PSP 2020

Evaluation report

IB World Schools Department

Education for a better world

Programme Evaluation Report

Head of School: Teodora Nenova
School Name: British School of Sofia
School Code: 050955
School Address: 1700, Bulgaria, Sofia, Sofia-city, Vitosha, 21 Georgi Raychev str.
IB Programme(s): Diploma Programme
Programme Coordinator: Naomi Van Wyngaarden
Date: Friday 29 October 2021

Evaluation Team:

Diploma Programme:
Programme Leader: Pamela Carter

School and Programme Leadership

Dear Teodora Nenova,

Thank you for completing the programme evaluation self-study process. The International Baccalaureate (IB) recognizes that this process requires considerable time and effort from the entire school community. We appreciate the effort that you have made and hope that the insights gained along the way will be valuable in further developing your programme(s).

Please review the feedback in this report carefully as it provides important guidance for the development of the programme(s) that will help your school achieve the optimum outcomes for students.

IB programme evaluation is built on the premise that IB programmes, when implemented with fidelity, ultimately lead to the achievement of the IB mission. The primary aim is to support schools in continuously developing their capacity to implement IB programmes in order to have a greater impact on student outcomes through the development of teacher and leader practice.

We hope that through this process school leadership will gain a deeper understanding of both the aspects of the programme that are being implemented effectively and the aspects that need further development. The process supports the school—as a learning community—to develop the capacity to work intentionally and strategically to develop its IB programme(s) and enable school leaders and teachers to better direct their efforts and resources.

A. School Context

School Address

1700, Bulgaria, Sofia, Sofia-city, Vitosha, 21 Georgi Raychev str.

School & Community Description

The British School of Sofia (BSS), located in the city of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, was established in 2010. It is the first and only British school in Bulgaria, implementing the British style curriculum model in line with the National Curriculum. School leavers receive an IB Diploma.

The general British educational model has been continuously enhanced over time to become a consistent and systematic educational and personality enrichment process. Academic curricula have been designed to provide students with a solid academic background in several languages. Delivery of the academic material implements various flexible and student-centred pedagogical approaches.

Students of different nationalities study at BSS. The academic process is carried out in English, however there is an emphasis on host-country language with all children learning Bulgarian at either native or foreign level. As well as Bulgarian and English all students study a third language from Grade 3 (French, German or Spanish). Students are also encouraged to continue their studies of their mother-tongue and the school accommodates this. BSS has a well-developed World Language department.

The school calendar includes celebrations from different cultures, as well as the host country Bulgaria. The curriculum makes use of these celebrations and different cultural events are held throughout the year. Parents are encouraged to come and speak about their home countries as well as guest speakers to broaden the views of the students regarding different nationalities and cultures. Students are encouraged through the Duke of Edinburgh and the CAS programme to engage with the local community and the school celebrates these partnerships with local charities.

The British School of Sofia is the school preferred by a large number of diplomatic missions. As well as this, the school is attended by local students, with approximately 40% of the students being Bulgarian. In 2020-2021, the school has 285 students of 42 nationalities.

The British School of Sofia is an international community. Academic activities are carried out in that highly diversified environment. The majority of the teachers are Bulgarian; however, many have had exposure to international education or employment. As well as this, the leadership of the school is British and native speakers are often selected as foreign language teachers, particularly in Grades 11-12 where teachers of English must be native speakers, and any native foreign language teachers are utilized for this age group.

B. Programme strengths

Purpose: Sharing an important mission

- Purpose (0101)

    – **Purpose 1:** The governing body and school leaders articulate a purpose for learning that aligns with the IB's philosophy and mission. (0101-01)

        - The school articulates their commitment to a holistic approach to education through the academic programmes and activities offered.

        - The school leaders show a strong commitment to the IB philosophy and mission.

        - The school vision is aligned to the IB mission and philosophy.

    – **Purpose 2:** The school's pedagogical leadership team embraces educational approaches that encourage students to become active, compassionate life-long learners. (0101-02)

        - The school's identity is shaped by the IB philosophy and programme implementation is guided by the principles of an IB education.

        - The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school's purpose, and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

    – **Purpose 3:** The school community fosters internationally minded people who embody all attributes of the IB learner profile. (0101-03)

        - The IB mission serves as an important driver for the school in all aspects of implementing the DP.

        - The school clearly places great importance on the development of international mindedness, through a variety of courses, initiatives, and authentic activities.

Environments: Providing essential structures, systems and resources

- Leadership and governance (0201)

    – **Leadership 1:** The school regularly reviews and follows all IB rules, regulations and guidelines to support programme implementation and ongoing development. (0201-01)

        - The school benefits from leadership and governance that demonstrates a commitment to providing high-quality learning environments.

- The school is located in a new purpose built building, designed with DP requirements in mind.

