

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL  
(ISC)**

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**INSPECTION OF**

**THE SIR JAMES HENDERSON BRITISH SCHOOL, MILAN**

**By the**

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE  
(ISI)**

**On**

**19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **The Sir James Henderson British School, Milan**

Full Name of the School	<b>The Sir James Henderson British School of Milan</b>
DCSF Number	<b>703/6023</b>
Address	<b>Via Pisani Dossi, 16, 20134 Lambrate, Milan, Italy</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0039 02210941</b>
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Principal	<b>Mr Trevor Church</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr James Noble</b>
Age Range	<b>3 - 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007</b>

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The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The Sir James Henderson British School (SJHS) was founded in Milan in 1969 by a group of parents who aimed to serve the needs of the British and international communities by providing a British education for their children. The school was named after a British businessman whose wife provided a generous donation to start the school. It has been in its present accommodation in the north of Milan for 11 years, during which time numbers have more than doubled and the site become overcrowded, so that the school is currently in the process of looking for new premises. The majority of physical education (PE) and games lessons take place off site at a nearby sports centre, owned and run by a local church, (Schuster), some 10 minutes by bus from the school. This arrangement imposes constraints on organisation and timetabling
- 1.2 The Sir James Henderson Association is a non-profit making organisation whose objective is to provide quality British education in Milan. Members and owners of the association are all parents of the pupils, each family being allowed up to two memberships.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide a broad, balanced, coherent and stimulating programme of study, based on the English National Curriculum; to promote excellence and achievement, developing individual potential through effective teaching and learning; to guide and prepare students to become responsible citizens of society, ready to face the challenges of a rapidly changing world; to encourage tolerance and respect for the beliefs and values of others; to promote a positive partnership between staff, pupils, parents, governors and the wider community; and to enable pupils to progress to other educational systems, including higher education, in both Britain and the wider world.
- 1.4 A distinguishing feature throughout the school is the provision of courses in Italian and Italian culture, both for native speakers and for those to whom Italian is a modern foreign language. Recognition by the Italian State, 'parità', ensures that native speakers can continue to have access to Italian qualifications and eventually to Italian higher education.
- 1.5 Pupils come mainly from the north of the city and the school organises a bus service. There are currently 778 pupils on roll (409 boys and 369 girls). The lower school has 441 pupils, of whom 86 are in the Foundation Stage, and the upper school has 337, including 81 in the sixth form. Some 26 nationalities are represented in the school. Approximately half the pupils speak Italian as their first language, half of that number coming from 'international' Italian families where one of the parents is Italian. The proportion of Italian pupils is increasing, and this is an issue for some families who fear that the essential Britishness of the school may be compromised. As an international school, with parents often on short-term contracts, SJHS has a higher-than-usual turn-over of pupils, though a substantial core are the children of more or less permanent residents and receive the whole of their education at SJHS.
- 1.6 Standardised tests indicate that pupils' average ability is above that of the national (UK) average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be above the average for all maintained primary and secondary schools in the UK. Some 13 pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), 10 of whom have individual education plans (IEPs) and receive support. None have statements of special educational needs. Thirty-two pupils receive English language support.
- 1.7 This is the first ISI inspection of the school.

- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The word ‘pupils’ is used to refer to the whole school and Years 1 to 6; ‘children’ refers to the Foundation Stage, and members of the upper school are referred to as ‘students’.

