



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

Willow International School

Quesada, Spain

Date
Inspection number

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding, if appropriate); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

During the inspection visit, over 50 lesson observations took place, as well as a series of learning walks. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, and a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. Parents were also surveyed, online. The inspection team were in school for three days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans, with team member Cheryl McSweeney, working online.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British schools overseas. The school actively promotes tolerance and a respect for all human differences, within the confines of the law. This is embedded in the culture and ethos of the school. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Willow International School (WIS) is a warm and friendly school that offers education and care in a vibrant and creative community of staff and students. Since it opened in September 2020, the school has successfully inspired students to learn and to reach their full potential. Much of the teaching is exciting and enjoyable. More than 90% of parents agree that the school is a safe and secure environment, where their child is happy and makes good progress. There is capacity in the school for even more improvement. The ethos of the school combines academic aspiration, personal development and student wellbeing.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- emphasis on the personal developments of the students;
- strong sense of belonging;
- effectiveness of the leadership team;
- work ethic of students, which is excellent;
- dedication of staff, both teaching and non-teaching to ensure each student feels valued as an individual;
- culture of teacher co-operation and collaboration which permeates classrooms;
- community relationships which are valued;
- students' behaviour and engagement;
- passion of the owner and principal of the school.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

1. Further refine the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that all lessons are as good as the best, including by:
 - a) upskilling teachers to make best use of the IT (hardware and software) that is available to them
 - b) encouraging more focus on extending the challenge offered to the most able students;
 - c) ensuring there are even more opportunities to observe one another teaching;
2. Consider consolidating data and systems into one place/package, and ensure that all staff make full use of that;
3. Monitor the impact of any and all new initiatives to measure the impact on learning.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school	Willow International School		
Address	Avenida del Mar 2b, Local 6-7 Pueblo Bravo 03170 Ciudad Quesada Alicante, Spain		
Main telephone #	+34 865 758 026		
Website	www.willowinternationalschool.es		
Email	info@willowinternationalschool.es		
Principal	Mrs Amanda Riding		
Chair of board of governors and proprietor	Mrs Amanda Riding		
Age range	4-16 years		
Number of pupils	Total = 87	Boys = 43	Girls = 44
Pupil numbers by age on date of entry	0-2 yrs = 0	3-5 yrs = 1	12-16 yrs = 49
	6-11 yrs = 37	17-18 yrs = 0	18+ yrs = 0
Total number of part-time pupils	None		

3.3 British nature of the school

WIS provides aspects education and care that are clearly British:

- The primary curriculum is based on the English National Curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The secondary school curriculum broadly follows the English National Curriculum.
- Classroom management, colourful displays of work, three term year and age-related year groups all contribute to a British feel of the school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are incorporated within each lesson throughout the curriculum, across the primary and secondary classes.
- The British flag is proudly displayed throughout the reception area.
- Parents are an integral part of the school's ethos, contributing with regular communication, thoughts and ideas.
- The school encourages outside speakers and community led projects., such as the Major of Rojales and a local artist who delivered a specialist workshop, incorporating the local environment.
- The school hosts daily as well as residential trips that are both educational and recreational, for example to the Valencia Science Museum, Elche Multi Aventura Park, as one would expect in a British school in the UK.
- Assessments are based on national standards from the UK.
- Communications from the school to families and students are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website.
- The parents are highly supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents, suggested they valued the British style of education.
- The leadership structure mirrors British schools, with defined roles for leaders and teachers in both primary and secondary classes.
- Pastoral care is a high priority with dedicated staff fostering student welfare and wellbeing.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies are evident, understood by stakeholders and applied throughout the school.

5. *Standard 1* The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at WIS is good: there are some aspects which are outstanding.

5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum is good and meets the BSO standards.

The school has a clear written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of students, including those with special educational needs. It is clear that the curriculum does not undermine the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, offering the EYFS Framework and National Curriculum for England from Years 1 - 11. Curriculum maps are shared with parents at the start of the year and highlight year specific curriculum coverage for the mixed year groups.

The curriculum is balanced in terms of academic disciplines, sports and the arts. The full-time supervised education gives students experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social education, as well as physical, aesthetic and creative education. It ensures students acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. There is personal, social, health and economic education which reflects the school's aim and ethos. Students in secondary have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented impartially and enables them to make sensible choices about a broad range of career options. Overall, this encourages them to fulfil their potential.

