

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations

INSPECTION REPORT

**INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A
OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002**

Name of school:	Southbank International School, Kensington
DfE number:	207/6383
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell Supporting Inspectors: Mr Tony Hubbard Mrs Elisabeth Linley Mr Andrew Rickett
Dates of inspection:	30 April - 2 May 2013

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Southbank International School, Kensington	
Address of school:	36-38 Kensington Park Road, London W11 3BU	
Telephone number:	020 7229 8230	
Fax number:	020 7229 3784	
Email address:	admin@southbank.org	
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools Ltd	
Name of the Chair of School Board:	Sir Christopher Woodhead	
Name of Executive Principal:	Mr Graham Lacey	
Name of Principal:	Mr Mark Case	
DfE number:	207/6383	
Type of school:	Independent school	
Age range of pupils and students:	3-11	
Gender of pupils:	Male and female	
Total number on roll:	Boys: 107	Girls: 98
(Full-time)	Boys: 8	Girls: 6
(Part-time)		
Number of children under 5:	Boys: 0	Girls: 0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	None	
Annual fees:	See www.southbank.org for details	
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002	
Inspection Team:		
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell	
Supporting Inspectors:	Mr Tony Hubbard Mrs Elisabeth Linley Mr Andrew Rickett	
Dates of inspection:	30 April - 2 May 2013	

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Cognita Group and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. Aspects of the school's management and ethos are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Southbank Kensington is an independent primary school for boys and girls between the ages of three and eleven. It is part of Southbank International School which includes two primary schools and a secondary school. Since 2006 it has been part of the Cognita Group, which manages a family of independent schools. The school was first established in London for students between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, moving a number of times before settling on the current site in Kensington in 1992, when a primary school provision was added. The secondary part of the school is now established in Westminster and a second primary school in Hampstead. The primary school on the Kensington site has grown considerably during its relatively short history and now provides full-time education for 219 students, including 48 who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of their education and attend Early Childhood (EC) classes. Fourteen of these students below the age of four attend on a part-time basis.

Students attending the school represent 46 different countries currently and are the children of expatriates representing business, the diplomatic corps, the arts and news media, who are in the UK on short- to medium-term contracts. Many of the students are multi-lingual and a high proportion has English as an additional language (EAL); 42 require additional support for EAL. There are no students who have statements of special educational needs, although the school has identified 27 as having varying degrees of special educational needs (SEN). The school identifies students' abilities as broadly average and above. The aims of the school are expressed by the mission statement: *'Southbank International School is committed to developing students who are internationally minded, independent, enthusiastic about life and learning, and imbued with a sense of service to others. Our school strives for excellence in a happy, caring community founded on integrity and respect'*. The school was last inspected in 2010 by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

Students follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP). IB and school nomenclature is used throughout the report. National Curriculum (NC) year equivalence is shown in the table below.

School	NC Name
Early Childhood (EC)	Reception
Kindergarten	Year 1
Grade 1	Year 2
Grade 2	Year 3
Grade 3	Year 4
Grade 4	Year 5
Grade 5	Year 6

Summary of main findings:

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It meets its aims well and is successful at developing a caring community where students are happy and enjoy learning. The quality of education is good with a significant number of outstanding features. It enables students throughout the school, including in the EC classes and Kindergarten, to thrive and make progress personally as well as intellectually. The students say that they like their school and this view is reflected in comments received from parents. The curriculum provides them with a very wide range of opportunities to learn. Teaching is overall of high quality and teachers throughout the school work hard to plan their lessons effectively in order to make learning interesting. Teachers are effective communicators and are exceptionally well aware of the language needs of a large proportion of the children who do not have English as their first language. Good procedures for sharing information between teachers supports the process of ensuring that opportunities to learn are consistently provided for students relative to their age and need, including those who require support for EAL and SEN. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, supported by the range of opportunities provided through school visits which enrich the curriculum and opportunities made available through extra-curricular activities. Behaviour is excellent. Students are very well cared for and their personal development and the good progress they make relative to their ages and abilities is supported significantly by the positive relationships that exist between teachers and their students. All policies and procedures relating to their welfare, health and safety and safeguarding are thoroughly implemented.

