



Swedish School in London

Governance and 2025 Vision

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1. Introduction and background

The Swedish School in London has been providing high quality education for the children of London-based Swedes for over 110 years. The school currently caters for approximately 290 pupils aged three to 19 years of age. Parents choose the school for their children for a variety of reasons, but chief among these are the opportunity for their children to become fully bilingual in both English and Swedish to a level sufficient for tertiary education in either language; the consistently excellent standard of teaching to a Swedish curriculum; the small classes, and being part of the broader Swedish community in London.

The Swedish School in London was founded in 1907, with its original location at the Swedish Church in Harcourt Street. In 1976, the lower school moved to its present location in Barnes, while the sixth form started in Barnes in 1995 and has been based at The National Archives in Kew since 2020. The school as a whole serves the Swedish community in London, whether children of Swedes in the UK for shorter periods on behalf of companies back in Sweden, or children of Swedish or Nordic families permanently settled in the UK. While the teaching at the school is primarily in Swedish, the school enjoys a rich cultural context with many children coming from families with one non-Swedish parent. The high number of exchange students from Sweden to the sixth form also provides the students at the school with new perspectives.

The school's ethos of mutual respect, inclusivity and civic responsibility filters through all areas of its activities, and pupils of the school emerge as true cosmopolitans, having interacted with a host of different languages and cultures within the school population. While the Swedish culture is celebrated in many ways, the large number of parents from other countries further enhances a truly international world view, which is only fitting in a city famous for its rich cultural mix.

The next five years will be focused on maximising student uptake and retention through effective marketing of our unique selling points including our high quality of education; bilingual ethos; focus on digital skills; tradition of building confidence through creativity, and 'opening doors for the future' by preparing our sixth form pupils with practical career-building skills such as networking and CV preparation.

2. School Governance

2.1 Regulatory standards

The school adheres to the Swedish national school curriculums¹, as well as the regulations laid out by Skolverket. This means that the school is compliant with all aspects of Swedish education as detailed in the Swedish government's School Act² and School Ordinances for preschool, compulsory schooling³ and sixth form⁴.

As it is based in the UK, the school is also inspected by Ofsted⁵, which means it needs to ensure its compliance with this regulatory framework to maintain its current 'Outstanding' status (February 2019⁶). Similarly, matters of Safeguarding⁷ and employee rights are also governed by UK law.

2.2. Organisation

The Annual General Meeting

The school is a not-for-profit organisation, registered as a UK charity. The parents at the school are the charity's members and elect a board of governors at the Annual General Meeting. The AGM provides a forum within which members:

- are presented with the annual accounts;
- confirm the chairman and governors of the Board;
- elect new governors when required;
- confirm the auditors for the next financial year;
- grant discharge of the governors.

Members are encouraged to ask questions and raise any concerns with the Board if necessary, so that it is robustly held to account by the people who elect its governors.

Board of Governors

The board consists of seven permanent members. A minimum of one governor is required to be a member of the charity (i.e. a parent at the school). Each governor may serve up to six years on the board, with a one year extension granted in exceptional circumstances. To fulfil its obligations to the Swedish public school system's regulatory body, and to receive grants⁸, the board must have one member who acts as a representative of Skolverket. The board meets once a month during term time.

The board of governors is responsible for holding school management to account, ensuring not only that action plans and policies for the school are up-to-date and adhered to, but also in the Chair conducting regular update meetings and annual performance reviews with the Headteacher and

¹ <https://www.skolverket.se/sok#query/l%C3%A4roplan>

² https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800

³ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skolforordning-2011185_sfs-2011-185

⁴ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/gymnasiefordning-20102039_sfs-2010-2039

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/inspections>

⁶ <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/27/102948>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

⁸ <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statsbidrag/statsbidrag-for-svenska-utlandsskolor-201>

Chief Financial Officer. The Board is also responsible for the appointment/dismissal of these two roles.

