

British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection report

24 to 26 March 2025

Oporto British School

Rua da Cerca, 326/350

4150-201

Porto

Portugal

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect British Schools Overseas (BSO). Our inspections report on the extent to which the BSO Standards are met, referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	5
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION.....	7
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	11
SAFEGUARDING	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE BSO STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	12
SCHOOL DETAILS	13
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	14
INSPECTION DETAILS	15

Summary of inspection findings

Provision at the school meets the requirements of the BSO Standards.

1. Governors ensure that the leaders of the school have sufficient skills and knowledge to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The school updated its procedures so that pupils' use of the internet is monitored in line with UK statutory guidance. This was then checked by inspectors.
2. The curriculum is suitably broad and designed to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Children in the early years are provided with a range of activities which develop their skills across their key areas of learning. Teaching is effective in considering the needs and prior attainment of pupils so that they make good progress. Pupils' performance is systematically monitored, and this information is used by leaders to ensure that support is targeted effectively.
3. In the primary school, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because of the effective personalised support they receive. However, this support is less systematic in the secondary school and consequently the progress of these pupils is less consistent.
4. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) rapidly acquire fluency in English because of the targeted individual support they receive.
5. The curriculum is complemented by a well-resourced extra-curricular programme, which benefits pupils of all ages and abilities. The programme is wide-ranging and well-co-ordinated, and supports pupils' skills, interests and personal development.
6. Pupils' emotional and mental health is well supported. Consequently, pupils have a number of adults to whom they can go with any concerns. Leaders have put in place clear policies and procedures to ensure good behaviour around the school and in lessons. An effective strategy to prevent bullying is in place, and the school responds promptly to any occurrences.
7. There is a systematic approach to the management of health and safety at the school. Measures to mitigate risk are suitably implemented and reviewed. Fire safety protocols are well understood. First aid is readily available.
8. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and respect for others. Effective links with the local community ensure that pupils are well informed and well prepared to contribute positively to British and Portuguese society. Pupils benefit from a well-structured careers education programme which enables them to make informed choices about their next steps.
9. Policies are made available on the school's website. At the time of the inspection, not all information required by the BSO Standards was made available, but this was subsequently addressed by the school.
10. Governors review safeguarding practices at the school and staff understand and follow the school's procedures for reporting concerns. Leaders carry out recruitment checks correctly, and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils know how to keep safe, including when they are online.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards

The school meets all of the BSO Standards.

- BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- BSO Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- embed the monitoring of pupils' use of the internet in order to minimise the risks to them
- monitor the provision for pupils who have SEND in the secondary school to ensure that teaching more consistently meets their needs
- ensure that all the information that is required to be made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils is consistently maintained on the school's website.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. In response to the inspection, they addressed the issue relating to the monitoring of pupils' use of the internet effectively. Leaders have an accurate view of the positive strengths of the school and areas for further development. They carefully consider the impact that their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and success. They formulate their long-term strategy through methodical and detailed self-evaluation.
12. Leaders ensure that the school's ethos is embedded and understood by pupils. Leaders foster effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. There are close working relationships with local agencies and authorities which support the school's procedures around health and safety and safeguarding.
13. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately and keep detailed records of these and any actions taken by the school in response. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy.
14. Parents receive reports regularly about pupils' progress, attitudes and attainment. The required information, including the school's aims and ethos, is made available to current parents, largely through a parent portal on the school's informative website. During the inspection, information on the school's website was updated so that all the required information was also made available to parents of prospective pupils.
15. Leaders ensure that the provision for younger children is well resourced. Leaders ensure that staff have an in-depth understanding of how to support early child development. As a result, children feel secure and make good progress.
16. Leaders have a systematic approach to risk management. Leaders understand the importance of pupils' welfare and respond with urgency and diligence to areas of risk when identified. Risk assessments identify potential risks thoroughly and detail appropriate steps taken to reduce or remove these. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
17. Leaders have ensured that pupils who have disabilities are not discriminated against by ensuring that there is appropriate access to the school's education and its facilities. All pupils are treated fairly, in line with the principles of the UK Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the host country.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

18. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum is designed to be broad and age-appropriate, with suitable academic challenge, and to prepare pupils effectively for the next stage of their education. Appropriately high academic standards are expected and elicited at all stages, in line with the aspirations of many pupils to gain places in higher education institutions both in Portugal and the UK. Pupils develop a wide range of skills. They are able to explain, debate, justify and listen at levels appropriate to their age. They apply numerical skills both in answering mathematical problems and in applying number in areas such as environmental science, physics and chemistry.
20. Leaders have implemented structured monitoring systems, including learning walks, planning scrutiny and work scrutiny, to assess and ensure high standards of teaching. Effective teaching strategies support good progress. In lessons, teachers typically plan carefully, have detailed subject knowledge and set clear learning objectives. A variety of strategies and activities allow pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. The school's clearly defined policies and expectations together with monitoring by leadership ensure that teaching and the culture within the school supports the values of Britain and Portugal.
21. Assessment is systematic and rigorous. Comprehensive data management allows the leadership and teachers to track progress and implement targeted interventions. This informs decision-making and curriculum planning. Pupils benefit from teaching strategies informed by this data as well as timely support and targeted challenge opportunities.
22. Lessons are well structured. Typically, lessons are both accessible and challenging. Pupils are well prepared for examinations through carefully chosen tasks which are used to develop pupils' skills. Effective use of questioning leads to widespread participation. Lessons are appropriately timed so that lessons move forward at a suitable pace. In most cases, extra work is on hand to provide appropriate challenge. Many pupils carry out extended and detailed project work to suit their interests which is frequently well beyond the demands of the curriculum. Data shows that pupils make good progress to IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate (IB) from their starting points.
23. Almost all pupils are engaged in and take responsibility for their learning. They work independently, asking for help and clarification when required and seeking extra work when they need to. Books are neat and well organised, showing the care and pride pupils have for their work.
24. In the primary school, processes of identification and support are in place for pupils who have SEND. Teaching and learning assistants provide effective one-to-one assistance and support, and these pupils make good progress overall in lessons. However, the monitoring of the effectiveness of the provision for secondary school pupils who have SEND is less embedded. Consequently, the progress of these pupils is not as consistent.
25. The level of English of all pupils is assessed on entry, and pupils are placed in appropriate groups. Where necessary, individual support for pupils who speak EAL is provided. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and linguistic support refined where necessary. Consequently, these pupils are able to make good progress.
26. Leaders have established an informative programme of parents' evenings and written reports for every pupil. This partnership between school and home enables parents and teachers to build close relationships so that they can work effectively together to ensure good progress and high-quality

outcomes for pupils. Pupils enjoy sharing music and drama performances with their parents in school. In the primary school, parents and teachers meet daily at the school gate. This fosters close links between home and school. School staff are in regular communication with the parents of pupils who have SEND in order to ensure that interventions are explained. Consequently, these pupils benefit from the support strategies that are put in place.

27. The reading scheme enables the youngest children to make progress in their communication and language, which strengthens and develops their literacy. These children can correctly discriminate sounds to support their learning. Children are confident to repeat the new language they are learning and are unafraid to make mistakes.
28. A wide variety of activities take place at lunchtime and after school. As pupils get older, they are encouraged to both organise and lead activities and, if they so wish, to set up new activities. Consequently, pupils develop their skills in collaboration and leadership.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

29. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

30. Leaders promote a culture of respect for diversity so that pupils demonstrate respect and understanding towards those with diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Classroom displays reinforce awareness of different religions and cultural traditions. Pupils learn about their responsibility to be respectful of differences between people. As a result, pupils behave in a respectful and caring manner towards each other.
31. The leadership of the school places an emphasis on pupils' moral development. The high standard of pupils' behaviour is indicative of their clear understanding of right and wrong and their respect for their learning environment. The spiritual awareness of the very youngest pupils is evident in their awe of the natural world.
32. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for adult life and recognise the importance of developing pupils' self-confidence. The curriculum gives pupils opportunities to develop their performing skills. Staff frequently celebrate pupils' successes and as a result pupils develop high levels of self-esteem. They confidently speak up in assemblies and answer questions. In class, pupils are confident in their participation and show a great deal of respect towards one other, which allows for a high degree of mature debate.
33. Curriculum leaders support physical activity within the curriculum. The school has a range of sports facilities on the campus and supplement these through the use of external facilities. Pupils develop skills in a variety of sports, including volleyball, table tennis, athletics and basketball. There are also field trips and expeditions. There is a high level of pupil participation in sport both as a competitive and social activity. This has a positive impact on pupils' physical and mental health and wellbeing. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about the sporting opportunities on offer at the school.
34. There are effective schemes of work and activities to support pupils' personal and health education. Leadership in the primary school is particularly effective in supporting pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and make informed food choices. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum has appropriate coverage of the key aspects identified in the UK guidance. Pupils learn about how to establish and maintain healthy relationships and online etiquette and safety. Common misconceptions are addressed. External speakers talk to pupils about sexually transmitted diseases, consent and contraception. These are followed up in tutor groups so that pupils can ask questions to develop their understanding.
35. Leadership takes effective steps to ensure there are high standards and expectations around pupils' behaviour. There are robust policies and systems in place to support and promote good behaviour. As a result, behaviour amongst pupils is of a high standard. This leads to harmonious and respectful relationships between pupils. As a consequence, pupils thrive both socially and academically. Good behaviour in class enables pupils to focus and learn well.
36. Leaders ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment for pupils. Policies, processes and initiatives are in place to minimise cases of bullying. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, assemblies and an annual anti-bullying week help pupils to understand and prevent bullying. The school is effective in minimising the number of cases of bullying and as a consequence pupils feel safe and happy in school.