What the school does well:

- teachers listen carefully to what their students have to say and as a result students feel that their views are valued;
- it ensures that lessons are structured effectively to meet the learning needs of all the students;
- it provides frequent opportunities for students to speak with their teachers about their work; and
- students respond to the challenge provided by teaching from the earliest years and develop exceptional learning and thinking skills.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school must share the results of the EYFS profile with parents so that they can discuss it with the teacher who has completed it.

What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

The school complies fully with the Equality Act.

Next Steps:

While not a regulatory requirement, the school might wish to consider the following points:

- to improve the consistency with which assessment is recorded;
- to make fuller use of the data the school has to assess standards across the school as a whole; and
- to extend the use of software for tracking students' progress and maximise the effective use of available data on their performance.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good with a number of outstanding features. It reflects the ethos of the IB and the mission statement of the school. The nature of the curriculum enables it to meet the needs of children who stay at the school for varying amounts of time or may join the school at different times during the academic year. It reflects successfully the school's goals for inquiry based learning and for 'transdisciplinary' learning and provides a range of activities which are appropriate to all students, including the considerable numbers who begin requiring support for EAL and those who are identified as requiring support for SEN. The curriculum provides good opportunities for all students to develop effective skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Their communication skills develop rapidly, supported by regular and effective opportunities for expressing their views. Students quickly become aware of the need to listen carefully to what their teachers say and this supports the pace of their progress.

The curriculum is broad and provides all students with rich opportunities to learn and make progress. Long-term planning guided by the IB PYP and supported by effective teaching, is successful in providing opportunities aimed at developing students as inquirers, communicators and risk takers and encouraging them to be knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, balanced and reflective. It is supported through a programme of planning and consultation undertaken very regularly and involving all staff. The thoroughness of teachers' planning reflects their hard work and commitment to both the school's aims and to their students. Teachers' planning documents reflect a theme of on-going development and modification designed to meet students' learning needs. Regular staff meetings, designed to support collaboration, involve all teachers, including subject, EAL and SEN staff, and are identified as essential in ensuring that students receive a consistent range of opportunities to learn and to develop their understanding. As well as supporting consistency, teachers say that the programme of regular meetings, which involves working together and in pairs, encourages the sharing of experiences and ideas.

Provision for students with SEN and EAL is good and delivered according to need. Assessing students' learning needs has to rely to a large extent on the observation of teachers, in particular Grade (class) teachers. This requirement is well served by the regular meetings which support the flow of information between staff. Records of students' learning needs are carefully maintained by the SEN teacher and individual education plans are of good quality. Support for students identified as having SEN and EAL is provided both within the classroom and through withdrawal from lessons for individual specialist support. The high quality of support seen in the classroom reflects the success of mechanisms established for passing information between SEN and EAL specialists and Grade teachers. Care is taken to ensure that when students are withdrawn from lessons for SEN or EAL support that there is minimum disruption to their access to the curriculum as a whole. The school makes appropriate use of outside support from educational psychologists and other specialists as necessary.

The curriculum includes English language, home languages, Spanish, mathematics, science, social studies and the arts (including the visual arts, music and drama). The curriculum for mathematics is currently under review to ensure that it fully meets the needs of all students, including those with SEN. The development of creative skills is well served through art and music. All students study the violin or cello through the Suzuki method from the Kindergarten to Grade 5, and a further 27 take additional music lessons. The quality of provision in art is high. Students in a Grade 3 art class took delight in discovering and sharing techniques using oil pastels. The range of materials and media available to support learning in art is notably good. Aspects of design and technology are available at various points in the curriculum, including through visits and after-school clubs. Older students have limited opportunities to use practical electronics and resistant materials, although elements of simple programming and control technology are being introduced through information and communication technology (ICT). Computers are used routinely throughout the school as part of learning and the school benefits from excellent ICT facilities. The specialist teacher provides important additional support to the use of ICT throughout the curriculum. Provision for students' physical education (PE) has been considerably enhanced by a sports centre, purchased recently by Cognita to serve all three campuses that constitute Southbank International School.

