

Sage College, The British International School of Jerez

Calle Alemania,2, 11408 Jerez de la Frontera, Cádiz

School's regional authorisation number: BOJA 3251

Date of Inspection: 17th March 2023

Inspection Team:

Fiona Jacobs (Lead Inspector)
Christa Mickel (Team Inspector)

Reason for the Inspection:

to evaluate the educational provision in Pre-nursery (2- to 3-year-olds) to Year 13 (17- to 18- year-olds) with a view to recommend the renewal of the current authorisation as a British school in Spain.

Overall Recommendation:

The school is recommended for authorisation from Pre-nursery (2- to 3-year-olds) to Year 13 (17- to 18-year-olds) for a period of 4 years for 635 students.

The next inspection is due in *March 2027*

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N.B. A NABSS inspection does not infer membership of the Association. Authorised schools may apply for NABSS membership.

History and Context of the School:

Sage College opened in September 2010. The school is owned by Necus Education SL which also owns a school in Switzerland. The headteacher of Sage College is also the director of education at the Swiss school. Due to this there is an exchange of students and teachers which adds positively to the academic programme. There are currently 410 students enrolled from pre-nursery to Year 13. 63% of the students are Spanish, 12% Saudi Arabian, 12% from the USA and the remaining 13% represent a variety of nationalities.

Accommodation and Resources:

The school provides accommodation and resources appropriate for the delivery of both the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the British curriculum from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5. There are three main linked buildings: one houses the EYFS and primary children, another houses the middle and high school students and the third contains the boarding school facilities.

The EYFS and primary school areas are well resourced, and all classrooms have ample natural light. All classes from EYFS and year 1 have outdoor areas leading directly from their classrooms. These are well resourced and organised, allowing the students access to a range of equipment encouraging creative play and the development of gross and fine motor skills. Water taps have recently been installed to allow for water play. There is adequate shade and shelter. For years 1 and 2, there is a pleasant space with artificial grass to enable safe play, a small wild garden and trees for shade. This space is also used by students to chat and eat their snacks.

Older primary students have a concrete area and pitch for their break times. These are the same areas that are used by the secondary students at separate times. The outdoor space is limited when all students use it, although a new sports complex is under construction. Year 6 play leaders enjoy the responsibility of encouraging cooperative play and games amongst the younger students. A swimming pool is open from April to November and all classes have lessons each week.

A stage in the central courtyard is also used for whole school assemblies and encourages participation in performance and debating activities. A new performing art room also has a stage. The room is very spacious and is arranged to promote movement well. It is semi- soundproofed which helps to contain the music and drama in the room and so not distract other classes.

The art room and study area have been transformed from a previous storage area. These are two successful spaces. The students are supervised during study sessions and are focussed on their work and revision tasks. The art space is bright and airy. Students comment on how much they enjoy both the space and the art classes. However, art resources are minimal as are those for drama. As a result, resources do not support creative work as much as they could. As students' progress to GCSE courses in these subjects, resourcing will need to be developed to allow maximum opportunities for developing their skills with a wider variety of media. Art is majorly limited to working in two dimensions with basic pencils and felt pens whilst drama lacks lighting and sound systems that could be an option instead of performance.

High quality displays are a feature of the EYFS and primary shared areas and classrooms. They are organised to support learning and celebrate student work and achievements. Year 6 classrooms are particularly imaginative and stimulating, encouraging student self-reflection by presenting a variety of techniques such as real, colourful "thinking hats" which students use to evaluate their success and level of understanding after completing work.

The EYFS rooms have toilet and changing facilities which are well organised and clean. There are sufficient toilets in the buildings for all age groups. In each EYFS and primary classroom there is a projector and a class computer to support learning. A set of iPads can be booked by teachers for student use and for information and communications technology lessons.

Corridors throughout the school are wide and students move around the school sensibly and quietly. The reception areas are colourful and welcoming. In the secondary corridors there are photos of school life and displays promoting the school values. Displays in classrooms, however, are limited and often do not adequately support learning as they are not matched to the learning objectives or content.

The dining room and cafeteria have recently been refurbished. The older students and staff can use the cafeteria during the day. The students are extremely happy with this new area as they say it is a “real café”. They spend time there discussing work and enjoying each other’s company in a mature manner. The dining room is well furnished and promotes a relaxed but well-mannered environment. The menu is balanced, and students say that they enjoy the lunches.

Health, Safety and Welfare:

The school is a safe environment. Visitors are allowed access via three entrances which are controlled by the receptionist. Two have ramps to allow for wheelchair access. Visitors have an identity lanyard to wear throughout the visit. They must sign in and out at the main reception.