Another essential aspect of the Board's functioning is to ensure the school's financial security. In addition to approving the budget, this is done through regular contact of the board's Treasurer with the CFO, as well as financial reports presented at every monthly board meeting. This financial responsibility includes setting yearly school fee and staff salary increase percentages. The Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the charity complies with applicable laws, regulations⁹ and good business practice.

Part of this good practice is to maintain a culture of trust and transparency in the organisation, with communication being key to this. The Board should ensure that it communicates any relevant information regarding the functioning or future of the school in a timely fashion to the management team, staff and parents. The presence of two Staff Representatives (one from grundskolan, one from gymnasiet) at each board meeting makes this communication a two-way process, and provides the staff with a voice at board meetings as these representatives are able to raise their colleagues' concerns and lend their professional expertise to discussions. These representatives are elected by their colleagues for a year, with the possibility of being re-elected.

Aside from its overall view of the school's operations, the Board must also look to the future. Monitoring of potential pitfalls economically or politically, and an openness to opportunities, will mean that the school is able to adapt and thrive moving forward.

Headteacher and School Management

The Headteacher takes executive responsibility for the running of the school, assisted in this operational function by the CFO. This management team works closely together to ensure the action plan for the school and budget are aligned. The Headteacher and CFO work across both schools, and the Headteacher may recruit additional support on the management team.

In addition to day-to-day running of the school and implementation of their action plan, the Headteacher is responsible for ensuring compliance with the relevant curriculums, School Act, Skolverket and Ofsted regulations, and UK employment law. As they are also responsible for maintaining a high standard of education, their own continued development of professional skills and knowledge is therefore essential, and opportunities to further these include courses and interactions with other school headteachers.

As well as keeping the board apprised of developments and potential issues at the school, the management team has the main leadership role in supporting and motivating the school's staff. Annual development talks take place with each staff member conducted by the Headteacher. It is essential to the successful working environment and cohesiveness of the school that they are able to unite the staff behind them and their leadership of the school.

Teachers and Support Staff

The school's staff is its greatest asset, and the quality of their work has a direct impact on the quality of the education received by our pupils. Ensuring that they feel motivated and supported in their working environment not only means that they will perform to the best of their professional abilities, but also that they are more likely to continue working at the school and sharing their valuable experience.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/charity-commission-regulations>

Professional development, including training opportunities and regular development talks, is essential. The fact that we actively ensure every teacher at the school is qualified gives the curriculum both depth and breadth, and the ability to adapt to new teaching methods allows the school to continue to evolve. In order to best facilitate their pupils' individual learning journey, the staff need to ensure that they evaluate progress on a consistent basis and maintain excellent communication with parents.

Communication is also similarly important, allowing for a cohesive and collaborative group of colleagues all aligned with the school's goals. This communication, at and between all levels of the school's structure, also serves to build trust throughout the organisation. Without this trust, uncertainty and demotivation are unavoidable consequences. Delivery on promises is a natural trust-builder, but consistency of professional treatment throughout the staff is also a priority.

2.3 Community engagement

The school should actively engage with its broader community and external Nordic organisations, in order to raise its profile, fundraise when appropriate, and continue to serve as an anchor for many Swedes in London.

2.4 Quality & Evaluation

The board expects the school management to maintain and monitor the school's high standards continually across its provision of education and pastoral care, as well as the satisfaction levels of pupils, parents and staff. The monitoring of further outcomes, such as when pupils leave either the grundskola or gymnasiet for further education, is also an important part of this continuous assessment.

2.5 Marketing

Considering both the specificity of its educational offering and its location, the school has relied on an effective marketing strategy for several years. However, the new, ongoing challenges posed by for instance Covid-19 and Brexit mean that boosting the profile of the school both in London and internationally, while continuing to improve quality, learning outcomes, student acquisition and retention is more important than ever. While the marketing strategy is driven by the Headteacher, it is essential for the board to stay regularly apprised of this strategy and to be ready to approve further resourcing where appropriate.