The range of opportunities provided by the curriculum supports students' preparation for the next stage of their education and provides a sound basis for their future adult lives. Its quality is enhanced and enriched through field trips, for example to the London Wetlands in Grade 2 and to the London Zoo in Grade 3 as part of a unit of inquiry being studied currently, linked to 'sharing the planet' and the range of extra-curricular activities available. The personal, social and physical education programme (PSPE), and the inquiry approach to learning, provides many opportunities for students to explore how they think and feel about moral issues and they are encouraged to appreciate the views of others. 'Exhibition' lessons require students to prepare presentations of completed units of inquiry visually and to be able to present their findings and achievements to others, including their peers.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and in many aspects, particularly of the teaching, excellent. All the teaching observed was at least good and much was excellent. The school has sustained and built upon the strengths noted in its previous inspection report, and students of all abilities, including the most able, are now identified and challenged effectively. As a result, they develop into highly educated young people, well prepared for the next stages of their schooling. Assessment, and in particular the consistency with which progress is recorded and analysed, is not yet sufficiently well developed.

The strength of the teaching is apparent in the enthusiasm which students show in their work, and in their exceptionally well-developed powers as learners. Only occasionally does the attention of students flag. Mostly they pay close attention to their teachers, each other and the activity in hand. Their learning shows an uncommonly consistent energy, derived from the pace of the teaching. At all ages they are becoming adept researchers, guided by the teaching they receive. They learn to use books and ICT effectively to seek and use information. They are encouraged to be reflective and to see that problems rarely have simple answers,

because their teachers give them the space to think and to have their ideas and thoughts considered. This reflectiveness is evident in their writing. Students work and plan equally well alone or in pairs or larger groups. In a Grade 3 lesson students preparing an exhibition for their unit of inquiry based on the environment busied themselves with their own tasks but would stop, despite the urgency, to help out another.

Teachers are well qualified and skilful. They are very familiar with the expectations of the IB PYP and make sure that all its elements are constantly in play through the topics they cover. Lessons are extremely well planned and resourced. They follow a defined structure, with clear, well-understood aims, and are carefully timed. The needs of individual students are thoroughly thought out in advance. Teachers are aware of those in need of special attention and cater for them extremely well. Lessons are very well resourced, most notably by the use of displays, which are always part of the learning of the children. For example, in Grade 2, students coming to terms with a food web constantly returned to a bright display about food chains to check their information. The best lessons have outstanding pace and purpose, in which students are constantly encouraged and challenged. As a result students' conceptual frameworks are enlarged and enriched constantly, because they have so much encouragement to express, explain and debate their thoughts and ideas. These elements are less apparent in the good than in the excellent lessons.

Teachers are skilful at asking open-ended questions and at listening to what the students say, and at drawing the attention of others to its importance. This is no less true of specialist subjects like Spanish than it is of other subjects. Because they are aware that their teachers regard what they say as important, they listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. So the levels of speaking and listening are high at all ages. The small class sizes play an important part in this. Thus in mathematics, classes divided in half to allow for violin lessons become virtual one-to-one-tutorials. As a result, students are very well grounded in mathematics, but are also adept at their different levels at problem solving and investigation. Reading and writing are very well supported through language classes and through the curriculum. Students have very secure foundations in literacy. They write well and fluently, either by pencil or a computer, showing a good mastery of grammar and a wide vocabulary. They can write for a variety of purposes in a variety of styles. They read well and tracking of their reading includes their mature personal reflection on what they have read relative to their ages. Their progress in Spanish is extremely good for their ages.

