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part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

**British Schools Overseas**

**Inspection Report**

**Britannica International School, Shanghai**

**February 2025**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Britannica International School, Shanghai			
<b>Address</b>	Britannica International School, Shanghai 1988 Gubei Road near Wuzhong Road Shanghai 201103 China			
<b>Telephone number</b>	(+86) 021 6402 7889			
<b>Email address</b>	admissions@britannicashanghai.com			
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Paul Farrell			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Kevin McNeany			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Orbital Education			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	353			
	<b>Early years</b>	38	<b>Primary</b>	171
	<b>Seniors</b>	126	<b>Sixth form</b>	18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24 to 25 February 2025			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Britannica International School, Shanghai is a co-educational day school located in the centre of the city of Shanghai. Established in 2013, the school is owned and managed by Orbital Education who provide operational and management services and oversight. The school's governance team comprises senior Orbital Education staff based in the United Kingdom. The school is made up of three sections: early years, primary and senior, which includes a sixth form.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The school aims to develop ambitious, resilient and independent pupils who acquire a lifelong love of learning. It strives to encourage pupils to respect the people and the world around them and to develop responsibility, integrity and compassion.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Approximately three-fifths of the current school population comprises expatriate pupils, representing around forty nationalities. The rest of the pupils are of Chinese heritage. The school's own assessment data indicates that the level of ability of pupils, when they join the primary school or Year 7 in the senior school, is broadly average. The school has identified five pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are 331 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 55 receive additional support to enable them to access the curriculum. The school identifies pupils who are more able in a given area and seeks to provide additional challenge for them through the curriculum or other activities.

## 2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO). It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements. Schools may opt for an inspection of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

**This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas.** The standards represent minimum requirements, and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. In order to gain BSO accreditation, a school is required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report. If a school does not meet all of the standards, it may elect to be re-inspected once it has taken the required actions in order to gain BSO accreditation.

**Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.**

Accreditation as a British school overseas lasts for three years. This is the school's first accreditation inspection.

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified.

## Part 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 **The standards relating to the quality of education in paragraphs 1, 2(1)(a) and (b), 2(2)(a) to 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(i), 2A, 3 and 4 are met, but that relating to paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) (encouraging respect for other people) cannot be met because it is precluded by the host country's legislation.**
- 2.3 The curriculum is well planned and effectively takes account of the aptitudes and needs of pupils of all ages, including those who have special needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For children up to the age of five, the school follows a programme based on the United Kingdom's early years foundation stage (EYFS), with an emphasis on developing curiosity, linguistic skills and children's confidence in leading their own learning. Pupils in the primary and secondary phases follow a broad and balanced curriculum which is based on the English national curriculum and which covers all the areas required by it. Pupils work towards iGCSEs at the end of Year 11 and A levels in the sixth form. Support for the large majority of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is a key feature of the curriculum. This includes the effective deployment of teaching assistants. Pupils are successful in simultaneously mastering the English language in addition to the content of the curriculum, as evidenced by their understanding and use of spoken and written English. In line with the school's aims, the curriculum promotes the development of global citizenship and education about different cultures through an ambitious and extensive programme of language learning.
- 2.4 Pupils are able to explore and develop new interests and skills through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These include clubs relating to sport, drama, music, curriculum extension and areas of general interest. The programme offers a range of options for pupils in the sixth form, who can also volunteer to lead or support activities.
- 2.5 The school provides suitable careers guidance. From an early age, as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, pupils are encouraged to have regard to their aptitudes and temperament in thinking about career paths and being open to all possibilities. Older pupils receive impartial advice when choosing GCSE and A-level options and applying to universities all over the world. The PSHE programme also prepares pupils for life in British society as well as teaching pupils about fundamental values. However, elements relating to the promotion of respect for peoples' protected characteristics are precluded from being met because of the law in China.
- 2.6 Teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge and effective planning which incorporates suitable activities and teaching strategies to enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers provide and use a range of appropriate resources effectively and lessons are purposeful and productive. They challenge more able pupils and support those who have specific needs or areas of relative weakness. Equally they allow pupils to deepen their understanding by thinking and learning for themselves. Pupils appreciate the extra help that teachers are willing to give and their clear and patient explanations and advice. Skilful teaching motivates pupils to aspire to improve and develop a love of learning. In response to the pre-inspection surveys, the vast majority of pupils said that their teachers know how to help them to learn. Teaching ensures that British values are not undermined and does not discriminate against pupils due to their protected characteristics.
- 2.7 An effective assessment system is in place to track pupils' attainment and progress and identify where additional support is needed. Leaders and teachers make effective use of standardised data to produce both minimum and aspirational termly targets. Marking and feedback helpfully set out next steps for pupils' learning so that they know how to improve.

## Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.8 The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, paragraph 5(a) and (b)(i) to (v) and (vii) are met, but that relating to paragraph 5(b)(vi) (encouraging respect for other people) cannot be met because it is precluded by the host country's legislation.**
- 2.9 Through its PSHE programme and the curriculum as a whole, the school actively and effectively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is a view that is supported by almost all parents in response to the pre-inspection surveys. Pupils develop an understanding of public institutions in England. The PSHE programme is supplemented by a regular programme of assemblies, house activities, tutor time and displays in classrooms and corridors. An effective pastoral system with its strong emphasis on individual welfare enables pupils to grow in self-esteem and self-confidence, distinguish right from wrong and accept responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils show respect for each other and for adults who work in the school. They actively contribute both to the school and the wider community through service, the fulfilment of leadership roles and charity work, thus enabling them to experience and enact democracy and put the responsibilities of citizenship into practice.
- 2.10 The school ensures that the United Kingdom's Equality Act (2010) is followed in so far as the law in China will allow. Respect for the protected characteristics relating to disability, sex, marriage, age, race, religion and belief is actively promoted. However, the school is precluded by the host country's legislation from actively promoting protected characteristics relating to sexual orientation, same-sex marriage and civil partnerships and gender reassignment.

## Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16] are met.**
- 2.12 The school has robust safeguarding measures in place. Members of the safeguarding team undertake suitable training and apply United Kingdom statutory guidance appropriately to the context of the school. Leaders are held to account through regular consultation and reviews with the school's proprietors to ensure that the safeguarding policy is implemented effectively. Clear communication systems allow early identification and resolution of issues. Child protection records are detailed, clear and securely stored. Staff receive regular training so that they are able to recognise and address issues such as potential abuse, neglect and mental health issues. Training ensures that staff are not complacent about the possible occurrence of safeguarding concerns. Policies and procedures are clear and well understood by staff. They are vigilant to safeguarding issues in their day-to-day dealings with pupils and recognise the need to take prompt action to communicate or act upon safeguarding concerns when they arise. There are clear procedures for managing any allegations against staff that might arise. Leaders are aware of the risks that pupils face, including in the wider community. Those risks and the school's response to mitigating them are effectively communicated to the relevant staff.
- 2.13 There are appropriate and adequate channels for pupils to report concerns. Pupils are confident that they have a trusted adult who they can speak to if they have any worries, and that prompt action will be taken to support them. The school educates pupils effectively about how to stay safe, including online, a view that is supported by almost all pupils in the pre-inspection survey. Pupils feel safe in school. Appropriate network filtering and monitoring systems are in place in school, and leaders regularly check these for effectiveness.
- 2.14 Procedures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying are known and understood by pupils and staff and are implemented effectively. The PSHE curriculum, assemblies and events such as anti-bullying week are effective in educating pupils about kindness and compassion. A suitable system of rewards celebrates pupils' success, efforts and achievements, and appropriate sanctions are applied on the relatively rare occasions where the need arises. In their survey responses, almost all pupils

agreed that the school expects them to behave well and takes bullying seriously. Suitable records are kept, enabling leaders to identify trends and patterns.

- 2.15 The school complies with local fire and health and safety requirements. Regular checks are made of premises, machinery and equipment. A robust maintenance programme, which includes fire detectors, alarms and extinguishers, is in place, and record-keeping is thorough, reflecting an effective overview of the school's procedures. Fire drills are carried out regularly and suitably recorded.
- 2.16 Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the school day and on school trips. Arrangements for the supervision of children in the early years are robust. The school has a suitable policy for first aid and its effective implementation ensures that pupils who are ill or injured are treated by well-qualified staff in a timely manner. This includes staff with appropriate paediatric first-aid training and a fully qualified school nurse. Medicines are kept securely and their administration carefully recorded.
- 2.17 Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. They are stored and backed up as required by local laws. Staff follow up any unexplained absences immediately. An appropriate risk assessment policy is in place and implemented effectively so that potential risks involving areas of the school, activities and people are suitably identified and mitigated.

#### **Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.18 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**
- 2.19 The school carries out the required checks on staff, proprietors and any other adults working at the school to ensure their suitability to work with children, in line with both local requirements and guidance issued to schools in the United Kingdom. These checks are carried out before the start of any adult's employment. A suitable single record of appointments is maintained, and staff files include all the required documentation. The school does not use supply staff.

#### **Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.20 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**
- 2.21 Appropriate toilet and washing amenities are provided for pupils of all ages. The school has a suitably equipped medical centre with appropriate washing and toilet facilities. The premises are maintained to a high standard of safety and hygiene. Acoustic conditions and both internal and external lighting are suitable. The provision of drinking water is adequate. Ample space is available for physical education and general recreation.

#### **Part 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.22 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**
- 2.23 All the information required by the Standards is provided or made available to current parents and the parents of prospective pupils. The contact details for the school, the principal and the proprietor and a statement of the school's aims and ethos are published on the school website. Also published on the website are policies and particulars of arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions; provision for pupils who speak EAL; the procedure for complaints; the curriculum; arrangements to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying; and health and safety and the school's provision for first aid. Details of the provision for pupils who have SEND are provided on request, and the school provides parents with three written reports annually on their child's progress.



## **Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

### **2.24 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

- 2.25 The school's appropriate complaints policy provides for a three-stage process with clear timescales, including an initial informal stage. If concerns are not resolved informally, parents are able to proceed to a formal stage by submitting a complaint in writing. If the concerns still remain unresolved, the school makes provision for a hearing before a panel which includes at least one person independent of the management and running of the school, which parents may attend, accompanied if they wish. The policy allows for the panel to make findings and recommendations and for a confidential record to be kept.

## **Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

### **2.26 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

- 2.27 The leadership and management of the school, including the proprietor, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities so that the BSO Standards are met consistently and the wellbeing of the pupils is actively promoted.

### 3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, pupils and staff to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

#### Inspectors

Mr Stephen Fox

Reporting inspector

Mrs Sarah Harley

Team inspector (Deputy principal, Hong Kong)