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Pupils throughout the school enjoy a good range of educational opportunities that are largely suited to their interests, aptitudes and needs. The school achieves considerable success in meeting its identified academic aims to provide a rich educational experience based on the English National Curriculum, complemented by a range of other activities and experiences and by a personal and social development that produces confident, rational young people secure in themselves and considerate of others. The integration of the teaching of Italian language and culture is a major strength of the school
- 2.2 The school is successful in promoting linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, aesthetic and creative development and in the acquisition of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. In the Foundation Stage, children concentrate on the six areas of learning and particularly on the acquisition of English language. Throughout Years 1 to 6, pupils' educational experience is very securely based in the National Curriculum and, again, the school provides a strong emphasis on the acquisition of English language skills. Italian is introduced in Year 2, with separate provision for both native and non-native speakers; in Year 6, humanities taught through the medium of in Italian replaces history and geography for pupils preparing for the 'Quinta' examination in that year. The addition of Italian and of humanities in Italian limits the overall curriculum time for other subjects particularly science, design and technology (DT) and the humanities in English, but without compromising the standards reached.
- 2.3 The overall provision the upper school fully meets the needs of the students. Students in Years 7 to 9 largely follow the National Curriculum, though there is no provision for DT. French is added in Year 7 and combined science is replaced by biology, chemistry and physics in Year 9. Between a third and a half of each age group opts to take the course in Italian language and humanities, whilst maintaining the British curriculum, in order to prepare for the 'Terza Media' examination; this also entails extra mathematics lessons after school. All students take a two year course to GCSE and study nine subjects of which English, mathematics, a science and Italian are core. The options include three other modern languages, French, German and Spanish, and all the sciences. At A level, sixteen subjects are offered. A number of students who are planning to continue into higher education in Italy replace one option by the course in Italian Language and Culture. Plans are advanced for the sixth-form programme to be replaced by the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP).
- 2.4 Programmes in religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are comprehensive in the lower school, covering a wide range of topics including a module on world religions. PSHE is being further developed in the upper school to promote greater awareness of global and environmental issues. The PSHE provision in the sixth form is unsatisfactory and is being revised to bring it into line with the requirements of the IBDP.
- 2.5 Pupils' educational experience is enriched by trips, visits and extra-curricular activities some of which are outstanding. The range of activities and level of participation in them are greater in the lower school than the upper school. The activities are well organised and coaching and tuition are of a high order. The variety and quality of musical activity is excellent and benefits pupils of all ages. The enthusiasm of the pupils and the high standards achieved are due to the dedication and skill of the staff. The quality of sports coaching is excellent but the numbers taking part are not high; most of the facilities are a distance away; there are few fixtures as the Italian tradition is for youngsters to join local clubs and for local

schools not to field sides. Additional factors affecting all after-school activities are the inflexibility of the school day and the fact that many pupils are involved in lessons after school to prepare them for the Italian state examinations. Field trips for geography, Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions, the lower school book week, the Eisteddfod, the chamber choir tour and visits to cities in Italy and elsewhere all add to pupils' enrichment.

- 2.6 Throughout the school, pupils are prepared well for transition to the next stage of their education. In the lower school, pupils benefit from the use of upper school facilities, including an induction day and taster lessons in both the science laboratories and the ICT suite, and by their familiarity with some secondary department teachers. However, there is considerable scope for further curriculum links, which would benefit the whole school. Planning to ensure greater continuity of the curriculum between Years 6 and 7 is in the early stages of development.
- 2.7 Careers provision in the upper school is good. Students in Year 11 undergo careers orientation profiling and have an interview with the Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO) team and with the head of the sixth form to determine their option choices. Year 12 students undertake work experience and, in Year 13, students receive advice on higher education choices in the UK, Italy and the USA; in addition, the school is visited by representatives of British universities. Students preparing for university interviews have practice interviews before panels which include members of the school's governing body.
- 2.8 Curriculum planning in the lower school is good. Co-ordinators' files are generally well structured and comprehensive with evidence of recent initiatives, and they are reviewed regularly by the head of lower school and in subject and key-stage meetings. In the upper school, curriculum planning is satisfactory. Subject planning is the responsibility of the heads of the academic departments and, though there are guidelines for departmental handbooks, a number of departments do not include appropriate differentiated schemes of work or guidance on teaching and assessment. Curriculum liaison between the lower and upper schools exists but is not well enough developed.
- 2.9 The provision for English as an additional language is outstanding. In the nursery, children with little or no English have daily lessons. In the lower school, pupils are assessed on entry and given support appropriate to their individual needs for as long as is necessary. A few pupils take one fewer GCSEs so that support can continue. Pupils were rich in their praise for the support offered to them by their teachers. A small number of pupils, principally in the lower school, have been identified as having LDD. The Learning Support Unit, which works across the whole school, produces, in negotiation with both parents and pupils, detailed and appropriate IEPs. These are reviewed annually. The support these pupils receive enables them to make good progress, particularly in the lower school.