Students show good recall of the factual information they gain in the units of inquiry. They make excellent progress in the key concepts, vital for future academic study, such as cause and effect or the use of primary and secondary evidence. They are able to think across subjects and are taught and deploy a wide range of learning skills, including the taking of notes and the drafting of surveys. In all lessons students with SEN or EAL needs are very well supported. Teachers know the students well and plan effectively for students with SEN, EAL or those identified as particularly able. Learning assistants are used effectively to this end, so that students of all abilities progress at an appropriate rate. Data on progress is of limited reliability, because of the small size of the cohorts and their transience in the school. The data provided by the school indicates that over the last three years progress in mathematics, reading and writing has been broadly in line with similar schools.

There are some strengths in assessment and it is good overall. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and provide oral or written feedback on improvement. They give students responsibility for their progress, for example by using symbols to indicate standard corrections to be made. Students evaluate their own and each other's work with critical perception and sensitivity. Their reflective essays about their strengths and areas for improvement are searching and mature. Students show an understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers keep suitable records of progress in mathematics and English, including levels achieved and records of students' development across the learning requirements of PYP. The school has rightly identified that the way in which assessments are recorded centrally lacks sufficient consistency to support fully the exchange of information or to allow the management a broad picture of progress. Students in Grades 3 to 5 are entered for external international tests to support evaluation of their progress. The management has scrutinised this information perceptively, and, for example, identified a specific weakness in narrative writing and set in place a remedy. It has, however, not reviewed the effectiveness of the intervention, and is not using the tracking of assessment information fully to drive up standards. There are opportunities to make greater use of computer software for the tracking of students' progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is excellent. Provision for their personal development is a central aspect of the life of the school. It closely reflects the school's ethos to respect both oneself and others and the appreciation of the cultures, traditions and beliefs of all members of the school community. The emphasis on international cooperation has created an environment in which cultural diversity is valued and celebrated. The vast majority of behaviour throughout the school is exemplary and is characterised in the high quality of relationships that exist between the students themselves, of whatever age, and the mutual respect between students and teachers.

The social development of its students is an important aspect of the school's aims and is a significant strength. Students have many opportunities to work collaboratively often sharing ideas that reflect their personal cultural backgrounds. This enhances their appreciation of the importance of how different people celebrate traditions and beliefs and they show considerable tolerance and respect for these differences. A strong sense of community is promoted effectively through a wide range of themes delivered in assemblies known as 'Town Meetings'. Social skills are developed through the study of issues such as the effects of behaviour and attitudes on social justice and students express their views on such topics very articulately and with confidence. There are good opportunities for students to develop social skills, for example, Grade 5 students acting as buddies for Kindergarten children offered positive encouragement in a gentle way. The quality of the students' reflection is excellent. They are encouraged to look back at their successes and achievements both academically and personally to recognise what they have done well and how they might do better.

Students' moral education is excellent and they develop a clear understanding of right from wrong and articulate clearly how their actions make an impact on the lives

of others. A particularly strong aspect of this is the support students receive to think through the consequences of their actions, a principle central to the school's approach to managing behaviour. The PYP Learner Profile makes an important contribution to the development of students' awareness of the views and opinions of others and in developing their understanding of human behaviour. This is particularly strong through Exhibition time, which places an emphasis on identifying specific actions that will make a difference and be beneficial to the lives of others; for example, a Grade 5 group prepared a presentation to the rest of the school and parents about taking action to plant trees to replace deforestation.

Cultural development throughout the school is exceptional. The school grasps opportunities both within the curriculum, and in its wider life, to celebrate diversity through units of inquiry that focus on exploring themes such as 'Who We Are'. A Grade 4 unit of inquiry on migration was an excellent example of how the school uses the students' own experiences to enhance their understanding of the topic. Students are open-minded in the way that they approach these studies. They respond with enthusiasm when challenged about their perceptions of stereotypes and discrimination and have a mature understanding and acceptance that their viewpoints may change over time. Through a wide range of experiences, that includes African drumming and gamelan music, students develop empathy for the cultures and traditions of other countries. Social studies is a thread running throughout the students' learning and promotes their understanding of forms of prejudice and intolerance by engaging them in debate and the sharing of opinions and views. Specific units on inquiry about faith and belief help students to understand how religion can be an important part of a person's cultural identity. The school ensures that such studies provide a balanced approach through, for example, visits to a range of different local places of worship.