Students feel safe. They know who to go if they need help. Photographs of the safeguarding staff are posted prominently. There is a school nurse, and several other members of staff are first aid trained. The headteacher has obtained references and criminal record checks for all staff.

Termly emergency evacuation practices are held. All classrooms have clear emergency evacuation plans posted on the exit doors. Fire extinguishers are posted throughout and are checked regularly.

Risk assessments are conducted for all major trips out although those for physical education trips to nearby areas are not included.

Several policies promote health and safety in school including anti bullying, use of social media, child protection and safeguarding. Staff follow these policies and are aware of who is responsible for the different areas.

Students behave extremely well and know what is expected of them. This helps to maintain the calm, safe and respectful atmosphere.

The Curriculum:

The curriculum is broad and balanced.

The primary classes have recently moved away from a focus on textbook study and specialist teachers, to allow a more creative way of working, with the aim of providing a more tailored approach to individual needs. The impact of teachers spending more time with their own class has been one of knowing student strengths and weaknesses better and so being able to personalise the curriculum more effectively to their needs.

In the EYFS, the curriculum is guided by the students’ interests whilst ensuring that all areas of the framework are covered. For example, the current pre-nursery students all thoroughly enjoy messy play and so an activity was planned with a very large strip of paper with paintbrushes. This was successful in helping to develop hand- eye coordination and motor skills.

Some published mathematics and English schemes are used. An online reading and comprehension resource has had a positive impact as, since its implementation, students are reading more and are more eager to work.

Specialist teachers teach physical education, music and drama.

There are detailed schemes of work for all classes and subjects. Planning is thorough, building on previous learning.

Students take part in a variety of creative activities. Depending upon the age group these include, debating, film making, drama, environmental science, and usage of drones for checking environmental pollution. There are also extra-curricular activities

including swimming, horse riding and drama. Older secondary students have access to a wide range of opportunities for work experience both online and in the workplace. These activities promote a variety of interests and encourage students to use their own initiative.

There is a school council run by the pastoral lead and led by the head students. Two representatives per class organise events and discuss ideas for improvements within the school. Primary representatives are highly motivated to participate as it is a good opportunity to give their ideas and opinions.

Staffing:

Most staff are native English speakers who have experience in schools in the UK or in other British schools in Spain. All staff are suitably qualified, dedicated and caring. They enjoy meeting and sharing expertise to improve the school. Staff strengths are used in staff meetings to share good practice. Teachers and staff form an effective whole-school team.

Professional development is seen as a priority. Staff have access to online courses and each year a group of teachers attend the NABSS (National Association of British schools in Spain) training sessions.

The special educational needs (SEN) department is well organised and led by the SENCo (special educational needs coordinator). He has an excellent knowledge of the students, understands and takes into account home circumstances and promotes communication with families. He works closely with all staff. He leads other members of the team in observing students in class and deciding on suitable strategies which are shared with staff and families to ensure that everyone has a collective understanding of how best to support the individual. As a result, students are well supported and make substantial progress.

Teaching and Learning:

Teaching and learning throughout the school are good or better. Overall, they are good. Where they are most successful, students are challenged and supported, teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and the pace is consistently appropriate for the learners.

In a year 11 PSHE (personal social and health education) lesson on stereotypes and feminism, the level of discussion was high, due to the teacher's expectations and level of questioning. All the students made excellent contributions and took the topic seriously even to the extent of questioning the validity of an interview clip seen in class. The teacher reflected on this and agreed to show a contrasting interview, suggested by a student, in the following session. This was an excellent example of encouraging students to develop critical thinking.

Likewise in a year 5 mathematics lesson, students were challenged to think, as they had to find errors in the teacher's calculations and then explain the errors found to the class. Students were fully engaged and made good progress due to the fast pace. Excellent questioning challenged some of the more advanced learners and appropriate use of visual resources supported other learners in their understanding.

Though never less than satisfactory, a few lessons lack variety and students spend too long listening to the teacher talking. This results in less progress being made due to less work being accomplished.

Assessment:

Assessment and tracking have improved considerably since the last inspection. The marking and feedback policy has been worked on as a staff and there has been a series of meetings led by the head of the middle school to improve staff practice. All assessments now follow the policy and students know what areas they are strong in and those in which they need to improve and how to do it.

Tracking in the high school is based on regular assessment weeks in all subjects. Previously, it was difficult to make accurate examination predictions whereas now, teachers feel confident about predicted grades due to an improved system of moderation of marking. Interventions are soundly based on the thorough analysis of results.

In the EYFS, observations of children are recorded and shared with parents. Primary tracking of progress is very systematic. Students are tracked against the objectives in every subject and then this information is used to make decisions about interventions and to inform future planning.