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.10 The school is successful in fulfilling its aim to develop promote excellence and achievement and to develop individual potential. Pupils are well grounded in the subjects and activities provided. They are able to apply their knowledge and to think and act critically and creatively. Their skills for work and study are good, and their attitudes and their ability to work collaboratively is outstanding.
- 2.11 In the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress in all six areas of their learning. For the very large majority of pupils entering the nursery, English is not their first language and their progress in language and literacy is outstanding. The quality of the educational experience

- offered and the highly skilled teaching they receive enable them to make rapid progress in this area.
- 2.12 The firm focus on language and literacy across the curriculum continues throughout the lower school. Year 6 pupils are articulate and confident in discussion; they read and write fluently and appropriately in a range of styles. The more able show a high degree of technical accuracy and an excellent vocabulary in their writing. Pupils have very well developed number skills and are confident in their use of mathematical vocabulary. They understand thoroughly their work in science and have a very good grasp of topics such as the movement of the earth, sun and moon.
- 2.13 Achievement is good at all stages of the upper school. Year 9 students engage in high quality comment and discussion and are able to draft, and redraft their work efficiently. Students are mathematically articulate and, when interviewed, they used methods and ideas they had met in lessons to solve problems and made imaginative suggestions when discussing graphs. In science, they make scientific predictions and carry out experimental work to confirm the outcome.
- 2.14 By the time take their GCSE examinations, students' writing is lucid and insightful. In mathematical discussion with an inspector, they confidently interpreted distance-time graphs and carried out related calculations. One student was able to make connections between a quadratic equation and the associated graph. In science they understand and apply knowledge, for instance when calculating the energy of solutions.
- 2.15 Students at 18 have a firm grasp of the complexities of theme, character and situation in literature. In mathematics they apply appropriate methods in their answers to written problems. Algebraic manipulation is consistently accurate and pupils produce organised, well-structured answers. A-level scientists analyse data, evaluate their work and identify areas of experimental error. They engage in discussion of complex topics, such as, the spreading of viruses and prevention of infection.
- 2.16 Most pupils have strong ICT skills as a result of sound, and sometimes good, teaching combined with their own high level of application. Pupils make some use of appropriate ICT technologies, in particular for the drafting of work and for independent research, typically using the internet. They use control and data logging technologies in physics and chemistry but do not apply their ICT skills sufficiently in other subjects.
- 2.17 Where given the opportunity, pupils are confident in their reasoning skills. The most able pupils have well developed intellects and are capable of original thinking. They reason from first principles, articulate arguments and pose incisive questions. For example, a Year 8 lesson on climatic variation in Africa led to students asking very insightful questions about seasonality and how deserts can extend into coastal regions. However, at times, the development of these skills is restricted by teaching styles which are too directive.
- 2.18 Pupils take notes without prompting and structure their books and folders well. They develop these skills progressively through the school and benefit clearly from the guidance and support offered by their teachers.
- 2.19 Pupils throughout the school have excellent study habits and apply themselves conscientiously, as evidenced by the high standards they achieve. They settle promptly to lessons and remain on task throughout, even in double periods of over an hour in length, or when the teaching is less than riveting. When offered the chance to work collaboratively, pupils do so willingly, co-operating with their peers, listening carefully, and both offering and examining ideas in order to achieve their work goals.