Students have an exceptional ability to reflect on their own successes in their learning and show considerable skill when reflecting on moral and ethical issues. Groups of students were able to express difficult concepts relating to the development of a social conscience that helps guide their decision making. They contribute to the local community through support for local charities and community projects, such as a link with a care home as part of their study on local history and to the wider community through events, such as concerts which raise money to support overseas charities, for example under-privileged children in India. Students take responsibility for fundraising through their leadership of the student council, which has supported a school in Tanzania. The council has also worked with parents to raise awareness of organic vegetables and has raised money to provide vegetable gardens in partnership with other local schools. Students have a good understanding of the processes that govern the country, including how democracy works. They explore how laws are made and issues of social justice such as equality and the fair distribution of resources around the world. Studies as part of the PSPE programme promote an understanding of public and social institutions such as the police and emergency services and the school has a good relationship with the local community police officer. Visits to places such as the Houses of Parliament and Kensington Town Hall enhance the students' understanding of national and local government.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety is good and students are well cared for. All matters relating to fire safety are routinely followed up, fire equipment regularly serviced and tested, and fire drills are suitably logged and reviewed. Risk assessments of the premises, including the EYFS accommodation, are in place. All trips and visits out of school are rigorously assessed for risk. An appropriate written policy for first aid is implemented and sufficient staff have up-to-date training. A suitable policy for safeguarding provides good guidance to staff. The designated child protection officer (CPO) and deputy CPO have up-to-date inter-agency training, as does the school counsellor. The school takes account of local safeguarding arrangements and the officers responsible have established links with the appropriate local authority officers. Students tell inspectors that they feel safe and secure in their school.

The arrangements for promoting good behaviour and tackling bullying are well understood and effective, so that sanctions are rarely needed. A record of serious misdemeanours is maintained, including those few occasions on which a pattern of behaviour has needed attention. Students say that bullying is not a problem and that any issues are dealt with effectively by staff. Records of concerns about behaviour or bullying are carefully recorded and indicate that firm action was taken, as well as consultation with both students and their parents. These records, however, do not make clear what the final outcomes have been, so that it is difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the system.

The quality of pastoral care is excellent. Students show confidence and trust in the staff because of the priority given to their needs and well-being. The care shown by all staff is supported by oversight from the school principal. Careful records are kept of any significant concerns and communication among staff about the need for special sensitivity is good. The system is supplemented by the presence of a qualified and experienced school counsellor, whose cosy room provides a welcoming and secure refuge for the discussion of issues and troubles. Staff are acutely aware of the personal stresses that arise from the frequent arrival and departure of students and cater for this sensitively. Students throughout the school show a good understanding of the importance of health and fitness and are encouraged to eat healthily and to drink water, accessible throughout the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has maintained the improvement noted in the previous inspection report. It has a rigorous system for ensuring that the recruitment of new staff. Appointment panels include two members with training in safer recruitment. Vetting and barring or, where relevant, overseas checks are carried out automatically before any appointment is confirmed. A record of checks undertaken is kept appropriately in a single central register.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The accommodation is of a high quality and the premises are suitable for effective learning. The school has benefitted from extensive refurbishment since the previous inspection, which has created a pleasant learning environment, enhanced by the good quality of displays throughout the school. There is adequate space for the number of students in the school and facilities for physical education have recently been enhanced significantly by access to the school's own sports centre. Regular site inspections ensure a high quality of decoration and maintenance. Extra toilets have been added since the previous inspection to reflect the growing number of students and provision for the short-term care of students who are sick or need medical treatment is suitable.

