



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BRITISH SCHOOLS OVERSEAS

INSPECTION REPORT ON PARK LANE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Park Lane International School

Full Name of School	Park Lane International School
Address	Norbetov 3, 16000 Prague 6 Czech Republic
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Fax Number	N/A
Email Address	info@parklane-is.cz
Director	Ms Barbara Lubaczewska
Chair of Governors	Mrs Karen Stochl Harlow
Age Range	2 to 10
Total Number of Pupils	163
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (83 boys; 80 girls)
Inspection dates	03 Oct 2011 to 04 Oct 2011 17 Oct 2011 to 20 Oct 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI Schedule* for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection consists of two parts: a preliminary two-day visit followed by a four-day (team) inspection.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools in England and overseas. As such, ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas and the *ISI Framework* requirements. ISI is also the agency responsible for the inspection of schools in membership of the Associations of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). Accordingly, ISI inspections of British schools overseas are required to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare;
- provide objective and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and build on their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses;
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain;
- report to the DfE the extent to which schools comply with the published Standards for British Schools Overseas;
- where applicable, assure ISC Associations that their member schools maintain the quality of provision expected.

ISI inspection is for the benefit of the pupils in the schools and through public reporting makes the information available to parents, governments and the wider community.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. The major difference is that schools in England must comply with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, which do not apply with legal validity to schools outside the United Kingdom. However, the inspection of overseas schools takes account where possible of compliance with any local requirements and it judges the extent to which the schools comply with the British Government's Standards for British Schools Overseas. The range of these Standards is as follows.

1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.
5. The premises and accommodation.
6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others.
7. The school's procedures for handling complaints.
8. The quality of provision for boarding.
9. Leadership and management of the school.

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:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features

- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The school was opened in 2008 in an historic neighbourhood near the centre of Prague. It now has 163 pupils, boys and girls, between the ages of two and ten, of whom 32 are in the Foundation Stage. Eight of the sixteen teachers and thirty-six of the pupils have joined the school this year. The school is due to extend its provision to the end of the primary phase in 2012 when it opens a Year 6 class.
- 1.2 The school is a registered company. The three company directors, one of whom is the head of the school and known as the Director, constitute the School Board, which plans the school's strategic development. The school also has an Academic Board to advise on educational matters, and a Governing Body made up of elected parents and staff, and a member of the local community.
- 1.3 The school is housed in an adapted four-storey building. The directors have acquired an adjoining site for the development of a secondary school that is planned to open in 2014.
- 1.4 Three-fifths of pupils are Czech, a small minority are UK nationals and others come from a wide range of different countries. Nearly four-fifths of pupils are learning English as an additional language. A small number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers' assessments indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the British average.
- 1.5 The school aims to develop successful learners who are kind, co-operative and honest. It seeks to foster responsible global citizens who are environmentally aware and competent in the use of technology.
- 1.6 The school uses the English National Curriculum as a framework for learning and assessment. In addition, all pupils follow a Czech language programme which, for Czech pupils, meets Czech statutory requirements.
- 1.7 English National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils are well educated and their overall achievement is good. They become successful learners, in line with the school's aims. They make good and often excellent progress in English across the whole curriculum. Their breadth of experience in language contributes to their success in all subjects. Pupils achieve well throughout the school from their different starting points. Children in the Foundation Stage are well grounded in basic skills and make good progress in learning to read and to count. In the older year groups, most pupils reach the levels expected for their age within the English National Curriculum, and many exceed these levels in reading and mathematics. The school fosters positive attitudes and pupils are eager to learn, curious and keen to do well. Pupils become good learners because of purposeful and effective teaching that is well planned. Teaching is often imaginative and inspiring. Where this is not the case, it focuses on the work to be covered rather than on the best way to help pupils learn. The curriculum is broad and greatly enriched by an excellent range of after-school activities. The timetable is carefully structured to accommodate the Czech programme, but does not fully ensure a balanced day for all pupils. Some extra support is provided for pupils with SEND; this provision is at an early stage of development.
- 2.2 The school is welcoming and pupils are valued and known well as individuals. As a result, they develop good social skills. Pupils from different language backgrounds work and play together harmoniously. Pupils co-operate well in groups and are friendly and considerate in their dealings with each other. They behave well in lessons, thereby promoting concentration on learning for all. They follow the 'golden rules' which guide positive behaviour in lessons and in the playground, and are keen to contribute to the community. Pupils are interested in the wider world, and the school is seeking to extend awareness of global citizenship.
- 2.3 The school, now in its fourth year, is developing rapidly because of good governance, leadership and management that have a clear vision for continuing improvement. The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored, and careful attention is paid to pupils' welfare and pastoral care, and their academic progress. The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show a high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents are particularly pleased with their children's progress in English and the ease of communication with the school. Inspectors judge parents' positive views to be well founded.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas

(The range of the Standards for British Schools Overseas is given in the Preface)

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Standards for British Schools Overseas.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Build upon the best practice already evident to provide teaching in all lessons that focuses on specific learning outcomes, engages pupils practically, builds on their prior experience and is rich in language.
2. Establish effective teaching provision to meet the individual needs of pupils who have SEND.
3. Improve the organisation of the day and the balance of the curriculum to maximise learning and opportunity for all pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The pupils' overall achievement is good. In accordance with the school's aims, pupils gain the skills needed to be effective learners, and they are increasingly competent in the use of technology. Pupils are confident and successful in learning in English.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve highly in language skills. Their fluency in different languages feeds their understanding of language structures and their enjoyment of words. Pupils listen well. They speak with growing confidence, to partners or in larger groups, keen to explain their ideas and to make their meaning clear. In the Foundation Stage, children quickly gain basic skills in reading, learning to build words from sounds. Older pupils become avid readers, eager for more books, both fiction and non-fiction, and are keen to see the library stock further increased. Pupils achieve well in spelling and handwriting, because skills are consistently practised. Confidence in writing develops slowly in the early stages. The school is working effectively to link speaking and writing more closely, and to give pupils more practice in writing at length.
- 3.3 Mathematical skills are strongly developed and applied well in context, for example when measuring or using statistical data. Pupils learn to think logically when carrying out science investigations. They are competent in using computers, and their skills are developing rapidly because of new resources and the introduction of a whole-school virtual learning environment. Pupils learn to be independent in accessing resources and organising their work in practical lessons. They express their ideas creatively, for example through art. They develop their physical skills well in lessons and clubs, and in their play, within the time available.
- 3.4 The school encourages pupils to participate in external challenges, and individuals have been successful in art and poetry competitions. A football team is embarking on competitive fixtures with other schools.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in English national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to English national age-related expectations. Assessments by teachers, sample tests taken annually from Year 2 and the work seen in lessons support this judgement. Most children in the Foundation Stage, including those who are new to English, reach goals for early learning in reading, writing and mathematical development. Pupils from Year 1 onwards usually achieve at least the expected level for their ages. Older pupils frequently achieve beyond this in reading and mathematics. Czech pupils also perform well in Czech examinations taken externally from Year 2 onwards.
- 3.6 Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Many make rapid progress in learning English and so are able to achieve well in all subjects. Pupils who receive extra support for English, or those with SEND, often do well as a result of the additional help they receive, though their progress is not consistently monitored. Pupils who are gifted and talented generally make progress at a pace that reflects their ability.
- 3.7 Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are attentive and enthusiastic. They participate confidently, striving to express their ideas clearly. Pupils co-operate