- The leadership team has a clear vision of a student-centred optimal learning environment to which it is committed.

- **Leadership 2:** The school includes on its pedagogical leadership team an IB-trained programme coordinator who is empowered to facilitate successful programme implementation. (0201-02)

  - The DP coordinator is passionate and knowledgeable about, and committed to, the programme.

- **Leadership 3:** The school organizes time for learning and teaching that provides a broad, balanced and connected curriculum and serves the changing needs of its community. (0201-03)

  - The school not only provides a broad range of subject choices, but is committed to reviewing and adding to subject choices in order to meet students' changing needs and preferences, and plans ahead in order to do this.

- **Leadership 4:** The school implements and reviews systems and processes to improve the operation and sustainability of its IB programme(s). (0201-04)

  - The school has established an eschool platform and expanded its virtual resources to ensure effective communication related to programme development, record keeping, and document sharing among all stakeholders in the school community.

  - The school uses data and an established review process to monitor and develop the programme of study for all students.

- **Leadership 5:** The school funds and allocates resources that sustain and further develop its IB programme(s). (0201-05)

  - The owner prioritizes and allocates resources that support student and teacher well-being.

  - School leaders support and leverage ongoing efforts to provide an inclusive education within the broader IB community.

- Student support (0202)

  - **Student support 1:** The school provides relevant human, natural, built and virtual resources to implement its IB programme(s). (0202-01)

    - Decisions about resource allocation are informed by students' needs and learning outcomes.

- The school's facilities are adequate, safe, functional, well-maintained and support the school's mission and students' learning.

- The laboratory technician and librarian are involved in students' DP-related work and provide support to programme implementation.

  – **Student support 2:** The school identifies and provides appropriate learning support. (0202-02)

    - The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose for learning and is characterized by respect for diversity, fairness and trust.

  – **Student support 3:** The school fosters the social, emotional, and physical well-being of its students and teachers. (0202-03)

    - The school provides services and strategies to support students' well-being and enhance access to learning opportunities, such as individual education plans.

    - The school has been proactive in offering support to students to guide them through the difficulties caused by Covid-19, in particular to ensure student well-being during school closure.

  – **Student support 4:** The school provides guidance and support that help students succeed in its IB programme(s) and plan for the next stage of their educational and/or career-related experiences. (0202-04)

    - The school provides advice, counselling and information for students and families making transitions into, and out of, the school and between programmes.

    - The school provides services to support all students in the areas of physical, emotional, career and personal counselling, and academic guidance.

  – **Student support 5:** The school builds relationships with the wider community that are a source of wisdom and expertise to strengthen the implementation of its IB programme(s). (0202-05)

    - Substantial support from parents and teachers to enhances the students' experience and richness of the programme.

- Teacher support (0203)

  – **Teacher support 1:** The school ensures that teachers use current IB resources and regularly review their implementation of the programme. (0203-01)

- • Teachers review their practices through strong collaboration and a range of opportunities for continuous professional development related to students' learning, individual teachers' needs and school-wide priorities.

- **Teacher support 2:** The school ensures that leadership and teachers participate in appropriate and timely professional learning to inform their practice. (0203-02)

  - • The school has implemented a continuous professional development plan that supports individual teacher development, as well as meeting the needs of the programme.

- **Teacher support 3:** The school provides time and other resources for teachers to collaborate effectively in the implementation of IB programme(s). (0203-03)

  - • The school modified the structure of the school day in order to provide more time for teachers' collaborative planning in order to allow for regular department meetings, DP planning meetings and smaller cluster meetings with a specific purpose.

Culture: Creating positive school cultures

- Culture through policy implementation (0301)

    - **Culture 1:** The school secures access to an IB education for the broadest possible range of students. (0301-01)

        - School policies and procedures are published and communicated to all members of the school community, which ensure that all community members are fully aware of each policy.

        - The school's commitment to access for students of all backgrounds and abilities is evident through policy implementation and the support systems established.

        - Policy implementation is strongly embedded in school culture and strategy, and policies are regarded as dynamic, being amended as necessary to reflect changing situations.

    - **Culture 6:** The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews its IB mandated policies to ensure they are cohesive and reflect IB philosophy. (0301-06)

        - School policies and procedures are communicated to all members of the school community through meetings and the school portal.

        - Policies are revised regularly and collaboratively to ensure they remain consistent with the school's mission and support the school in achieving its vision.

        - The school includes students in policy development, notably the behaviour policy, believing that student voice gives policies more validity in the eyes of students.

Learning: Ensuring effective education

- Designing a coherent curriculum (0401)

  - **Coherent curriculum 1:** The school plans and implements a coherent curriculum that organizes learning and teaching within and across the years of its IB programme(s). (0401-01)

    - The curriculum is broad, balanced and sequenced in a way to support student progression. It is guided by the mission of the school and the needs and preferences of the students.