Specialist areas include a well-stocked and pleasant library, an art room and a separate music room. The hall serves a number of uses, including for PE, Town Meetings and lunchtimes. The ICT suite is very well used and contains equipment of high quality. Outside space is good and has been developed creatively with areas for students to play or sit quietly in the shade. The school is making further improvements to the garden with the support of 'Trees for Cities' following a suggestion from the school council. This will add vegetable beds so that outside space can provide additional support for teaching and learning.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The information available for parents is comprehensive. The school's website provides easy access to a range of policies, including for safeguarding students and makes clear that more information is available upon request. Weekly newsletters provide up-to-date information about events at school such as new staff appointments or initiatives that are being organised by the school council. Other documents for parents provide useful information; the 'Back-to-school' documents, with parent and student handbook and information on the PYP, are particularly helpful. Reports to parents provide a clear and detailed picture of their child's progress. Parents also have the opportunity to discuss the progress their child is making during formal parents' evenings that are held during the school year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school has formally adopted the Cognita complaints procedure and practice and fully meets requirements. The policy is made available on the school's website.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002.

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

The Southbank Kensington Campus is popular and has grown significantly in recent years. Its aims and ethos are clearly stated in school literature which reflects the principles set out by the IB. Management ensures that the school serves the needs of its international students well. Since becoming part of the Cognita family of schools in 2006, the school has seen substantial investment which has enhanced the learning environment and improved learning opportunities. To improve the curriculum, in particular with respect to opportunities for physical activities in an inner city environment, a sports centre has been purchased which is now used by all three schools.

In response to the need to clarify and improve management across the three schools that constitute Southbank International, Cognita has introduced a new management structure. The changes are aimed at further developing the one-school character of Southbank International, ensuring clear lines of communication across the school at all levels and clarifying responsibilities. The changes were introduced partly in response to concerns expressed by parents about the change and structure of management, and relating to the transfer of students between the primary schools and the secondary school, and between the two primary schools. The new structure, headed by the School Board and chaired by the Cognita Chairman, includes the Executive Principal and six parents, three of whom are co-opted and three elected. Other groups, established to support management at whole-school and individual school levels, now provide opportunities for the participation of a wide range of interests in the development of the school.

The Kensington Campus provides a programme of meetings between staff and the school's management which ensures the involvement of all in the on-going development of the curriculum and improvements in the quality of learning. Regular staff meetings are designed to ensure consistency of opportunities of learning for all students. Staff demonstrate their support for the school through their hard work and enthusiasm. The school's management is aware of the need for ongoing improvement. Despite clear strengths relating to assessment, it is aware of the need to improve the use of data for tracking progress to enhance their oversight of student's academic performance across the school. This is recognised in the whole school development plan. The results of standardised assessments are not yet reviewed by the school board. In addition, the school's management has not always ensured that the impact of actions taken in the school are thoroughly evaluated; for example, when a specific weakness in narrative writing was traced and a strategy put in place to deal with it, the effectiveness of the strategy was not reviewed.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision

The overall quality and standards of the provision is good. The EC classes follow part of the IB PYP. Fundamental to this is to provide a framework for children's learning that enables them to become 'active inquirers' and 'life-long learners'. Much has been done since the last inspection to facilitate these outcomes and the planning of purposeful and challenging opportunities for learning has improved. As a consequence, children in the EC classes benefit from a well-planned range of stimulating activities, both in the classrooms and outdoors, and they achieve well across all the areas of learning as a result. A particular strength is the children's personal and emotional development. Children are encouraged to think for themselves and they do. They are confident to organise their own learning and this was demonstrated in the classroom when two boys decided their restaurant needed improving and set off to make an 'open' and 'closed' sign.

The tracking of the children's progress clearly shows their good progress over time and summative assessments record whether children are meeting or exceeding expectations for their age. Portfolios of the children's work, well-evidenced and dated, celebrate their achievement and involve both children and parents in the review of what they contain. Children were proud to share the contents of their portfolios with the inspector.