Continuous provision is provided in the mixed age class of Reception, Year 1 and 2 and is linked to the curriculum topics of KS1. These topics are adapted to the local context and allow for real life experiences for the children, for example discussing food from their home countries, UK and comparing it with their local environment in Spain.

The curriculum is enriched in primary by working in partnership with others, for example, talks from the local food bank and the local council who provided workshops with the students regarding recycling. They take part in trips each term related to class topics to further their knowledge and understanding.

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Outside the traditional English curriculum, enrichment also involves events, activities and assemblies which develop children's understanding of British culture and traditions, such as the King's coronation. Additionally other cultural days are celebrated allowing the nationalities of the school to share their own special days.

English as an additional Language (EAL) support is available across the school. In primary, the class teachers provide learning dictionaries with visuals, words and text in their own language for each curriculum topic. Further support is outlined in an intervention plan, written by the class teacher implemented by a teaching assistant outside of the class each week. Students are then also requested to attend a weekly after school club providing extra support.

During the last two weeks of the year, transition from primary to secondary is carefully effected: this allows the students to start the KS3 curriculum before the summer and allow familiarity of the secondary building and understanding of lesson transition and the pastoral care and guidance in secondary through the tutors.

The school provides a comprehensive curriculum in KSs 3 and 4, aligned with the National Curriculum for England and enhanced by the provision for Spanish in the National context. The curriculum is sometimes adapted to meet the needs of individual students, including those with learning difficulties by class teachers.

WIS has already mapped provision for September 2024 at KS5, introducing 5 A level courses following students and parent consultation. For KS4, the school is offering alternative pathways for present students to allow academic provision for more vocational courses and creative subjects in GCSES and Entry Level 2 and 3 courses.

Students have access to extra curricular activities both during the school day and after school, both offering academic support sessions for the older students and other classroom based clubs such as, craft club, Spanish conversation and *Surprise* club which has a different focus each week. Possible clubs each term are shared by the school each term and parents select for their children, the most popular are then run for that term.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good; some lessons were outstanding.

Teaching at WIS enables students to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability. They increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.

Teachers know their students very well. They are therefore able to encourage students' application of intellectual, physical and creative effort. Teaching generally involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, with suitable activities and excellent management of class time. In a lesson on fraction for years 1 and 2, the teacher engendered excitement by linking the activities to the students' home life, like eating pizza with their parents.

Teachers show excellent understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students. This understanding is mostly woven into the planning and delivery of lessons. All teachers demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught; some teachers who had outstanding subject knowledge were able to provide very finely tuned individual support, for example in a year 10 mathematics lesson. Most teachers utilise classroom resources very effectively; the resources are of a good quality, quantity and range.

In the best lessons, teachers support and enhance students' interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves. For example in an English lesson for years 7 and 8, the teacher dramatised an activity using hats and a (supposed) visitor, who could only speak Welsh. Based on the graphic novel 'The Arrival' by Shaun Tan, the lesson encouraged deep thinking about what it was like to be in a place where you could not understand what was happening, not even understand what people were saying.

Teachers utilise highly effective strategies for managing behaviour, though this was rarely necessary. They encourage students to act responsibly and do not undermine the values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. In appropriate lessons, for example a year 10 history lesson on why there was opposition to the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1960, there is a clear and evident promotion of mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. There is no evidence of discrimination against students at WIS because of their individual characteristics.

There is a framework in place to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly, but it is somewhat disjointed, especially between primary and secondary. This means that opportunities to tailor learning even more to the individual are sometimes

missed. Teachers do use information from assessments to plan teaching so that students can make progress, but sometimes the recorded data is not as strong and coordinated as the excellent knowledge teachers have of their students. The WIS assessment framework allows students' performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents, but links between primary and secondary teaching are in their infancy.

6. *Standard 2* Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at WIS is outstanding.

The school enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence: this is done by encouraging them to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely. The students are taught the importance of respect for each other and for other cultures.

Students have many opportunities to develop cultural understanding. The school promotes awareness through the curriculum, guest speakers, assemblies and by collaborative events for example at Christmas where students had the opportunity to discuss, if they celebrated Christmas and how they celebrate sharing traditions and experiences.

