

The Swedish School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	318/6076
Unique Reference Number (URN)	102942
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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The school is one of a number of Swedish schools abroad. It opened in 1907 to provide education to the children of the representatives of Swedish organisations and companies located in London so they could continue their schooling within the Swedish education system while living in England. It moved to an attractive site on the south bank of the River Thames in Barnes, in the Royal Borough of Richmond, in 1976. It admits boys and girls from the ages of three to 19 years. There are currently 247 pupils on roll. There are 12 children under the age of five, none of whom are in receipt of public funding under the government's nursery education scheme. There are no pupils with a statement of educational needs. Of the 101 students in the *gymnasieskola* (college for students aged 16 to 19 years), 73 live locally with host families. This provision was last inspected by the Commission for Social Services Inspection in December 2006. Occasionally this number increases when students come from Sweden on short exchange visits. Since late August 2009, the *gymnasieskola* has been housed in accommodation rented from a local university. The school aims to 'produce a sociable, independent, responsible and academically motivated student in a safe and secure learning environment'. It was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The Swedish School provides an outstanding quality of education and meets its aims fully. Parents and pupils express a high level of satisfaction with its work. Pupils of all ages make outstanding progress over time as a result of the outstanding quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment. Provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding and pupils develop high levels of self-discipline and self-confidence, reflected in outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. Recruitment and other procedures have improved since the last inspection, and safeguarding arrangements are now robust and contribute to making outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The pre-school embraces the principles of the English Early Years Foundation Stage framework and the overall effectiveness of this stage is good. The school has made good progress in improving its provision since the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding. The curriculum is outstanding and directly relevant to the needs of all pupils. Pupils benefit from personalised education from pre-school; they have individual educational plans that are reviewed at weekly or fortnightly intervals to meet their needs closely and ensure that they cover the curriculum areas well. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the provision is at least good in all areas of learning. In pre-school, the curriculum provides a good foundation for implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage. Provision for modern foreign languages is exemplary; pupils learn English from pre-school, which supports their language development well, and French, Spanish and German from the secondary classes. English is taught to a very high standard and is the teaching medium of physical education (PE), music and art. Consequently, pupils are highly competent Swedish–English bilingual learners by the time they leave school. In the *gymnasieskola*, students choose between a social science and languages programme and a natural science programme. Each student has a personally agreed curriculum, having discussed how best to distribute the courses over the three years. Students have the opportunity to evaluate each course at the end, so that modifications can be made to suit their needs.

Provision for pupils who have linguistic or learning needs is particularly strong; early identification of their needs enables teachers to put in place timely intervention programmes with the support of specialists. This ensures that these pupils can progress at the fastest rate of which they are capable. The programme of personal, social and health education is taught across the curriculum and makes a strong contribution to pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles. Secondary and post-16 students receive good careers advice from teachers and the Swedish visiting careers service. The curriculum is well resourced and teaching and learning are extremely well supported by information and communication technology (ICT). The rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits extends pupils' experiences and understanding of curriculum areas well.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and of their pupils' aptitudes and needs, and high expectations of pupils of all ages. They share the objectives of each lesson clearly with pupils and check regularly that these have been met. From the Early Years Foundation Stage to the *gymnasieskolan*, they communicate an enjoyment of teaching, plan an interesting variety of activities and use a wide range of methods to meet the learning styles of individual pupils. Small classes, combined with outstanding behaviour, allow teachers to pursue individual pupils' interests without distracting the focus of others. Probing questions stimulate discussion and thinking and pupils participate with enthusiasm, willing to voice their own opinions and to listen to the views of others. However, in a few lessons, overly long teacher introductions and explanations result in some passive learning. Where the teaching is outstanding, it maintains a relentless pace and level of challenge throughout and frequently engages pupils in peer- and self-assessment against precise success

criteria. This promotes an exceptional high level of intellectual, creative and physical development in pupils. In the *gymnasieskolan*, teachers mix lecture and tutorial styles to good effect. They encourage students to carry out independent research and to take responsibility for meeting deadlines and seeking guidance when needed. Discussions are frequently of high quality, with students prepared to question and challenge their teachers.

From an early age, pupils are taught how to set their own objectives for the coming week or fortnight, evaluate what they have learned, reflect on their performance and then re-set their learning goals. Parents are involved in deciding their children's targets for improvement with the form teachers. Pupil progress is carefully monitored and recorded throughout the school and the small size of the classes allows for many opportunities for individual feedback and guidance. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the requirements of formal Swedish examinations and prepare pupils extremely well in examination techniques. As a result of outstanding teaching and assessment, pupils make outstanding progress over time. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make outstanding progress towards the expected goals. By the end of secondary school, pupils achieve very highly in Swedish, mathematics and English. All secondary pupils move on to a *gymnasieskolan*. All *gymnasieskolan* students gain entry to universities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons and extra-curricular activities, and levels of attendance are very high throughout the school. They appreciate the school's caring and supportive family environment, a view which is shared by the parents. Pupils develop very high levels of self-esteem and are able to express and justify their views with confidence in at least two languages. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and demonstrate this in their consideration for other pupils of all ages. They demonstrate exceptionally high levels of self-discipline and their behaviour is outstanding. They are courteous to each other and welcoming of visitors. In class, relationships between staff and pupils are informal and relaxed, yet based on mutual respect. Pupils show outstanding social skills when working collaboratively with others in pairs or in groups, and when playing harmoniously together. The personal qualities and excellent key skills which they develop prepare them extremely well for their future.