2.6 Fundraising

The impact of Covid-19 and Brexit on student numbers is likely to be a significant focus of the board and management team over the coming five years. Along with an effective marketing strategy, fundraising for both improvements to the school environment, and for initiatives such as scholarships and bursaries, will be necessary. Fundraising at this level is a board responsibility, and will involve reaching out not only to the immediate school community, but also to Swedish institutions in London.

3. 2025 Vision – ‘Growing global citizens’

A high-quality Swedish education with London as a classroom, providing bilingual education from ages three to 19, benefitting from small class sizes, dedicated teachers, and a deeply-engaged school community of pupils and parents.

This strategic vision document is the Board’s governing document and sets out the overall direction for the school’s operations for the period 2020-2025. Re-evaluation of this document must be done continuously, and responsibility for this rests with the Board. Based on this strategic vision and the curriculums set by the Swedish public school system (Skolverket) for all stages of elementary/secondary (grundskolan) and sixth form (gymnasiet), the Headteacher, in collaboration with the school’s teachers, will prepare an annual action plan. This action plan will clearly articulate how the strategic vision goals will be achieved, and the responsibility for monitoring and updating this action plan rests with the Headteacher.

3.1. Qualified teachers providing high standard education

As the school’s primary function is to provide a high-quality education for its pupils, we are proactive in ensuring we have teachers who are all qualified in their subjects. Continuous professional development aligns strongly with the feedback from Ofsted in particular. Their recommendations at the last inspection were helpful in improving certain areas of the school’s and board’s functioning, and their emphasis on constant self-assessment and improvement in order to continue earning ‘Outstanding’ at inspections doesn’t just apply in a regulatory sense, but also as an underlying ethos for the board, management team and staff.

AMBITION:

- *The depth of teacher knowledge is continually improved by both external training and collegial learning opportunities.*
- *Benchmarking with other Headteachers and educational developments is also an important factor, and should be actively sought out by the Headteacher on an ongoing basis.*

3.2. Bilingual and bicultural pupils

An essential function of the school is to provide a well-rounded bilingual education for its pupils. While the initial degree of fluency in English and Swedish varies from pupil to pupil, depending on where they have previously lived/what combination of two or even three languages is spoken at home, the teachers are experienced in assessing each pupil’s proficiency and ensuring that both languages are developed to a high level. Pupils are then able to go on to schools or tertiary education in Sweden or in English-speaking countries with equal confidence.

AMBITION:

- *This is part of the school’s ‘unique selling point’, and as such, continuous development in the area of bilingual and bicultural education is vital.*
- *This is further enhanced by actively seeking out opportunities to interact with other bilingual schools to broaden our understanding of teaching methodologies.*

3.3. Preparing pupils for a digital future

The rapid digital evolution, specifically in education and in the workplace, provides significant opportunities to both pupils, teachers and parents. The potential to incorporate technology in both the classrooms and in the overall efficiency of the school can bring huge benefits, such as personalized learning, continuous feedback, and ease of sharing and collaboration. However, a measured approach to new technologies/applications is important and involves understanding and assessing potential flip sides to ensure the overall experience remains positive.

AMBITION:

- *Implement, monitor and assess the progress of the Digitalisation Report prepared by a staff work group in November 2019.*
- *Ensure that the usage and benefits of any new technology or software introduced in the classroom are fully understood by pupils, teachers and parents, to ensure its full potential is utilized.*

3.4. Confidence through creativity (förskola & grundskola)

For more than 25 years the school has produced an annual 'Spring Show' in which all pupils at the grundskola participate by acting, singing or assisting with the production. Events such as this, and the annual 'Lucia' Christmas concert, help children build confidence and encourage creativity from an early age. This also provides the grounding for pupils who do wish to pursue careers in the creative arts to move into sixth form schools and universities that specialise in these areas.