37. Leaders ensure that appropriate facilities for pupils' welfare and learning are well maintained. The classrooms and specialist teaching rooms are all well-appointed and fit for purpose. They have appropriate acoustic, light and toilet facilities. Showering facilities are available after sport. The science laboratories have appropriate storage and experimental equipment.
38. The school maintains a rigorous approach to the supervision of pupils. Teachers are prompt in supervising pupils during transitions and breaktimes. High-visibility clothing is used so that pupils can identify duty staff. Pupils feel safe, and trusted adults are readily available if required.
39. Leaders implement robust attendance monitoring procedures. Attendance registers are efficiently managed. The school effectively liaises with home when pupils are absent. There is a structured system in place to steadily escalate the communication home about lateness and poor attendance. If necessary, leaders work with the pupil and family, and the local authority is informed.
40. The school leadership has a rigorous approach to ensuring pupils' health and safety. Records are meticulous and comprehensive, updated regularly and verified by external expert agencies. Comprehensive fire risk assessments that are regularly reviewed, regular drills, and both internal and external assessments ensure adherence to safety standards. The local requirements for verification of health and safety procedures, including water, fire alarm and equipment testing, including electrical equipment, are in place. The school has a culture of safe practice, with thorough documentation and emergency preparedness in place.
41. The school provides appropriate medical care facilities. The medical room is equipped with an examination area and a secure system for medicine storage. Staff working with the youngest pupils are suitably trained in paediatric first aid.
42. The youngest children confidently and happily arrive at the classroom in the morning. Familiar routines encourage independence and confidence. This has a positive impact on the children's sense of self confidence and self-esteem. Through the use of carefully selected texts, children in Reception and Nursery are able to speak about their emotions, including what makes them happy and what makes them sad.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 43. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. Thorough lesson planning helps pupils to develop their social and cultural understanding. For example, pupils held a lively and well-argued discussion on the place of women in nineteenth-century Portuguese literature, analysing the factors that contributed to their oppression and comparing the situation with the present day. Pupils were confident in their contributions and gained a full understanding of the theme of repression. Pupils express mature views using a sophisticated level of language in both English and Portuguese. A wide provision of activities for younger children in music, theatre and dance ensure their social and cultural development.
45. Pupils develop their economic understanding. Younger pupils learn about saving, value, 'shrinkflation' and pocket money. Older pupils learn about managing a bank account. Older pupils are prepared well for their lives beyond school through learning about budgeting priorities and taxation.
46. Leadership aims to prepare its pupils for life in modern society in Britain, Portugal or elsewhere through a broad curriculum and a variety of enrichment activities. The curriculum is planned to develop the necessary skills and knowledge as well as the personal character traits to thrive in a changing world. Pupils develop their critical thinking skills and are able to be creative and work collaboratively. Many have advanced communication skills in several languages.
47. Leaders foster a culture of respect and inclusivity. Pupils learn about diversity through classroom discussions, assemblies and displays that highlight different identities, religions and cultural traditions. Pupils feel respected and trusted by the school to uphold inclusivity.
48. Leadership facilitates and celebrates cultural awareness and the international nature of the school. Many classrooms have displays celebrating the international community with flags, world maps showing where food comes from, and displays of celebrations and religions from around the world. Pupils also benefit from events such as International Food Day and Carnival. Pupils value the diversity of the school and the opportunities to learn about different cultures and traditions.
49. The school integrates British values into its ethos, encouraging democracy, respect and individual liberty. The pupil-led councils are greatly valued. The primary pupils are able to identify aspects of their work that have had a direct personal impact, such as choosing the activities for wellbeing week. Pupils are able to distinguish right from wrong and are mindful of the rules of their school. They appreciate the power of expressing their views. Older pupils are empowered to make a difference both within and outside the school community. For example, they organise events and activities for younger pupils. Consequently, they are well prepared to make a positive impact in the next stage of their lives.
50. Careers guidance is thorough and wide-ranging. Pupils learn about university choices both in UK and beyond. Individual guidance is given to support both university and career choices. Parents are appropriately informed. As a result of suitably aspirational careers education, pupils are successful in gaining places at selective courses and universities.
51. Pupils are involved in fundraising initiatives in the local community. Pupils undertaking The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) are involved in local community work such as litter picking,