- 2.20 There are no significant differences in the relative attainment of different groups of pupils at any stage in the school.
- 2.21 In national tests and public examinations, achievement is always at least good and at times high in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained primary schools. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' ability, and particularly so in view of the linguistic background of many pupils.
- 2.22 The results of national tests at age 14 over the last three years in mathematics and science have been far above the national average representing high achievement in relation to students' ability. The English results were not quite as good but were still well above the national average, representing good achievement in relation to students' ability; for the many pupils whose first language is not English, the level attained represents outstanding achievement.
- 2.23 GCSE results over the last three years have been well above the national average and represent good achievement. Results in A level examinations are also well above the national average for all maintained schools, both in terms of the pass rate and the proportion of A and B grades. The 2007 results were outstanding; all students passed and three-quarters of the grades were A or B. The results of those taking the Italian state examinations are also good, well above the Italian average.
- 2.24 Pupils achieve consistently strong results in externally examined instrumental music examinations at levels ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 8. In 2007, a record number of distinctions were achieved in the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music examinations.
- 2.25 Pupils derive great benefit from the opportunities offered to participate fully in the life of the school and they achieve worthwhile goals through their individual and group efforts in many areas. In regular activities throughout the school, the good coaching and teaching pupils receive enable them to achieve very high standards in sport, in music in art and in chess. Pupils participate and enjoy success in sporting events with other, mainly international, schools such as the athletics tournament against the International School of Milan. They present assemblies and concerts to parents.
- 2.26 In the upper school, several students represent local and regional teams in basketball and football. Group successes in music are outstanding and include the Carol Concert, a major choral and orchestral concert at Easter, a recent recital of Handel's Messiah and the chamber choir's annual tour, most recently to Zurich. Pupils perform well in mathematics competitions.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.27 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; it fulfils the school's aims to prepare students to become responsible citizens who are tolerant and respectful of others' beliefs, and they leave the school as mature and reflective young adults. Their high moral standards, readiness to contribute to the common good and respect for others are borne from the excellent relationships with each other and with adults in the community. The school offers good opportunities for involvement, for reflection and taking responsibility. Above all, the school fosters a strong sense of loyalty in its pupils. The highly-effective contribution of PSHE to personal development in the lower school provides a model for practice in the upper school.

- 2.28 Personal growth is a strong feature of the school. Pupils feel valued and are given every opportunity to be successful and have their success recognised, so that they grow considerably in self-confidence and self-esteem. The pupils and students who were interviewed were impressive in discussion, confident and articulate and unafraid to express views. In the lower school, spiritual development is reinforced by well-developed RE and PSHE. Through sensitive discussion in a secure environment, starting simply with circle time, pupils come gradually to a greater understanding of their own identity, they learn about religions, what separates them and what they have in common. Assemblies such as the one for Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils, which focused on consideration and helping others and which included enactments of ‘Goldilocks’ and ‘The Good Samaritan’, left pupils awestruck. In the upper school, the lack of RE, the limited programme of PSHE and the relative infrequency of assemblies restrict opportunities for spiritual growth. Music-making and art give students some appreciation of non-material aspects of life but schemes of work in most subjects largely ignore spiritual development and many opportunities to reflect are thus missed. Nevertheless, lessons in subjects such as English, geography, PSHE and science offer some opportunities for self-reflection. English lessons, for example, provide good opportunities for students to consider the differences in circumstances and values between different historical periods and introduce a number of aspects of British culture.
- 2.29 The school has high expectations of pupils’ conduct and behaviour and pupils develop strong moral values. Pupils are set a good example by both teaching and non-teaching staff, and are well able to distinguish between right and wrong. The school has a clear code of conduct, which pupils understand and respect, and any rare misdemeanours are dealt with firmly but sensitively. At all times, pupils are encouraged to think of the effect of their actions on others and on the whole school community. A Year 6 PSHE lesson enabled pupils to develop an excellent understanding of tolerance and acceptance of mistakes and to learn how one feels when mistakes are made. No opportunities are missed to raise moral issues wherever they occur, not only in PSHE but in other areas of the curriculum. In Year 4, the lyrics of a song in a music lesson gave opportunities to reflect on giving and caring. The discussion in a Year 10 English lesson focused on the moral choices explored in Blake’s London. Year 11 geographers debated the issues raised by an aging population.
- 2.30 Pupils develop very well socially, accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life. Pupils move between lessons in a composed, organised and well-mannered way, respecting each other. In the lower school playground, they play together considerately in an involved and engaged manner. Pupils cooperate well together in the library, sharing knowledge. The qualities of leadership and teamwork are strong through activities which allow pupils to work as teams and take responsibility as prefects, and as members of the school councils. Year 13 students and Year 6 pupils mentor pupils younger than themselves. Trips and residential visits provide further opportunities for pupils to develop socially. The PSHE course provides regular input into the pupils’ education as citizens, though this is limited beyond Year 9. The school councils are not only an exercise in democracy and committee work, they also demonstrate to pupils that such debate and corporate decision-making can produce results; several school initiatives have emerged from their deliberations. Pupils are aware that they are privileged and work very hard and successfully to help those in need, through fund-raising for charitable causes which they often initiate themselves. Lower school pupils collect non-perishable items for distribution to the homeless in Milan; pupils in Years 6 and 7 work hard on a regular basis to support, through cake sales, two children in Kenya and Year 12 pupils are raising money for the Bangladesh cyclone disaster.
- 2.31 Pupils put to good use the opportunities the school provides to develop culturally. During their time at SJHS they gain not only an appreciation of their own culture but a growing