well in groups and enjoy working together on practical tasks. Older pupils organise their work well, for example taking notes and seeking out information for themselves.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.8 Curricular provision is good, despite some constraints of time and space, and goes a long way towards meeting the aspirations of parents and the school's overall aims. A broad curriculum, based on the English National Curriculum, is supplemented by an excellent range of after-school activities, and by the daily Czech programme. Overall, the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils although some areas are less developed than others.
- 3.9 The youngest children follow a curriculum that is planned well to include six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 to 5, English, mathematics and science are well planned to provide good coverage of the English National Curriculum. The school makes some provision for personal, social and health education but has identified a need for a more comprehensive programme. Topic work includes aspects of history and geography but is not always planned coherently to extend pupils' knowledge and skills, and their understanding of the wider world. The school is developing its musical life, and singing is a highlight of the week for many pupils. Pupils have one physical education lesson a week, and this is supplemented by swimming. Provision for physical activity, in and out of lessons, and younger pupils' opportunity for play are limited, of which the school is aware.
- 3.10 The school makes good provision for the development of pupils' language skills. In addition to English, the curriculum incorporates an extensive programme of Czech education for Czech nationals, as well as Czech language for other pupils in all classes from Reception upwards. The programme for Czech speakers is rigorous, and effective in ensuring that pupils reach a required standard. Czech language for non-Czech speakers provides a good grounding, though progress in the one lesson each week is not clearly mapped. On other days of the week, these pupils work, for example, on projects about Prague, but the use of this time is not always well planned. Experience of modern foreign languages is further enriched from Year 3 by a choice of German or Spanish.
- 3.11 The school is very alert to the needs of the large majority of pupils for whom English is an additional language, and this is taken into account in all lessons. Although pupils generally make rapid progress in acquiring English, some need more targeted help to meet their specific needs, and additional teaching support is made available should concerns arise. The school is developing its provision for pupils with SEND, to good effect. It recognises a need to do more in identifying particular needs, setting targets, tailoring support for individuals and assessing their progress.
- 3.12 An extensive programme of activities is on offer after school each day, and a large majority of pupils participate on a daily basis. These clubs supplement well the richness of the curriculum and the development of skills, whether in sewing, cooking or tennis. Pupils talk excitedly about the dance and football clubs, for example. Educational visits, including residential trips, visitors to the school and special events such as Book Week add much to pupils' educational experience.
- 3.13 The school offers families the flexibility of an extended day, with supervised play activities available from 8.00 am until late afternoon. The start of the school day is fragmented because it varies between 8.30 and 9.00 am for different pupils. This

does not ensure punctuality for registration, or a purposeful focus on learning from the outset by all pupils.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 Pupils achieve well because of good teaching overall that enables them to become successful learners, in line with the school's aims. Teaching is well planned and appropriately resourced.
- 3.15 Teaching in the Foundation Stage often captures the children's interest and imagination, though the next steps in learning for each child are not always identified to guide teaching. Some excellent provision is made for structured play, indoors and outdoors, that engages children and develops their learning. On occasions, routine tasks such as the colouring of worksheets lack clear purpose.
- 3.16 In most lessons throughout the school, teaching motivates and interests pupils, generating enthusiasm for learning and eagerness to succeed. Teachers ask questions well to extend thinking. They mark pupils' work thoroughly and constructively, often helping pupils to evaluate for themselves how well they understand. Teaching frequently encourages practical activity and investigation, using imaginative approaches to make learning interesting and fun. Classes are well managed, enabling pupils to concentrate, co-operate and contribute their ideas. Teachers generally make good use of time, often setting a brisk pace in lessons. Effective use is made of resources, including interactive whiteboards that are present in each classroom.
- 3.17 Teaching is sometimes excellent, inspiring pupils' high level of involvement in their learning, and they surprise themselves about their own capabilities. Pupils' use of language, whether English or Czech, is reinforced imaginatively and practically through a variety of activities. For example, in singing, pupils relish new words and their pronunciation, and actions reinforce meaning.
- 3.18 In less effective lessons, teaching employs activities that are often enjoyable but are not precisely designed to bring about specific learning. At times, practical experiences to reinforce understanding and embed the use of language, particularly for younger pupils, is limited.
- 3.19 Teaching is most effective where language is demonstrated by the teacher to reinforce the learning of pupils with diverse language levels, and to build confidence through practice. For example, young pupils learning Czech as an additional language delighted in practical activities that helped them to count and recognise colours.
- 3.20 Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, often drawing on areas of particular expertise. However, their deployment is not always directed to the point of greatest need, with clear objectives for the development of individuals' learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is good. The school is successful in fostering the values of kindness and co-operation set out in its aims. Pupils demonstrate increasing environmental awareness, and a growing appreciation of global citizenship.
- 4.2 From the Foundation Stage onwards, children develop self-confidence and respect for others. The youngest children help to tidy up, recognising a part to play in contributing to the community and working with others.
- 4.3 Throughout the school, pupils grow in self-awareness and understanding of others. They are interested in the world around them. They enjoy coming together as a community, as evident in the spiritual, as well as musical, harmony of weekly collective singing sessions. The school offers an attractive environment for learning that fosters pupils' aesthetic awareness and care for the spaces they share.
- 4.4 Pupils develop good social skills, relating easily to adults and to other children. They volunteer as playground monitors and show responsibility in caring for others and looking after equipment. Pupils are well behaved, lively and sometimes noisy, but polite and friendly. They enjoy school, appreciate their teachers and respect the values the school upholds.
- 4.5 Moral development is good. Pupils know and apply the 'golden rules'. Older pupils are able to give reasoned arguments about the distinction between right and wrong, recognising the importance of rules within a community. 'Eco-warriors' from each class champion the environment, for example through recycling. Further afield, older pupils have taken the initiative in raising money for water projects in Africa. They are confident in expressing their views about the environment and global issues, as when learning about natural disasters in different parts of the world.
- 4.6 Pupils demonstrate good cultural development. From all backgrounds, they work and play together harmoniously. They help each other to communicate in English, and to translate between shared languages. An international day generated interest and pleasure in experiencing the food, culture and customs of different nationalities represented within the school community. The school is seeking to develop its curriculum further to strengthen pupils' awareness of global citizenship, drawing on pupils' own diverse experiences. Czech culture is embraced through visits, community links and Czech language classes for all pupils and staff.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.7 The school makes good arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, and it provides a good quality of pastoral care. Arrangements contribute positively to pupils' personal development and success as learners, as set out in the school's aims.
- 4.8 From the Foundation Stage, children learn to work and play co-operatively, safely and sensibly, both indoors and outdoors. Throughout the school, relationships are a significant strength. Pupils comment on the kindness and friendliness of the school. They are treated with care and courtesy by staff, and respect is mutual. Pupils are listened to by adults and they listen to each other. They are often seen helping others without being asked to do so. The school has clear and appropriate expectations about behaviour and the prevention of bullying that are well