The school aims to teach students to be positive individuals who know how to act responsibly, and who can become more independent as they grow older. The aim is to ensure that all know the value and importance of making a positive impact on the lives of other people. A moving secondary assembly illustrated how much the staff and students respect one another, and how confident they are sharing sensitive personal matters, for the benefit of all.

The school does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It does not discriminate against students because of their protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The school ensures an unbiased and fair approach to teaching students about the various beliefs that are held by differing political standpoints. Teachers remain politically neutral when delivering content to students and when discussing current events. This has been particularly relevant when friction between countries that the students belong to, in recent times. The school draws students' attention to matters and current events through a timetabled and thoughtful tutor time programme, which has been adapted to events that happen in real time, for example items of news interest.

7. *Standard 3* The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of students at WIS meet the requirements of the BSO standards and are good.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils is a high priority. The school values are displayed prominently around the school and have been created out of daily practices in the building. Bullying is rare, which reflects the school's on-going efforts to eliminate it. On the odd occasion where it does happen, the school attempts to deal with it firmly but sensitively. Students are well aware of the dangers of online bullying and know strategies to combat it effectively .

The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy: the principal is the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a senior colleague deputises in her absence. The school's child protection policy is suitable. It includes details of procedures for staff.

In the primary classes, student welfare is the responsibility of class teacher; in the secondary classes, the role is taken by the form tutor.

The school has an appropriate first aid policy. Medicines are not dispensed without parental consent, which is sought by phone and followed-up by email or text message. A small stock of medicines is stored on site securely in a locked cabinet. Logs are maintained for medicines dispensed.

Students' behaviour across the school is excellent and reflects an enthusiasm for learning. The school has a clearly defined and understood behaviour policy. During break times and at home time, students are supervised effectively, with sufficient members of the teaching staff on duty in play areas and in communal areas.

Students can explain confidently how to keep themselves healthy. They normally make informed choices about healthy eating, fitness and their emotional and mental well-being. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and are confident in staying safe from abuse and exploitation.

The school promotes the safety of its students with regular fire drills and is compliant with local regulations. Visitors to the school have coloured lanyards so that visitors and staff can easily be identified.

Most pupils come to school in private cars. Arrivals and departures are orderly, being supervised by teachers and senior leaders.

8. *Standard 4* The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

Everyone at WIS takes safeguarding and child protection seriously. National and international regulations and guidance is followed to ensure safe appointment of new staff. All senior leaders have up to date training on safer recruitment and understand the importance of ensuring the correct procedures are followed before new staff members are employed.

The proprietor has a clear vision for the school and supports it well. The school ensures that staff have a local police check prior to starting work. Qualifications are checked and references are taken up to provide assurances that the person is qualified and suitable to work with children. Appropriate checks include identity, medical fitness, legal right to work, qualifications if appropriate before employment. The single central register contains details of police checks, health checks and visa arrangements, as well as reference checks.

After the application process has been completed, a medical form is started, and stored carefully. Any staff member who has worked in the UK now provides an international child protection certificate (ICPC) police check before employment is confirmed. Police checks or its equivalent are conducted for all staff before employment. Recent staff turnover has been handled appropriately, and without putting students at risk.

WIS ensures that any appointment adheres to all laws related to the role in this part of Spain. The permits, teaching licences and visas are checked. Supply staff are not used.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The school's buildings and premises are good. WIS appropriately works to the standards required by the Valencian regional government, including its inspections and spot checks for premises, lessons and staff.

Classrooms are well lit and spacious. All are well-ventilated with windows, doors, and a recent air filtration system installed in 2022. They are suitable acoustically and are appropriate for the climate of this part of Spain.

There are suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of students. Separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over are provided. In the primary section, one classroom has direct access to toilets; there are two further toilets in the main area, one of which is suitable for students or adults with disabilities. The secondary building has three main toilets on the first floor, one of which is equipped as a disabled toilet. All washrooms have wash basins at the correct height.

Suitable drinking water facilities are provided. Toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water. Cold water suitable for drinking is marked as such. The temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk.

The school values outdoor learning and makes sound use of the areas available, including the sports and play areas. Students and staff also use nearby local woodland areas.

The school has a separate first aid room at the back of the school office which supports students' medical needs or who require medical attention. There are two qualified first aiders.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is good, and meets the standards for BSO.