understanding of and respect for other cultures. There is a wealth of music art and drama; many pupils play a musical instrument and make the most of opportunities to perform in public in a range of musical groups, some of which go on tour to other countries. Dramatic productions are the highlights of the school year. Art makes an important contribution to pupils' creative and aesthetic development and the excellent quality of art on display throughout the school creates a stimulating environment. Pupils from the many nations represented in the school get on well together and the school is assiduous in promoting knowledge, understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The Reception classroom has the word 'welcome' in several languages. An excellent Year 5 registration engaged pupils in a wide variety of languages and promoted understanding and tolerance. A well-produced assembly on the theme of 'Think Globally, Act Locally' compared pupils' own comforts to the difficulties of children elsewhere. Year 10 have done a project on Indian art and have written arguments for a debate about cultural integration.

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.32 The quality of teaching is good and consistent with the school's aim of developing individual potential through effective teaching and learning. The teaching was good or better in more than two-thirds of the lessons seen and in a significant number it was outstanding. It enables pupils throughout the school to acquire new skills and to achieve well, including those pupils who have learning difficulties or for whom English is an additional language. The teachers are committed, they have a good command of their subjects and they plan meticulously. In the few lessons where teaching was judged to be less effective, it was too narrowly focused on examination requirements and did not offer enough challenge to pupils' creative imagination or provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently. Increasing use of the school's developing assessment system is enabling teachers to monitor pupils' progress more effectively.
- 2.33 Teachers are well qualified and include in their number some outstanding practitioners who are capable of inspiring and enthusing their pupils. Planning is always sound and sometimes excellent; for example, meticulous planning of a Reception art lesson enabled pupils to master a wide variety of tasks matched to their abilities. Teaching methods are thorough; lessons have clear objectives and are delivered briskly. The best teaching encourages creativity and independent study; for example, in a Year 13 English lesson on Yeats's poetry, the teacher's deft questioning of students' ideas led to great sophistication of argument. In a Year 1 lower-school dance lesson, pupils made great physical efforts to explore and repeat simple movement skills. However, the over-reliance on teacher-led lessons seen in the upper school restricts students' opportunities to develop and test new skills. In consequence, creativity and independence of thought are not as well developed as in the lower school.
- 2.34 Teachers know their pupils well and have plenty of detailed information about their aptitudes, needs and prior attainments. In the lower school, this is evident from the high degree to which teachers adapt tasks and methods to match pupils' needs. In the best lessons, pupils were encouraged to explore their intellectual boundaries. In a Year 5 history lesson, for example, tasks were individually tailored across a wide ability range giving an equally fulfilling educational experience for all pupils. In the upper school, on the other hand, matching tasks and approaches to pupils' needs is less evident and teachers rely more on setting by ability. Some underestimate the capacity of the most able and do not deploy teaching techniques that challenge these students more, for example, by making greater use of open questioning to promote intellectual challenge.
- 2.35 Resources are adequate and up-to-date textbooks are used effectively to support learning. In the lower school, for example, the mathematics department makes good use of a wide variety