understood, and pupils feel safe and secure. They are confident that they can turn to teachers for help when needed.

- 4.9 The school values pupils as individuals and is alert to their particular needs. It is now beginning to develop more formal processes for identifying behavioural, language or learning needs and providing additional learning support when it is required.
- 4.10 The school has a rigorous and effective set of policies and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff. It has appropriate measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Monthly fire drills involving the evacuation of the building are carried out and pupils are very clear about what to do. Fire alarms are tested regularly, and procedures and equipment are checked by the Czech authorities.
- 4.11 Risk assessments are made in advance of visits out of school, and for activities such as swimming. The premises are checked weekly for any safety concerns or required repairs. Staff are very alert to potential hazards and encourage pupils to be safety conscious at all times. The school has clear policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Appropriate training in child protection is provided for all staff.
- 4.12 The school nurse is available throughout the day, and provides first-aid training and information on medical needs for all staff. Suitable records are maintained and medical procedures and permissions are in order. The school has a suitable medical room for looking after pupils who are ill or injured during the day.
- 4.13 Pupils are provided with healthy lunches and they are encouraged to make healthy choices. They have access to drinking water throughout the day. Displays around the school also support good eating habits and sensible behaviour at meal times.
- 4.14 Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. The school monitors attendance and is taking steps to reduce holiday and other absences that impinge on pupils' learning.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is good. The School Board, the Academic Board and the Governing Body exercise thorough oversight of the development of the school in pursuit of its aims.
- 5.2 The School Board plans well for the school's strategic development and oversees its financial management. It ensures a good level of investment in the development of the building, facilities and resources in support of agreed priorities. This is seen, for example, in significant recent investment to upgrade computers and software, in order to enhance the use of technology by the whole school community for learning and communication.
- 5.3 The Academic Board guides the academic direction of the school, and external consultants, both English and Czech, advise the Director and staff on educational matters. The Governing Body has an advisory role, monitoring the application of school policies and supporting effective communication between the school and parents. Governing Body committees are being developed, including a health and safety committee to liaise with the school's health and safety officer. These governance arrangements are serving to develop a shared understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and its priorities for the future. Roles and responsibilities are being defined with increasing clarity, to meet the needs of a growing and developing school.
- 5.4 Governance is effectively supporting the school in working towards its goals of expansion and pursuit of high quality education. Responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils are clearly understood and effectively discharged.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 Leadership and management are good. The school is well led and effectively managed so that it promotes successful learning, in accordance with its aims. The leadership has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. It harnesses the efforts of the whole staff team in pursuing agreed action.
- 5.6 The Director is supported well by a newly established Senior Leadership Team that shares a clear vision for school improvement. This team includes two Assistant Directors with academic and pastoral responsibilities respectively, and leaders of the Foundation Stage, of Years 1 and 2, and of Years 3 to 5. The leadership is taking the school forward, with energy and imagination. Subject leaders, in English National Curriculum subjects, and in the Czech programme, play an active role in identifying how to improve their subjects. The provision of learning support has yet to develop in full.
- 5.7 The school's expansion and the large number of new staff present a particular challenge in achieving consistency in the quality of teaching. Leaders are well aware of more limited aspects of teaching. They observe teaching, and scrutinise teaching plans and pupils' work in order to bring about improvement.