Pupils contribute to the community in its local and global dimensions by helping to raise funds for Sport Relief and Red Nose Day and by joining in borough-wide projects such as the 'Big WOW' (competition encouraging pupils to explore nature on their walk to school) and art exhibitions. The school council has taken the initiative to organise a social event with the Norwegian school and has been instrumental in re-designing the school sweatshirts. Pupils have regular opportunities to participate in school performances. The older secondary pupils take responsibility for helping the youngest and new pupils settle in. Visits to locations such as the London museums

and the Houses of Parliament give pupils an understanding of local history and public institutions and enhance their cultural development. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in a multicultural society and, recently, participation in a Holocaust Day presentation helped pupils reflect on moral and ethical issues. However, there are pockets of unevenness in pupils' cultural development as some year groups have fewer first-hand experiences than others, which was noted by a few parents and *gymnasieskolan* students.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Procedures for first aid and the care of pupils with medical needs are meticulously managed by the school nurse. All staff have first aid training and the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has appropriate first aid qualifications for this age group. All staff receive the appropriate level of child protection training at the required intervals. Thorough checks and assessments are carried out to minimise risks in all circumstances. As a result, all pupils feel very safe and extremely well cared for. They say that there is no bullying in the school. The school is exceptionally successful in creating a calm, orderly and inclusive community in which pupils enjoy a high level of emotional well-being. Registers are well maintained and the electronic system in use in the *gymnasieskolan* to monitor attendance is very effective in reducing absence. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy eating habits from the pre-school; they have bread, fruit, water and milk at snack time. Lunches are cooked on site and include an impressive choice of salads to accompany the main dish. Provision for PE includes a broad range of sports and swimming, and many pupils take up after-school physical activities. *Gymnasieskolan* students have access to a gymnasium but report that they do not have regular sports activities. Most pupils walk or cycle to school.

The school has planned well to increase accessibility and will be drawing up a fresh plan to review the possibility of further improving access to the premises and the curriculum.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has improved its recruitment procedures since the last inspection. All the required checks are now carried out on staff to confirm their suitability to work with children and they are recorded centrally.

School's premises and accommodation

The Barnes site provides teaching accommodation that is fit for purpose, light and airy. It is enhanced by colourful displays of pupils' work which contribute to their enjoyment of learning. There are suitable areas for safe outdoor play for all age groups. The *gymnasieskola* benefits from spacious accommodation with excellent specialist facilities appropriate for the numbers on roll.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wide range of information to parents and others. The parents' school council holds monthly meetings with the headteacher to discuss welfare and educational issues, as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Parents say that they feel well informed of their children's progress. They have frequent meetings with their children's form teachers and they receive two detailed annual reports that benefit from the recent inclusion of results in public examinations.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures meet all of the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Outstanding welfare provision, combined with good educational provision, secures outstanding outcomes for children. Children make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development because teachers work in close partnerships with parents to meet children's individual needs and they prepare a safe, inviting and inclusive learning environment in which children thrive. The 'key person' system enables teachers to know children extremely well and so children feel very safe and secure. Children develop an excellent awareness of hygiene and healthy eating through the firm establishment of daily routines. They spend a large proportion of their day outdoors. Spoken language is fostered very strongly, and so children are able to interact, communicate and express themselves to a very high level. This helps them to be very attentive to activities led by teachers and to persist in activities. Outcomes in reading and writing are less strong because the Swedish education system does not promote these formally until the age of six. Children enjoyed modelling chickens for Easter, and achieved impressive outcomes having manipulated different shapes and materials and talked about the world around them.

The leadership and the management of this stage are good. Teachers are well qualified and plan effectively together to improve the provision. Each child has an individual education plan that indicates a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. However, adults do not consistently involve themselves in children's play to extend and assess their learning. Secure assessment processes are in place and involve parents. However, teachers' observations are not always closely linked to the expected goals and are not used systematically to record what the child's next step might be in each area of learning. The use of the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles is at an early stage. The coordinator recognises that the recording of children's learning journeys would be enhanced by the inclusion of photographic evidence.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and provide a consistently high level of challenge throughout
- ensure that the excellent programme of educational visits and extra-curricular activities enjoyed by some classes is matched for all year groups
- in the Early Years Foundation Stage, improve assessment practice by:
 - ensuring that observations of children's learning are always closely linked to the expected goals and are used to record what the child's next step of learning might be
 - ensuring that teachers engage in play with the children and use these activities as opportunities to extend and assess children's knowledge, understanding and skills
 - including photographic evidence of children's achievements and activities in the records of their learning journeys.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?	✓			
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		✓		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		✓		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		✓		

The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	The Swedish School		
DCSF number	318/6076		
Unique reference number (URN)	102942		
Type of school	All-age school with post-16 boarding arrangements		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	August 1907		
Age range of pupils	3–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 88	Girls: 159	Total: 247
Number of boarders	Boys: 18	Girls: 55	Total: 73
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,600		
Annual fees (boarders)	£11,500		
Address of school	82 Lonsdale Road London SW13 9JS		
Telephone number	020 87411751		
Fax number	020 87419372		
Email address	office@swedishschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jan Dackenberg		
Proprietor	Swedish School Society in London Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Dates of inspection	16–17 March 2010		