- of resources. In the upper school, teachers make widespread and sometimes excessive use of photocopied material. ICT provision within the teaching rooms is variable and, in consequence, pupils' access to ICT in some classrooms is very limited. As yet, not all teachers exploit these technologies as fully as they might to support and enhance the pupils' learning experience.
- 2.36 Relations between teachers and pupils are excellent and the pupils respond positively to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour. In their response to the questionnaire, almost all pupils felt that teachers were effective in helping them to learn.
- 2.37 The quality of marking and assessment is good with some outstanding features. Marking is regular and frequent throughout the school; in the lower school where the marking policy is applied with particular consistency, marking gives pupils clear guidance as to how to improve their work and stimulates their interest. Assessment is used effectively throughout the school to monitor pupils' progress and to inform both planning and teaching. Target setting is particularly effective in the lower school, for example, in Year 4 where pupils are involved in completing self-evaluative 'target booklets'.
- 2.38 Results and pupil achievements are closely monitored by subject staff, tutors and key stage co-ordinators. In the lower school good communication and comprehensive record-keeping and tracking methods promote pupils' progress. In some subjects, the maintenance of portfolios of pupils' work across a wide ability and age range further supports monitoring. In the upper school, where grades are reported five times a year, under-achieving students are quickly flagged for attention.
- 2.39 Pupils' performance is evaluated by reference to national norms. In the lower school, national tests at age 11 and the optional intermediate tests are an important feature of assessment in English and mathematics, whereas science is assessed by means of internally designed tests. Throughout the school, care is taken within departments to moderate attainment grades against external criteria and training is provided for all staff to support this system, including teachers who are new to the school. Extensive analysis of assessment data and examination results is used to inform judgements at departmental reviews.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 In accordance with its aims, the school provides a high standard of pastoral care for its pupils, supported by robust structures and procedures. This quality of care is appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are excellent. Practices to support welfare, health and safety are sound but do not in all areas match the best standards found in independent schools in the United Kingdom (UK).
- 3.2 Class teachers (lower school) and form tutors (upper school) are clear as to their responsibilities and are fully involved in all aspects of care for the pupils during their time at SJHS. They are approachable and welcoming and provide excellent support and guidance for their charges. Pupils are very much treated as individuals and they value this. The school is a caring community where children can thrive on the support they receive. Further support is available from the pupil welfare officer (PWO) and through the counselling system. The counsellor is a recent innovation and is already having an impact.
- 3.3 The pastoral structure is strong. In the lower school, class teachers deal with most issues themselves and refer any problems to the head and deputy. The upper school has a formal structure of key stage co-ordinators, each responsible for a team of tutors. These teams meet monthly to discuss pastoral issues.
- 3.4 The pastoral system is reinforced by the house system which provides another layer of support. Pupils have developed a strong allegiance to the houses, fostered by a good range of house activities, including the annual eisteddfod and competitions; these enhance pupils' school experience, and they work hard to earn house points.
- 3.5 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this is a major strength of the pastoral system. Staff clearly know the pupils well. The atmosphere is welcoming and inclusive and it is clear that pupils are at ease seeking help from staff when they feel the need.
- 3.6 Good discipline and behaviour are a feature of life at SJHS, with mutual respect and care for others a part of the culture of the school. When behaviour slips below the traditionally high standard this is dealt with effectively. Appropriate sanctions are in place and suitable records are kept. The school has a clear and well-documented anti-bullying policy but incidents are few and pupils are confident that they are dealt with rapidly and effectively. Supervision in the school playgrounds is excellent and pupils play harmoniously together. Systems of rewards in both upper and lower school encourage excellence across a wide range of areas of activity and are clearly valued by the pupils.
- 3.7 School councils in both lower and upper schools meet regularly. They are led by the pupils and offer opportunities for them to voice their opinions and develop leadership skills. The councils initiate various school functions and events such as charity and sports days.
- 3.8 Pupils enjoy a good standard of food at lunchtime: a team of parents monitors the quality of the food and liaises with the catering company. The medical care available from the nurses, one of whom is the school's PWO, is highly valued. The PWO's role goes beyond basic first aid and she can be a key first port of call for some pupils seeking help. The school keeps detailed records of medical incidents and parents are informed of any topical medical issues.