- 5.8 The school provides a valuable ten-day induction for new and existing staff before the start of the academic year. Staff are encouraged to participate in professional development, and regular staff meetings focus attention on the school's priorities, for example in developing a virtual learning environment and improving the standard of pupils' writing across the school. The school supports trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers through informal arrangements for mentoring and induction.
- 5.9 The school ensures that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities with regard to pupils' welfare, health and safety. It has effective systems for carrying out recruitment checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children, and these are appropriately recorded.
- 5.10 The school's building and resources are used well and the leadership works hard to overcome constraints of time and space. Leadership staff are quick to recognise obstacles and are open and inventive in seeking solutions. This is seen, for example, in the imaginative development of the outdoor area to maximise opportunities for play.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.11 The school has an excellent relationship with the parent community, and this contributes positively to pupils' learning.
- 5.12 Parents are provided with the required information about the school. The system of communication logs works well so that school and home keep in close touch and parents know the expectations for each week. Reading records track the progress made in reading with support from school and home. Lively, colourful newsletters, with a spotlight on a different year group each week, help to keep parents informed about daily life at school.
- 5.13 Parents are greeted and welcomed in the morning and have every opportunity to meet staff. The leadership is approachable and accessible. Parents value the way in which the school listens to their concerns, and responds rapidly and with consideration for the school community's language and cultural diversity.
- 5.14 Workshops for parents are organised by staff to explain approaches to teaching and learning, and what pupils will be learning each year. These workshops are well attended and much appreciated, and help teachers and parents to work effectively together. A new website portal has been created to strengthen the sharing of information between pupils, staff and parents.
- 5.15 Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress. They receive twice yearly comprehensive written reports on the progress and attainment of their children in all subjects. These include information about the levels being reached in the English National Curriculum. Reports in Czech are also provided for Czech nationals with respect to their required curriculum. The school has suitable procedures for dealing with complaints.
- 5.16 The newly formed Parents Association is keen to develop social and fund-raising events to support the school and the school community. Class 'mums' support the parent network in each class. Elected parent governors give enthusiastic support and advise the leadership on a wide range of school matters from a parental perspective. They have a good understanding of their role as a bridge between the school and the parent body. The school recognises a need, as it grows larger, to formalise expectations, for example about routines at the start and end of the day, and about punctuality and attendance.

- 5.17 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed a high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents were particularly pleased with the progress of their children in acquiring English, the ease with which they are able to communicate with the school and pastoral care. They appreciate the wide range of activities provided, though a few feel that these are more limited with regard to sport. Inspectors agree that pupils have a wide range of opportunities in many areas, and increasingly for sport, though the complexity of the timetable currently restricts the time available for physical education.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and staff, and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, with the company directors and with representative governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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