    - The curriculum is rigorous and supports students' academic, social, physical and emotional needs. It fosters the development of the attributes of the IB learner profile.

    - The DP curriculum is dynamic, according to students needs and preferences, and considering the relatively small cohort size, the school provides a good range of subject choices.

  - **Coherent curriculum 2:** Teachers collaborate to design, plan and deliver the school's IB programme(s). (0401-02)

    - The school provides collaborative planning opportunities to facilitate knowledge sharing and reflection.

    - As mentioned above, opportunities for collaboration have been enhanced.

  - **Coherent curriculum 3:** The school develops, regularly reviews and shares its curriculum in ways that explicitly engage the school community.

    - There is a system for curriculum review, considering changing students' needs and school context.

- Students as lifelong learners (0402)

  - **Lifelong learners 1:** Students actively develop thinking, research, communication, social and self-management skills. (0402-01)

    - Students are actively involved in their own learning, through independent inquiry, self-reflection and peer evaluation.

    - The school has become a 'Thinking Based Learning' school, encouraging student-led inquiry and metacognition, and an ethos which actively improves learning and teaching.

    - Learning and teaching throughout the school is based on the principle of concept-based learning.

- **Lifelong learners 2:** Students demonstrate and reflect on their continued development of the IB learner profile attributes. (0402-02)

    - The school has its own "Keys to success", which adopt the learner profile attributes throughout the whole school and within learning and teaching.

- **Lifelong learners 3:** Students identify and foster healthy relationships, an understanding of shared responsibility, and the ability to collaborate effectively. (0402-03)

    - In addition to DP courses and the core, the school provides SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural education) which contributes towards the strong emphasis the school has on developing a culture that supports healthy relationships, shared responsibility and effective collaboration.

- **Lifelong learners 4:** Students grow in their ability to make informed, reasoned, ethical judgments. (0402-04)

    - Learning and teaching in the school supports students to develop the skills of making informed, reasoned and ethical judgments and taking principled action.

- **Lifelong learners 5:** Students exercise the flexibility, perseverance and confidence they need to bring about positive change in the wider community and beyond. (0402-05)

    - Learning engagements provide students with opportunities to understand the local community and its needs, and to identify opportunities to act.

    - Student-led projects enable students to develop skills of perseverance and organization, as well as encourage student initiative and agency.

- **Lifelong learners 6:** Students take ownership of their learning by setting challenging goals and pursuing personal inquiries. (0402-06)

    - Students have recently taken more ownership of their learning goals and rather than set targets, students now set their own termly goals and prediction grades.

- **Lifelong learners 7:** Students pursue opportunities to explore and develop their personal and cultural identities. (0402-07)

    - Students are proactive in organizing and participating in events which emphasise cultural identity.

- Approaches to teaching (0403)

  - **Approaches to teaching 1:** Teachers use inquiry, action and reflection to develop natural curiosity in students. (0403-01)

    - • Learning engagements and teaching strategies such as student-driven thinking skills lessons and teaching through inquiry, demonstrate the focus on developing students as inquirers and thinkers.

  - **Approaches to teaching 2:** Teachers focus on conceptual understanding to support students in developing their ideas. (0403-02)

    - The whole-school approach to concept-based learning allows conceptual understanding to develop as students progress from grade to grade.

  - **Approaches to teaching 3:** Teachers use local and global contexts to establish the relevance of the curriculum. (0403-03)

    - Local and global contexts are developed through the use of case studies, guest speakers, and various trips to extend learning outside the classroom.

  - **Approaches to teaching 4:** Teachers promote effective relationships and purposeful collaboration to create a positive and dynamic learning community. (0403-04)

    - Teachers engage in collaboration in order to create a positive and dynamic learning community.

  - **Approaches to teaching 5:** Teachers remove barriers to learning to enable every student to develop, pursue and achieve challenging personal learning goals. (0403-05)

    - The learning environment and teaching strategies provide the opportunity for every student to pursue and meet their learning goals.

    - A range of media and information technology is used to enrich the quality of the students' learning.

- Approaches to assessment (0404)

  - **Approaches to assessment 1:** Students and teachers use feedback to improve learning, teaching and assessment. (0404-01)

    - Feedback in various forms is an integral part of school life.

    - The school has a well-developed system for the use of data and results to inform planning of lessons and termly goals.

- **Approaches to assessment 2:** The school uses assessment methods that are varied and fit-for-purpose for the curriculum and stated learning outcomes and objectives. (0404-02)

  - Assessment tools are matched to unit plan learning outcomes.

  - The school uses a range of assessment methods, tools and evaluation techniques, to ensure triangulation of data from different sources.

- **Approaches to assessment 4:** Students take opportunities to consolidate their learning through assessment. (0404-04)

  - Learning objectives are shared with students, in whom the skills of self and peer assessment are encouraged.