- 3.9 The principal and the PWO are the staff with responsibility for child protection. Policies and procedures are robust and well documented. Staff receive child protection training and this is reinforced regularly.
- 3.10 The relatively compact nature of the school building brings no safety problems in respect of movement between lessons or round the corridors. The calm way the pupils move between lessons and efficient control as pupils enter (especially in the lower school) make the building and its environs a safe and secure place in this regard. The lower school playground area is well supervised during break times
- 3.11 Registration, which takes place every morning, notes who is present but unexplained absences are not consistently followed up during the morning and some registers are not completed accurately according to the school's own procedures. The admission register is detailed and comprehensive.
- 3.12 The school takes its responsibility for health and safety seriously and takes termly professional advice from an architect who, along with the trained health and safety representative, monitors the physical fabric of the building for any health and safety concerns, including fire risks. The advice is fully documented and concerns are passed on to both the principal and the health and safety committee for action. Risk assessments are now completed for visits off site, though procedures are not as rigorous as would be expected in UK schools. A number of minor issues were drawn to the attention of the school but the example set by the PE department, for instance, indicates a move towards a stronger culture of awareness for health and safety across the whole school.

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.13 The school maintains close links with parents and has sound and developing links with the community. Parents are pleased with the quality of education that their children receive; they are well informed, receive useful reports and have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school.
- 3.14 In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the education provided: particularly, teaching, pastoral care and the promotion of worthwhile values. A small minority expressed some concern over the range of extra-curricular activities, the provision for those with learning difficulties, standards of behaviour and the 'erosion' of the Britishness of the school. The inspectors found that the range and quality of the activities in the lower school are good but that the range of activities and pupils' participation are more limited in the upper school, though the quality remains high. Inspectors were impressed by the standards of behaviour observed. The school is clear in its commitment to providing a British education. The provision of a bridge to the Italian education system broadens the cultural scope of the school, provides additional qualifications for those who are Italian or part Italian and firmly embeds the school in the Italian community – this without compromising the essential purpose of the school. The school strikes a good balance.
- 3.15 The school is a welcoming environment and has an effective open-door policy which seeks to involve parents in their child's education. By virtue of the fact that all parents are members and owners of the Sir James Henderson Association, they are very much involved in the life of the school. The members of the governing body are all parents. The Friends of SJHS is a very active parent/teacher organisation; it has a network of class representative; the committee meets monthly and meets the governors before governors' meetings. In addition, the principal holds open meetings with parents once a term. Parents organise social and fund-raising events and provide some help with reading and DT in the lower school.

