as presenting witnesses if needed.

## 12. *Standard 8*

### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

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

Leadership and management are excellent. Governance is a strength of the school.

The school has a clearly defined vision to give the best possible start in life to every pupil. It was formulated through a collaborative effort between the board of directors, the headteacher, the senior leadership team and the members of teaching and support staff.

School policies and procedures are provided in line with standards and expectations for British Schools Overseas. They are reviewed regularly and a programme for the further review and/or replacement of policies is kept by the administrator. Careful management, overseen by the administrator and head teacher ensures that there are sufficient resources. All resources are provided for by a rigorous budgeting process.

The identification of key priorities for development is a collaborative effort at all levels of school management. Although the headteacher has ultimate responsibility for delivery of the school development plan, the priorities are developed out of needs identified first by teachers and subject leaders, then distilled into three key deliverables. Ultimately, personal development targets for every member of staff are developed from the plan. Strategy for the future development of the school is formulated by the board of directors.

Staff turnover is unusually low for an international school; the vast majority of the teaching and support staff are settled in Belgium. When recruiting, the school always seeks to appoint staff with relevant and up-to-date qualifications, training and experience.

Staff are developed professionally through a range of training opportunities which have included conferences, teacher training events with other international schools, the Institute of Education, the TA College and the Early Years College: there was also an in-service development week for staff and children in October 2016.

The school follows a programme of annual performance review for each member of staff. Targets are set at the beginning of the year, in line with the priorities for school development. They are reviewed at the end of each year by the headteacher. Professional development opportunities are also identified at the beginning, or during each performance management cycle and are included in the target setting aspect. The performance of the head teacher is appraised continuously by the board of directors to whom he reports quarterly.

The school regularly hosts student teachers from ITEPS (Netherlands) and Interaction International Inc. (USA) as well as UK PGCE Universities such as Canterbury and Sunderland. These placements are useful professional development for the school's senior teachers as they mentor the students.

## Annex

*A letter from the inspection team to the children at St Paul's British Primary School, Vossem.*

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Dear all,

We don't normally write a letter to the pupils at the schools we visit. But then we don't normally get letters from those children before we arrive at the school. So thank you to James, Tia, Shaurya, Tom, James M., Krishiv, Zebedee, Sargun, Emma, Lillian, Lucy and Rosie, for your lovely letters. Thank you to everyone for talking to us so honestly and openly. We agree with nearly everything you wrote, and Rosie – we agree that the school is 'magnificent'!

We really enjoyed reading your letters, and talking to all of you. You told us you liked the learning pit, that you appreciated the hard work of the teachers and that you relished the character calendar. November is the month for 'respect' and Sue and I feel you showed us a great deal of respect, as well as being very friendly. We really appreciated watching you learn actively.

Lots of you told us that Brett is 'wonderful' and the teachers are 'fantastic'. We agree, and we know that you learn a lot from them. One of you told us that 'when kids leave St Paul's, their brains have been flooded with smart thinking and friendship' – isn't that great?

So thank you for helping us understand St Paul's. We agree that you are lucky to attend and that you have great learning experiences.

I hope the rest of the term is as exciting as the last few weeks – soon it will be December, and you know what that means!

Very best wishes,

*Mark and Sue*

The Penta International Inspectors