helping the elderly and assisting with community gardening projects. Younger pupils consider how Portugal is positioned in terms of global life expectancy, giving them the opportunity to appreciate the plight of those in less well-developed countries. These initiatives give pupils the opportunity to experience life outside school, to empathise and to have compassion for those less fortunate than themselves.

52. Pupils are able to analyse the social aspects of different cultures and eras. Careful planning of topics enables pupils to discuss matters such as prejudice, racism, totalitarianism, dictatorships and the emancipation of women in a sensitive way. Pupils listen carefully to any conflicting views, and this allows them to have well-balanced discussions.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 53. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

54. Safeguarding training for staff is thorough, regular and in line with local and national requirements, with a suitable induction process in place for new staff. Leaders check on staff's understanding of their training, for example through quizzes and questionnaires. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns, including any concerns they have about adults working with pupils.
55. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. Safeguarding leaders are conscientious in consulting with external authorities and referring safeguarding concerns to them when appropriate. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these. Pupils are informed about the risks of extremism. Staff are trained to identify pupils at risk from these dangers.
56. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective overall. Leaders are well trained and knowledgeable. They are aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school. Leaders have established appropriate systems and procedures to safeguard pupils. There is an appropriate safeguarding policy on the school website which reflects the requirements of current UK statutory guidance, as well as local requirements.
57. Leaders ensure that all appropriate recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils are made in a timely manner and accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR).
58. All governors undertake regular safeguarding training and are knowledgeable and skilled in their role. Governors conduct a range of activities to ensure that all reasonable action is taken to keep pupils safe. For example, governors conduct a detailed termly review of safeguarding practice at the school. They speak to pupils and staff and review the actions that leaders take.
59. Leaders provide several ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils know who they can go to should they have any concerns. All staff are trained to listen and respond to pupils' concerns effectively and to escalate these appropriately.
60. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. As a result of the inspection, the school updated its procedures so that pupils' use of the internet is suitably monitored in line with UK statutory guidance. This was subsequently checked by inspectors, and effective internet filtering was put in place which is externally tested. This monitoring is used to inform the PSHE curriculum. Consequently, risks to pupils' welfare such as those related to radicalisation and extremism are appropriately managed.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to safeguarding

- 61. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

School details

School	Oporto British School
Department for Education number	000/6013
Address	Rua Da Cerca, 326/350 4150-201 Porto Portugal
Phone number	00 351 226 166 660
Email address	headmaster@obs.edu.pt
Website	www.obs.edu.pt
Chair	Ms Maria Joao Carrapato
Headteacher	Mr Nick Sellers
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	577
Date of previous BSO inspection	19 to 20 October 2021

Information about the school

62. Oporto British School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 3 to 18 years. It is situated in the coastal suburb of Foz do Douro in Porto. The school was founded in 1894, originally as a preparatory school. It is a not-for-profit trust administered by a board of governors. The school comprises a primary department for pupils aged 3 to 11 years, and a secondary department for pupils aged 11 to 18 years.
63. The school has identified 182 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
64. English is an additional language (EAL) for 40 pupils.
65. The school states its aims are to promote excellence in all pupils and develop them into compassionate, responsible leaders of the future. It seeks to motivate all pupils and ensure that they do the best they possibly can in their academic work and other areas of their lives. The school endeavours to develop creative, compassionate and enquiring life-long learners and leaders.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

Inspection: 24 to 26 March 2025

Follow-up inspection: 13 June 2025

66. A team of five inspectors visited the school for three days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

67. A remote follow-up inspection was also conducted.

68. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and another governor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are British Schools Overseas inspected?

- The Department for Education accredits British international schools which meet the BSO Standards. Accreditation last for three years from the date of inspection.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect BSO schools. ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the school meets the Standards.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net