AMBITION:

- *Continue to produce music and theatre performances encouraging participation of pupils of all ages, and actively seek out new opportunities to engage pupils' creativity through performance*
- *Continue to offer a broad range of extra-curricular activities relating to music and creative arts*

3.5. London as a classroom (gymnasiet)

As such a high percentage of our gymnasiet consists of guest pupils from Sweden, it's clear that a unique selling point of the sixth form is its position in London. Along with providing a standard of education as high as they could expect in Sweden, pupils are provided with the opportunity to experience the huge variety of cultural, academic and historical experiences as part of their learning. This develops their cosmopolitan world view, and equips them with the skills to further their education at international tertiary institutions.

AMBITION:

- *Continue to utilise London as a classroom, utilising all opportunities to enhance the learning of our pupils.*
- *Ensure that this unique element of the school is well-communicated to potential pupils.*

4. A Happy, Healthy School

In addition to the vision there are a number of areas which the school continuously focuses on to ensure the pastoral aspects of the school are as high-quality as its educational standards. These include:

4.1 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

While the school is too small to provide the necessary resources for pupils with significant special needs, it is clear from developments in the understanding of neurodiversity that many pupils with SEN can thrive in the classroom with adaptations to help facilitate their learning. With access to a range of SEN resources, the school should continue to work not only with these pupils and their parents in creating and evaluating action plans, but also with continuing teacher education to support the staff's ability to cater for these pupils.

4.2 Learning environment & Facilities

The school's not-for-profit status means that income over and above its running costs is reinvested back into the school to continue enhancing its function as an educational space. Both the grundskola and gymnasiet should be continuously assessed and maintained to ensure they are welcoming and safe for both pupils and staff. Improvements to classrooms, learning materials, sports, creative, and playground equipment should continue to be made.

4.3 Inclusivity & Kindness

The fact that the school caters primarily for the Swedish community in London does not mean that it is a homogenous community. We actively embrace the different cultures that the school brings together, and not only tolerance but understanding and support of others' differences is a core value. The school takes a strong anti-bullying stance, with a focus on pupil wellbeing across the board, including in personal, social and health education (PSHE).

4.4 Mental health

We are fortunate to live in a time of growing awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, and the opportunity to create an environment within which mental health challenges are treated with the same openness and understanding as physical ones should not be missed. Young people (often far younger than we might expect) find their mental health under increased pressure from factors such as social media, online gaming, sexting, pornography, and the impact of Covid-19. A head-in-the-sand approach to these issues will not make them go away, and raising awareness, educating both pupils and parents, and ensuring that pupils feel they can talk openly to the trusted adults in their lives is essential.

4.5 Drugs & Alcohol

It would be unrealistic to claim that our pupils exist within a bubble that guarantees their avoidance of drugs and alcohol, and no school would sensibly do so. The school's policy is rightly one of zero tolerance, but this is another area where education and raising awareness is key. Along with talks by police on the illegality of drug use, we continue to educate pupils on the unpredictability and danger of under-age drinking and all drug use.

4.6 Integration of new families

As the school has such a significant percentage of families that come from Sweden and other countries either temporarily or permanently, we should aim to make the transition into London life and the school as comfortable as possible. Friends of the Swedish School do an excellent job of providing opportunities for new parents to get to know other parents at the school, as well as London in general, but we can always do more to help new families settle into this community.

4.7 After-school activities (förskola & grundskola)

It is understandable that parents of younger children should expect some kind of after-school offering, especially as working in a city like London is so logistically challenging. While we have provided after-school activities from both teachers at the school and external suppliers, this should be continually assessed to ensure that this offering meets the standard of what parents should reasonably expect as this impacts the school's viability as a long-term option for working parents.

4.8 Sustainability

Sweden has always had one of the world's best track records on protecting the environment, one of the world's most famous Swedes is Greta Thunberg - the fact that she is a schoolgirl making a difference in the global dialogue around climate change is inspirational for both children and adults. The school should always aim to make the most environmentally sustainable choices in all areas of its functioning, from incorporating the theme of sustainability in the classroom, to recycling, equipment purchases, and the maintenance of the school grounds.

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