

## WHAT IS A BRITISH SCHOOL? Guidance for Inspectors

This paper is produced by the British Council/NABSS Inspection Monitoring Committee. It is intended for discussion and guidance only – it is not a ‘legal’ definition.

A British school:-

- teaches the **National Curriculum**<sup>1</sup>;
- uses method of **assessment** common in the U.K. This would include conventional primary practice such as reading tests and teacher records of progress. Formal testing would include GCSE (or international equivalent) type examinations and probably SATs in Key Stages 1,2 and 3<sup>2</sup>;
- All staff would carry qualifications that would be recognized for teaching in a British school. The teachers would be mainly British trained. A majority of the teachers should have experienced work in the UK;
- has **accommodation** suited to the needs of the National Curriculum. Inspectors need to assess the suitability of buildings so to judge how well they provide adequate teaching facilities according to the circumstances. For example, younger pupils will require such things as space and play (indoor and outdoor) facilities, whilst the older age groups should have adequate specialist provisions (e.g. for science, P.E. art, CDT, ICT etc). Staff and office accommodation should also be considered;
- has adequate **resources** to deliver the National Curriculum. There must be sufficient materials, practical equipment, apparatus and stationery to support the educational requirements. Books would be of paramount importance and should be judged for their quality, quantity and suitability;
- has a **management structure** similar to that found in the British system. Typically, a headteacher, other senior staff and subject or phase co-ordinators. The head and senior staff would have a fair degree of

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<sup>1</sup> Some adaptations which exploit the local circumstances may be sensible – e.g. in humanities subjects such as geography some concepts could be taught utilising the regional setting.

<sup>2</sup> The introduction of SATs testing might depend on the category of pupils served. In some cases, e.g. where schools are serving a mainly Spanish contingent, it may not be appropriate to apply such tests at a very early stage. However, many schools will use comparative standardised assessment as a means to check their standards and to inform their recording. Inspectors will need to judge whether the tests are appropriate – and to make sure that they interpret any such the results in the appropriate context.

educational autonomy (i.e. they are not just working to the directions of an owner). Management would provide clear direction but would normally engage all staff in democratic discussion of educational matters, regular meetings would take place and delegation of responsibilities would be practised;

- has management that uses **effective monitoring** structures in order to evaluate the performance of its teachers and other staff, and to judge the standards of work.
- has means by which its teachers are given proper access to continuing **in-service training** - particularly with regard to keeping abreast of British practice
- plays proper attention to matters of **health and safety**. Normally a member of staff will be responsible for this area. It will have a policy, and will have been subjected to local inspections. Inspectors will check that matters arising from such inspections have been properly attended to. (Inspectors will draw attention to any serious health and safety risks that they encounter although they are not necessarily providing specialist advice);
- has appropriate **policies**. In addition to educational policies and curricular guidelines, a British school would have policies for such matters as child protection, bullying, equal opportunities etc. (according to circumstances);
- has an appropriate British '**climate**'. This area is hard to define – but is recognisably 'British'. The school is welcoming and teachers know their children well. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, they manage their work well and they motivate their pupils. Relationships are good – this including all staff, pupils and parents. The environment is cared for and proper attention is given to display. A range of teaching and learning styles is employed and teachers have a good rapport with each other and their pupils (including humour). Whole school assemblies are a regular feature. British schools are generally happy welcoming places where the community is valued.

**The acid test of a British school** is one where pupils can transfer to a school in the United Kingdom 'seamlessly'. They would recognize their curriculum, the educational provision and the styles of teaching and learning. They would be able to continue with their education without serious disruption.