How well the early years' provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

The school is effective in meeting the needs of children in the EC classes. Teaching is consistently good and on occasion outstanding. The staff team work together well to provide a good balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities across all the areas of learning. Modifications to the planned activities, to meet the needs of the individual child, are made as required and are based on the children's key workers' on-going observational assessments. Staff focus on developing children to be inquirers and constantly challenge them to think for themselves and to organise their own activities when possible. Children have many opportunities to do this, both indoors and outside where a very good range of learning experiences was seen to include writing, reading, role play, climbing, counting, and sand play, to name but a few. An exciting activity linked to a unit of inquiry on shadows and pattern was particularly enjoyed by the children when they investigated the 'dark box' in their classroom. They used wind-up torches to shine on the mirrors inside the box and then told stories of what they had seen as they imagined monsters and other tales.

A key factor in the children's achievement is the way in which the provision is unique to each child. It is in this way that children's individual needs are met. This was observed when a child in EC3 enjoyed joining cubes to make a very long line of 100 and then 200 and marked where the 'ten' occurred by placing a red cube in the correct position. Evidence shows that clear lines of communication, and work with parents and others, are established to ensure that individual support provided for children with learning needs, and for those with EAL, is effective. The staff team has identified that more can be done, however, to formalise the team's approach in this respect. Even so, all children benefit from the teachers' encouragement to try new things, the valuing of all their efforts and the high-quality questioning by staff in both

classes that challenge the children to think carefully and make decisions about their own learning.

The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being

The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being is good. The school's policies and procedures, together with the appropriate completion of employment checks, ensure that provision for children's safety and well-being is effective. Relationships within the EC classes are particularly strong and staff work well with parents and others to ensure that the children's needs are met effectively. Similarly, children build strong relationships with older pupils, and the buddy system, when Grade 2 pupils work with the EC children, for example to hear them read, is beneficial and much enjoyed.

The children's natural curiosity, the promotion of inquiry and the consideration of 'taking risks' in learning are fundamental to the early years' provision. The children develop in confidence to work out solutions to early problems and they are, as a result, well prepared for the next steps in their education. Children also develop an awareness of how to keep healthy and stay safe. Through the social occasion of snack time, healthy snacks are enjoyed with their teachers, and water is available at all times. Through daily physical activities outdoors, children explore the garden and play equipment and, in this way, children develop an awareness of how to stay safe, for example when riding a bike while other children nearby are building a den, reading or writing. The children show that they are caring and considerate of others.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision is good. The EC staff work together well as a team under the effective leadership and management of the team leader. Much has been done since the last inspection, and this has resulted in the improved quality of provision and the progress children make in the EC classes.

Staff have benefited from recent training on the requirements of the EYFS. Work with the local authority has also supported their further development by a review of their assessment procedures and moderation of the assessments completed to confirm their accuracy. Staff appraisal has been instrumental in the improvements made, and this process in turn has aided the setting's self-evaluation and planning for the future. For example, the review of music and physical education as currently provided for children, in addition to the daily provision for the expressive arts and design and their physical development, has been planned.

Information for parents is comprehensive and the many ways of communication, established to enable a successful partnership between home and school, aid their children's learning effectively. Reports to parents are thorough and provide helpful information about what the children have learnt. However, the information on the results of the EYFS profile, completed with children at the end of EC4, is not shared with parents as required. Parents are able to discuss their children's work and reports at the formal parents' evenings and they are made welcome into school on a regular basis. The vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that they were very happy with their child's education.

Does the school meet the mandatory requirements?

The school meets all but one of the mandatory requirements.

What does the school need to do in order to comply with the regulations?

In order to meet the mandatory requirements in full, the school should:

- share the results of the EYFS profile with parents so they are able to discuss it with the teacher who has completed it.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the ISC and its constituent associations. Further copies of the report are available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk