

British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection report

19 to 21 May 2025

British Junior Academy of Brussels

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Brussels

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect British Schools Overseas (BSO). Our inspections report on the extent to which the BSO Standards are met, referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

Provision at the academy meets the requirements of the BSO Standards.

1. The proprietors monitor the academy carefully so that pupils receive an education in line with its aims. They have played a key role in the academy's evolution since it opened in 1992 and have a clear vision for the academy's future. Leaders ensure the Standards are met and promote the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Leaders systematically complete, review and sign off risk assessments, reflecting a pro-active and reflective approach to managing pupils' safety and welfare.
3. Leaders in the early years are effective in supporting individual children's progress through responsive, well-informed practice. Leaders effectively use ongoing tracking to measure individual children's starting points, progress, and attainment, allowing for targeted support to be planned effectively when it is required.
4. Teachers help pupils become curious and self-motivated learners. They purposefully teach skills aimed at assisting pupils to communicate effectively and share ideas. Teaching is characterised by high expectations, well-planned organisation, and clear routines to ensure that learning flows smoothly. The feedback provided by teachers enables pupils to understand clearly what they need to do to make more rapid progress. Pupils across the academy achieve high standards and make good progress.
5. Teaching supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively overall. However, the guidance provided to teaching staff about in-class strategies that they can use to support identified pupils who have (SEND) is not always as clear as possible in ensuring that these pupils make consistently good progress.
6. The welcoming morning routine and leaders' personal greetings support pupils' emotional wellbeing, helping them feel seen, valued, and emotionally ready to learn. Children in the early years engage effectively in social learning and development. They interact with other children and learn how to share, take turns and develop their patience with others.
7. A sense of calm and purpose permeates the academy. Leaders and staff at all levels prioritise the care that staff provide for pupils. Consequently, pupils experience a nurturing environment where they feel safe and happy. There are highly effective relationships between staff and pupils. Staff ensure that pupils have high self-esteem and are resilient learners.
8. Pupils are self-aware and regulate their behaviour around both sites. They are confident and relaxed with each other and respectful and polite with adults, including visitors. Pupils socialise well and show respect for staff and each other. They listen to and support each other well during lessons. Pupils display genuine care and concern for one another.
9. Leaders promote pupils' sense of right and wrong and understanding of the importance of mutual respect. Pupils learn about diverse cultures and beliefs.
10. The proprietors effectively oversee the academy's safeguarding policies and procedures and their implementation. They regularly meet to review arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Leaders'

vigilance and promotion of an open culture for raising concerns supports safeguarding well. They provide staff with timely training and updates on current safeguarding guidance. Staff have a clear understanding of how to address and report concerns.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards

The school meets all the BSO Standards.

- BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- BSO Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen the guidance provided to teaching staff about in-class strategies that they can use to support pupils who have SEND to make consistently good progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. The proprietors maintain successful oversight of the academy to ensure that it consistently meets the requirements of the BSO Standards. They have high profile roles in the academy and support leaders at all levels to meet their responsibilities effectively.
12. Senior and middle leaders make regular presentations to the proprietors about the successes and improvements in their areas. Proprietors ensure that leaders possess the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain high standards in all aspects of the academy's life. Leaders maintain the academy as a harmonious and welcoming community with an ethos of care, wellbeing, and academic challenge, in line with its aims.
13. The role of middle leaders across the academy has developed as the academy has grown. They are clear about their role in making decisions that place individual pupils at the heart of their work. Staff know pupils well and respond to them as individuals to ensure they are secure, happy, and able to make good progress. Lower school leaders accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the early years department. They regularly assess the quality of education in Nursery and Reception classes and constantly seek improvements.
14. Leaders communicate clear and consistent expectations of the quality of teaching and monitor this carefully. Subject and phase leaders play a crucial role in supporting their colleagues and ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. They implement strategies to help staff to develop their professional practice in line with the academy's high expectations.
15. Leaders review their actions and decisions effectively to ensure that the academy continues to comply with the principles of the UK Equality Act (2010). For example, leaders reviewed the academy's accessibility plan during the period of refurbishment, following the recent acquisition of a new building, including a lift to access all floors for those who may need it.
16. Leaders are vigilant for any signs that pupils may be at potential risk of harm, particularly concerning online risks and influences. A suitable risk assessment policy is in place and leaders work effectively to reduce risks that are identified on both academy sites. Staff contribute to risk assessments that identify potential hazards relating to the range of educational and recreational opportunities and control measures to mitigate these.
17. Leaders work well with relevant agencies to support pupils when necessary. The academy's effective partnerships with the police, regional and local services contribute towards the support provided to pupils and their families.
18. Parents are provided with the required information through the academy's policies and procedures, which are available on the academy's website. These are implemented effectively by staff and leaders at all levels. Parents are kept well informed through termly reports, which highlight their child's progress in each subject and outline targets for improvement.
19. An appropriate complaints procedure is in place. It includes clear timelines and a suitable three-stage process. Leaders maintain an appropriate record of complaints and respond to them effectively to reach resolution.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

20. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. A high proportion of children enter Nursery with low levels of English language skills. Staff quickly identify children's learning and development requirements and ensure that these are addressed. Assessment procedures are thorough and provide teachers with a detailed knowledge of each child's development. Teachers use this assessment to plan a wide range of stimulating activities which engage children. Consequently, children across Nursery and Reception make good progress, and are well prepared for Year 1.
22. Staff enable children who speak English as an additional language (EAL) to successfully develop their English language skills alongside their home language, enabling them to participate in social tasks and express their understanding effectively. Leaders adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of older pupils who speak EAL so that they make rapid progress with their English. Teaching about the sounds that letters make is of consistently high quality, ensuring that children develop confidence in reading, regardless of their starting points. Children learn about what nouns and verbs are and how they relate to each other.
23. Pupils' results in English and mathematics are above the average for those pupils taking the international standardised tests used by the academy. Throughout the academy, pupils produce a high standard of work. The needs of pupils with higher prior attainment in language are met through the provision of three language levels of French within each year group.
24. Pupils who have SEND make good progress overall, but this is variable. Although phase leaders support staff in identifying the needs of pupils who have SEND, the guidance that staff receive about in-class strategies that they can use to support pupils who have SEND is not always consistent or effective as possible in ensuring that these pupils progress as well as possible.
25. Pupils have well-developed language skills. They are confident speaking when debating and contributing during lessons and read with fluency and expression. Pupils develop their comprehension skills well. Lower school pupils write to a high standard and at length for various purposes. Upper school pupils are encouraged to make their writing enjoyable and teachers support them in deepening their understanding, knowledge and skills. Consequently, the standard of writing amongst older pupils across the curriculum is high. Pupils who enter the academy with limited knowledge of the French language quickly achieve high competency due to teaching that is well matched to their abilities.
26. Teachers show pupils how to use subject language to express their ideas in sophisticated ways. For example, older pupils who speak French as a first language confidently identified the distinction between mystery and suspense in a text. Teaching does not undermine British or Belgian values or discriminate against pupils. Pupils have notably positive attitudes to learning.
27. Teachers' questioning skills effectively probe pupils' knowledge and understanding, deepening their learning and moving them to the next stage in their knowledge. For example, Year 6 pupils are able to confidently identify and communicate scientific hypotheses about themes such as different types of renewable energy generation that could be used on an imaginary island.
28. Lower school pupils benefit from a consistent and systematic approach to teaching number and place value in mathematics. This enables them to understand the connections between, for example, multiplication and division. Teachers of upper school mathematics ensure that pupils

receive challenging tasks in Years 7 and 8 that form a high starting point for Key Stage 4 studies. These enable older pupils to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills, as well as to deepen and apply their mathematical knowledge.

29. Teachers regularly assess pupils' learning and use this information to plan rich and engaging lessons. Their feedback to pupils enables pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work further and make more progress.
30. The range of recreational activities is well organised. The varied programme of external clubs enriches pupils' educational experiences beyond the classroom, supporting their social, emotional, and physical development. Lower school pupils access woodland activities and residential trips to an adventure outdoor centre. Upper school pupils participate in a Year 7 ski trip, raft building, and indoor climbing, in addition to The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. The recreational activities build pupils' confidence, develop new skills, and engage them in positive interactions with both peers and adults.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

31. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

32. The morning routine is well structured and welcoming, with leaders visibly present to greet pupils. A calm, respectful start to the day and effective pastoral care foster pupils' sense of belonging, emotional security, and readiness to engage positively with others. Pupils' sense of unity is fostered through assemblies and guidance from tutors, such as updates from representatives of the student parliament and the eco committee. These also include the regular promotion of a *Value of the Month*. Pupils develop moral understanding and empathy through involvement in charity walks for causes such as suicide prevention, non-uniform days and playing music in a nursing home.
33. The personal, social, and health and economic (PSHE) education programme is well structured and contains appropriate content. Pupils develop mutual respect and empathy skills. Pupils learn about diverse lifestyles and characteristics and why it is important to respect these. They learn to consider issues by listening to others' views as well as reflecting on their own beliefs. The academy's communication of positive values and the importance of inclusion promotes respect and tolerance well. Pupils learn to respect different religions, faiths and cultural traditions.
34. Relationships between adults and children in early years are nurturing, caring and respectful. Staff have created a well-planned learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that offers a variety of learning activities for children, engaging their imaginations and helping them develop emotionally and academically.
35. In PSHE and other subjects, pupils learn about the importance of acknowledging and respecting people's protected characteristics, such as sex, race, and religion. Pupils learn how to recognise and manage their emotions, or strategies to deal with anxiety. They also learn about British and Belgian values such as local democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance.
36. The well-planned and well-resourced relationships and sex education (RSE) programme contains appropriate content. Pupils learn in detail and at an age-appropriate level about topics such as healthy relationships and the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs.
37. Pupils are taught how to maintain their physical and mental health and wellbeing, including through the suitable physical education (PE) programme. Lower school pupils take part in much exercise, including swimming, and develop their stamina. Upper school pupils learn skills related to a wide range of specific sports, such as positioning and returning the ball to particulars of the court in tennis.
38. Leaders and staff communicate the academy's behavioural expectations clearly. Consistent use of reward systems and the implementation of a *behaviour ladder* to help pupils understand how acceptable their behaviour is promote pupils' reflection and sense of accountability for their actions. Bullying is rare. Leaders raise awareness of the nature of bullying and the harm that it can do so that both pupils and parents are well informed about the academy's anti-bullying strategy.
39. Leaders demonstrate effective oversight of health and safety arrangements, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements such as those relating to fire safety and first aid provision. The proprietors engage external expertise and facilitate local services, such as the fire service, to produce audits and reports. The recommendations from these reports are acted on appropriately.

within the timescales stated. These include appropriate medical accommodation and external fire and catering hygiene audits.

40. Appropriate supervision rotas on both sites ensures pupils are supervised effectively. Staff-to-child ratios in early years meet requirements, and staff monitor both sites effectively at the beginning and end of each day as pupils enter and leave the sites.
41. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current UK statutory guidance and contain all information required in Belgium. Admissions are reviewed annually and attendance registers are checked twice daily. Contact with local authorities occurs as required whenever a pupil joins or leaves the academy at non-standard times of transition. Leaders diligently follow up on pupils' absences, resulting in attendance levels that are above the national average for schools in the UK.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

42. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. Senior and subject leaders promote positive values, kindness and how to contribute to the academy community and beyond. Pupil leadership opportunities and thoughtfully planned assemblies reflect the academy's motto '*Education for Life*'. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the academy and can reflect on their own and others' perspectives. Transition is well-planned, including when children start at the academy, when they move from Nursery to Reception and when pupils join Year 1. Effective communication takes place with parents and the presence of Years 6 and 7 in the same building as Years 8 to 10 enables the younger pupils to mix with and discuss the types of subjects and activities they could participate in when they are older. Older pupils also act as role models for the Year 5 and 6 pupils in the academy.
44. The curriculum promotes pupils' awareness of rights and responsibilities. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about why people's protected characteristics, such as their sex, race and beliefs should be respected. Pupils develop mutual respect through learning about global issues and the importance of empathy in diversity workshops. They learn about right and wrong and develop a deeper understanding of human relationships when discussing topics in PSHE lessons and tutor groups. Leaders maintain a school community that cares and models respect for all. Teachers ensure that pupils learn about different kinds of families and lifestyles as part of the planned curriculum. They learn to consider issues by listening to others' views as well as reflecting on their own. This promotes respect and tolerance well.
45. Pupils show respect for democracy and the rule of law through active participation in activities such as mock courtrooms and studying aspects of criminality, justice and democratic representation. Staff ensure that any discussion with political content presents an unbiased and balanced perspective. Pupils participate in leadership opportunities which promote a sense of social responsibility, such as being members of the lower school council, pupil parliament or the eco-committee, and taking on house captain roles.
46. School council representatives are democratically elected by pupils from Years 1 to 6. They share their ideas and opinions and are involved in the decision-making process for various activities. They plan and organise events and fundraise for their chosen charities, considering the needs of others in the community. The pupil parliament for those in Years 7 to 10 is democratically elected from each tutor group. Pupil representatives have organised voting on the group's logo and influenced the introduction of age-appropriate awards and merits for older pupils. The eco committee has generated engaging projects and competitions for upper school pupils to promote their involvement in supporting the environment.
47. Pupils develop their sense of social responsibility and economic awareness through structured opportunities such as charitable initiatives, values-led assemblies and PSHE lessons. Pupils also learn about economic wellbeing in Year 6 science, as well as in cross-curricular topics and through board games. These provide pupils with information about earnings, bank deposits, savings accounts and how to pay utility bills. Older pupils complete financially based project work and have the option to pursue a qualification in this area.
48. Pupils develop their awareness of possible careers through visiting speakers from a diverse range of fields, local employers and professionals alongside a well-taught *Global Perspectives* programme

that includes information on different careers and how these are changing as a result of global economics and technological developments. These activities and a well-organised Year 9 options booklet inform older pupils' qualification choices.

49. Pupils benefit from enrichment opportunities, including charitable initiatives and mindfulness practices. This enables pupils to engage with broader issues, promoting empathy, responsibility, and a readiness to contribute positively to their communities. For example, the eco committee not only discusses issues that could be addressed in the academy, such as workshops on the care and upkeep of bicycles, but also produces newsletters to inform pupils and the local community about the benefits of a vegetarian alternative and reducing food waste for the environment.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders maintain an effective culture of safeguarding across the academy. The academy's safeguarding policy and procedures reflect the current UK guidance.
52. The proprietors maintain effective oversight of the academy's safeguarding arrangements, including through an annual review. They ensure that any recommendations from this review are implemented effectively.
53. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date safeguarding training, commencing at their induction into the academy. Staff are aware of the different forms of abuse and signs that might indicate these. They understand how to respond to and report any safeguarding concerns that might arise, supported by the academy's clear reporting systems.
54. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained for their role. They respond promptly and act decisively when any safeguarding concerns are identified. Partnerships with external agencies are effectively utilised to support pupils and their families. Leaders refer concerns onwards to the relevant authorities when appropriate.
55. Leaders ensure that all the required pre-employment checks on staff are carried out. These checks are recorded in a suitable central record.
56. Appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Leaders assure themselves through regular checks that the filtering systems are effective, and that staff and pupils are protected while working online.
57. The academy has effective whistleblowing procedures. Staff understand what constitutes a low-level concern and report these directly to the headteacher in line with the code of conduct in the staff handbook. They can describe situations that they might consider low-level concerns and how they would respond to them.
58. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and can explain some of the measures they can take to help keep themselves safe. They are confident that concerns will be taken seriously and that they can speak with someone if they have a problem, including through an email address to report concerns. Leaders promote the importance of the academy being 'a telling academy', with prominent signs to inform staff and pupils across both sites about how to raise concerns or share any worries that they might have. The signs indicate who they can talk to and the types of problems they can share anonymously by using the provided email address.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

School details

School	British Junior Academy of Brussels
Department for Education number	000/6113
Address	British Junior Academy of Brussels 101 Boulevard Louis Schmidt 1040 Etterbeek Brussels
Phone number	+32 2 732 53 76
Email address	info@bjab.org
Website	www.bjab.org
Proprietors	Mme Patricia de Maertelaere and Mme Justine de Maertelaere
Chair	Mme Patricia de Maertelaere
Headteacher	Mr Francis Retter
Age range	3 to 15
Number of pupils	279
Date of previous BSO inspection	17 to 18 May 2022

Information about the school

60. The British Junior Academy of Brussels (BJAB) is an independent co-educational day school situated in the European quarter of Brussels. The academy opened in 1992, primarily for pupils from the British expatriate community. Since 1999, under the current proprietors, the academy has served a broad spectrum of the community and pupils represent a wide range of nationalities. It is registered as a not-for-profit organisation under Belgian law. The academy is housed in two buildings in close proximity. One building houses the lower school, for pupils from the age of 3 to 9 years, and the other, the upper school, for pupils from 9 to 15 years. The upper school opened in September 2020.
61. The academy has identified 93 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
62. English is an additional language for 59 pupils.
63. The academy states its aims are to deliver a broad and balanced education to enable the individual child to develop his or her maximum potential, in a dynamic and caring environment. It intends to offer an academically rigorous curriculum, balanced by superb pastoral care and a broad co-curriculum. The academy seeks to offer a truly personalised approach, with the very best of the National Curriculum of England, leading to Cambridge IGCSE and subsequently the IB Diploma.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

19 to 21 May

64. A team of three inspectors visited the school for three days.

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other proprietors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are British Schools Overseas inspected?

- The Department for Education accredits British international schools which meet the BSO Standards. Accreditation last for three years from the date of inspection.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect BSO schools. ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the school meets the Standards.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net