All appropriate information is made available. Following this inspection, a copy of the report will be published and maintained on the school's website and made available to the parents of each student. An annual written report of each student's progress and attainment in the main subject areas taught is provided to the parents. All information required for the purposes of the inspection was provided and inspectors were given access to the school's admission and attendance registers.

The school's address and telephone number and contact details for the principal and proprietor for both term-time and holidays is made available. Similarly, a telephone number on which the proprietor may be contacted is on the website. There is also a clear statement of the school's ethos and aims. The WIS policies on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions are (amongst others) available to parents.

One group of parents interviewed stated that communication between teachers and parents is a strength; they suggested that they are pleased with the genuine care of students provided by staff and believe that staff are always prepared to listen and guide students. They stated that their children are safe and happy at school and the leaders are passionate about the students' wellbeing. Parents are mainly confident with the lines of communication, be it email or in person and can identify the relevant members of staff they would need to contact to resolve any issues that arise. One parent stated "I've not known another school that goes above and beyond in helping and getting the very best from the children".

Parents were surveyed by inspectors and more than 90% feel their children are doing well. One parent wrote "It is clear that by child is happier since being at Willow, through supportive teachers who truly care".

The school's newsletter is sent weekly to parents and provides a range of information about various aspects of school life. Important updates are provided in the newsletter and celebrations of learning are shared. As the school has grown, a PTA group has been established. Although in its infancy, community events, such as carnival week and Christmas Fayre have been supported this year.

Provision of information for parents is a two way process; parents are invited to participate in surveys by the school to seek parental feedback on academic pathways, further developing the curriculum offered as the school grows. Regular parent teacher meetings allow parents to be involved in their child's learning, discuss their progress, future choices and ways to support at home, based on what they are doing at school.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's policy for handling complaints of any sort, meets the BSO standards.

The first stage is *informal resolution*, and it is intended that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a concern, they normally contact their child's form teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved at this level to the parents' satisfaction.

If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, they can consult with a member of the leadership team. Any complaints made directly to the principal will usually be referred back to the relevant member of staff unless the principal considered it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should that be the case, the aim is still to resolve the matter informally. However, the involvement of the principal at this stage will be in exceptional circumstances.

Stage 1 complaints will normally be addressed within 7 working days from the point at which they are received. Where there are reasons which prevent this from happening, the staff member dealing with the complaint will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame. A written record of all complaints is kept and this will include the date on which the complaint was received, the action taken and the outcome.

Should the matter not be resolved informally, despite the teacher's best efforts, then the parents are able to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - *formal resolution* – required that parents put their complaint in writing to the principal using a complaint form available at the school. The principal decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take including the person to take the lead in any investigation.

There is not currently a well developed process for complaints about senior leaders or principal. However, parents with long-standing relationships with the school suggest that whenever they have had concerns, these have been resolved effectively.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are good; some aspects are outstanding.

The proprietor, supported by the board, ensures that the leaders and managers at WIS have skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, so that the BSO standards are met consistently. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The board offers support to the principal. All members of the board are staff at the school and none are independent, so their vision is necessarily relatively limited.

There is a strong and effective emphasis on the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This leads to students being protected from harm and neglect. Leaders and teachers discuss the contribution students can and will make to society, and their social and economic well-being. In particular, the senior leaders actively promote the well-being of students, including their physical and mental health, and emotional well-being.

The school's proprietor and the leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and of the challenges that it faces. Their passionate leadership ensures that the school is successful in relation to the expectations of the community, and ensures progress of the students. The school's vision is clearly set out on the website.

The positive approach to leadership of the principal and her senior team inspires warm relationships between staff and students, as well as the collaborative relationship between staff at all levels. The rapid integration of the new members of staff is an illustration of the supportive culture among the teachers.

The school leadership are beginning to focus on the establishment of whole school systems for tracking and monitoring student progress, as well as pulling the different strands of management information together into one system. This will add cohesion.

The school has made steps to develop the leadership structures across the school, in order to support the development of all the curricular areas and the further growth of the student population. This process is supported with a CPD programme for the teachers and the leaders, in line with the expectations of the British educational system. This is encouraging the sharing of good practices inside the school.

The day to day maintenance and organisation of the school are strong. Security is a high priority, and despite the difficulties inherent in a school split over slightly different locations, students are safe.