C. Requirements

Based on the review of the programme documentation, observations of the team during the visit and in conversations with members of the school community, all requirements are in place.

D. Development of IB Standards

Purpose: Sharing an important mission	School Self-Assessment	IB Evaluation Team	Comments on School Development of IB Standards
Purpose (0101) Schools implement IB programmes to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.	**DP:** Shows notable development	**DP:** Shows notable development	

Environments: Providing essential structures, systems and resources	School Self-Assessment	IB Evaluation Team	Comments on School Development of IB Standards
Leadership and governance (0201) The leadership and governance of IB World Schools create and sustain high-quality learning environments.	**DP:** Shows notable development	**DP:** Shows notable development	
Student support (0202) Learning environments in IB World Schools support student success.	**DP:** Shows notable development	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** The school has a number of students with learning support requirements; this is an area which is still developing.
Teacher support (0203) Learning environments in IB World Schools support and empower teachers.	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	

Culture: Creating positive school cultures	School Self-Assessment	IB Evaluation Team	Comments on School Development of IB Standards
Culture through policy implementation (0301) Schools develop, implement, communicate and review effective policies that help to create a school culture in which IB philosophy can thrive.	**DP:** Shows notable development	**DP:** Shows notable development	

Learning: Ensuring effective education	School Self-Assessment	IB Evaluation Team	Comments on School Development of IB Standards
Designing a coherent curriculum (0401) Learning in IB World Schools is based on a coherent curriculum.	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	
Students as lifelong learners (0402) Learning in IB schools aims to develop students ready for further education and life beyond the classroom.	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	
Approaches to teaching (0403) IB programmes encourage approaches to teaching that create learning experiences that are shown to be meaningful to the school community.	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	
Approaches to assessment (0404) Learning, teaching, and assessment effectively inform and influence one another.	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	**DP:** Shows development beyond requirements	

E. Feedback on the planning and analysis and reflection of programme development

Programme development strengths

Planning
- The school identified a clear focus for programme development based on specific weaknesses in student skills that had been identified.
- The plan, its goals and related activities have a direct relationship to learning within and outside the classroom, for all students.
- The plan clearly outlines the impacts the school wished to achieve along with the actions to take and the resources needed in order to do this.
- The school set appropriately challenging goals that strongly motivated the school community.
- The focus of programme development was initiated by the leadership team and developed collaboratively by all DP staff. The rationale outlined clearly the reasons for the chosen focus.
- The process was well-organised and facilitated to obtain maximum engagement from the school community.
- The school identified several IB practices that supported the achievement of their goal.

Evidencing and analysing
- The school undertook a range of activities to achieve the outcome.
- In establishing the process, the school took an in-depth look at strategies, structures and support mechanisms that currently exist, along with what needs to be improved in relation to student learning and the programme.
- The school demonstrated that the process resulted in a positive improvement in the student experience.
- The development team evidenced a number of examples to demonstrate the impact of the plan on the student experience.

Reflection
- The school showed insight in reflecting on the impact of the programme development efforts.
- The plan is a detailed record of how the school has developed, analysed and reflected on key aspects of the students' experience.
- The development team identified one main factor that led to the work having the desired impact, namely the positive team of teachers who exhibited effective teamwork, a passionate interest and joy in what they were doing.
- The school made systemic improvements as a result of the programme development process.

- The school's reflection on the programme development plan concluded a positive outcome was achieved.

Areas for consideration

Planning

- The leadership team could consider involving the whole school community in future development plans.
- A more refined timeline could be mapped out for the completion of each component of the development plan.

F. Opportunities for future or further programme development

The school identified the following areas as priorities for programme development

Priorities:

- The school has identified collaboration between teachers of DP subjects and the core, and teachers of the CP core and career-related studies.

The Evaluation team has identified the following areas of the programme(s) for the school to consider for future or further development

Future or further development:

Purpose / Purpose (0101) / Purpose 1:

- There is opportunity to develop student-led initiatives in the community, either inside or outside the school, or both.

G. Conclusions of the Evaluation team

During the call to the school, the leadership team demonstrated their thorough knowledge of and passionate belief in IB philosophy and the value of an IB education. The school has clearly carried out a careful self-study and programme development plan which has allowed them to recognise strengths, and identify and address challenges, thus leading them to direct their efforts and resources in a way that will enhance programme development.

H. Conclusion of the IB on the school status as an IB World School

The programme(s) shows close alignment with the IB Programme standards and practices (2020). The school's status as an IB World School is confirmed.

We trust that the information found in this report will support the school's continued development of its IB programme(s). Your IB World School manager, Terri Walker (terri.walker@ibo.org), will be in touch with you to follow up on this report and to support your school's ongoing efforts.

Yours Sincerely,

Adrian Kearney
Director, IB World Schools