Reports are shared termly with parents showing the progress in key areas. Throughout the school, these are detailed and clearly written so that parents are more likely to understand their child's level and rate of progress.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development:

This is a strength of the school. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Students feel a sense of belonging to the school community and feel safe.

The school has clear values of excellence, internationality, and respect. Students exhibit excellent attitudes to learning in class. Students are from a wide range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds, but the key language is English. Students communicate exclusively in English. On very few occasions when students slip into Spanish, staff remind them, and they immediately correct themselves.

Members of the whole school community are respectful towards each other. There is a strong feeling of a team spirit. As the teachers work together respectfully, the students do the same. This is reinforced by concentrating on a positive value each month whereby students can gain recognition for having demonstrated the value by receiving a certificate at a weekly assembly. These positive values are displayed by the students in the classrooms.

There is a well-planned PSHE programme of study.

Parents are invited into the school regularly so that they too form an important part of the community. They attend parent teacher meetings, informal gatherings, charity and other events such as a musical or drama performance. There is an informative, weekly newsletter shared with parents online which highlights academic and social events.

Leadership and Management:

Each member of the management team has a clearly defined role. All staff are aware of who is responsible for each area. There are heads of stages for EYFS, primary, middle, and high school. They work very well as a team. As a result, the heads of the middle and high school respect each other's strengths and support each other to develop consistency and progression between the two stages. Each leader is passionate about their work and the effect it has on the students. They lead by example and by introducing initiatives clearly and consistently so that staff want to be a part of it.

An appraisal system has been developed to support teachers achieve their objectives and improve their practice.

The director has energy, commitment and vision. He leads his team with a passion for teaching and learning. The team is therefore dedicated to the vision that he has promoted. He has made several changes in the three years since his appointment. These consist of a revision of the subjects on offer, staffing and management structural changes, and a school ground's plan for a sports complex. Staff comment on the positive aspects of these changes. There are more creative academic programmes of study and staff are more experienced in British education. This has led to an improved level of spoken English demonstrated in classes and improved consistency of approach throughout the school as staff are accustomed to working in British schools.

The Boarding School:

The boarding school programme is offered to students aged 11 to 18 years old. The boarding school is linked to the main school building and consists of 100 rooms for students. The head of the boarding school lives on the premises with his family. Another teacher on site supports the students as a houseparent. She is a language specialist from the UK who can support a group of students in learning English whilst sharing their native language.

The head of the boarding facilities is experienced in this role and is dedicated to giving the students a positive experience. One student who boards commented that living on the campus was highly positive for her as she felt as though she was part of a family. She is extremely happy with her experience of the boarding school.

Currently there are 12 boarders. This is set to increase to approximately 40 students who will board next year as a high-performance sport programme is on offer at the school from September 2023, specialising in golf, sailing and football.

The boarding school handbook has comprehensive information about the running of the boarding school. Risk assessments have been carried out thoroughly for the routines, day to day safety and for excursions and free time.

Security of the boarding area has been increased through:

- CCTV
- Bedroom keys
- Access key cards and
- Pin code access for cleaning and maintenance staff

All boarders' rooms are equipped with en suite toilet and shower facilities.

Accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders, age groups and accommodation for adults.

The boarding facilities include wireless Internet, a well-equipped, spacious common room with TV, study area and games area with billiards, table football and board games. Students who board have access to the Sage Café, the school library, the Sage Pool, the Sage Gym and to their own kitchen and laundry facilities. There is also a roof terrace where students may study, and at weekends they may have barbeques or meals together.

The boarding school is authorised by the local authority in Spain.

Response to the previous inspection report:

- **Further develop the tracking and assessment systems**- these have been fully developed and now include action plans and ideas for improving progress
- **Continue training key workers in EYFS**- this has been continued and is ongoing
- **Develop a whole school child protection policy and that all staff know the procedures**- there is now a fully comprehensive policy that all staff work to and are aware of the key post holders and their responsibilities
- **Offer more creative subject options such as art and music to secondary examination students**- art, music and drama have been introduced and are now available as subject options for examination classes, but the current creative curriculum is limited by a lack of resources, such a costume, lighting and sound resources for drama and a wider variety of materials for work in art in both two and three dimensions
- **Maintain the high standards of student behaviour and achievement**- behaviour and achievement remain very good throughout the school. In the examination classes, strategies are in place to improve on some weaker results

Recommendations:

- Develop a wider variety of teaching strategies in the few secondary classes that lack them, so that students are more quickly engaged in working hard at their tasks
- Invest in resources to support the teaching of art, music and drama as they start the GCSE programmes of study
- Build on the successful changes made over the past three years especially in teaching and learning in the primary school, curriculum development, staffing and staff professional development and in the effectiveness of the leadership and management team.