- 3.16 Parents are provided with a wealth of information about the school. The school's web site, which is in the process of being updated, provides information about the school and its activities, including regular newsletters. Handbooks explain the curriculum and the school's procedures. Parents receive full reports twice yearly and grade cards three or four times. These reports provide a clear and helpful picture of pupils' attainment and progress and set targets. The best of them highlight specific achievements and give advice for future learning. Lower school parents' evenings are held three times a year. Parents in the upper school have one meeting, except for parents of Year 7 who have two. Parents are invited into the school at other times to discuss pupils' progress if grades indicate under-performance, and additional meetings are held to discuss options.
- 3.17 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. The school's 'open door' policy, and the ready availability of senior staff, mean that most concerns are resolved informally and speedily. For more difficult issues, the school has a comprehensive complaints procedure. Examination of correspondence indicates that such problems are dealt with sensitively and thoroughly.
- 3.18 The school has sound links with the community. It uses the sports facilities of a local church. Harvest Festival and Carol Concerts are held in local churches to which the public is invited. Pupils raise money for local charities and distribute the proceeds of the harvest collection. Work experience placements are organised within Milan.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The governing body exercises effective stewardship of the school, ensuring that it fulfils its aims. The members of the association which owns the school are all parents who elect the governing body. The board consists of nine parents and the non-voting representatives of the British Consulate General and the British Council. Members of the board of governors may serve a maximum of two three-year terms. This system, while it is democratic, does not ensure that all essential gubernatorial skills are represented and the lack of effective external representation means that there is no counterbalance of objectivity to the commitment of the parent governors. Governors are aware of this and are in the early stages of considering the issue.
- 4.2 The governing body is well organised with six sub-committees for education, security, finance, community, sponsorships and building. Members of the board serve on at least two sub-committees. The main board and the sub-committees meet once a month; therefore members attend at least three meetings a month. This is a heavy commitment which could usefully be reviewed.
- 4.3 Governors are aware of their responsibilities and have appointed one of their number, who is about to undertake training, as a representative for child protection. They also use the services of an outside consultant to check health and safety issues but, for the most part, they are not up to date with the best practice in the United Kingdom and does not benefit from membership of a body such as the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent A Schools (AGBIS) which is an invaluable source of information, advice and in-service training. The governors offer valuable support for the school but its role of providing advice and challenge is less well developed. Nevertheless the board is proactive; for instance, the education sub-committee initiated the discussion of provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. The board is investing considerable energy in securing the future of the school in the search for a new site.
- 4.4 The fact that the governors are all parents gives them immediate insight into the workings of the school. Parents meet the governors before the monthly meetings of the governing body, ensuring that the latter are aware of parental concerns. Governors regularly attend school functions but do not routinely visit the school to observe it in operation. There is no formal link between the governing body and the staff of the school.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 The leadership of the school provides clear direction for the future of the school and ensures that it fulfils its stated aims. The principal is supported by very experienced heads of upper and lower school and a well defined management structure where senior managers have clear job descriptions and work well together as teams. The next two tiers of middle management, key stage co-ordinators and curriculum managers and co-ordinators are equally well defined and provide good leadership. Together, these bodies ensure that pupils receive a high quality education which eventually enables pupils to progress for the most part into higher education, not only well qualified but as mature and articulate young men and women.
- 4.6 Effective consultation, particularly at middle management level enables the two sections and eventually the whole school, to develop a coherent development plan which is put before the education committee. The priorities in the overall development plan are clear and

appropriate but the document itself is insufficiently detailed, in respect of planning, financial implications, criteria for success and evaluation. In the tightly knit lower school, this process is more rigorous. Curriculum development is also strong in the junior school. The more disparate nature of the upper school and the lack of a designated director of studies make this process more difficult. Both the lower and the upper school have a full range of policies, though those in the upper school need greater detail, except for the assessment policy which is comprehensive. Policies are implemented effectively and reviewed regularly.

- 4.7 The school has a sufficient number of committed, well-qualified staff who are deployed to best advantage. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and secure and all necessary checks are made. The school provides good support for new appointees through subsidised accommodation. The induction of new staff is sound but lacks a coherent programme of induction into the school practices over an extended period and the support of a mentor. The school has a comprehensive performance management programme which appraises staff in both their teaching and leadership roles. In-service training is related mainly to priorities identified by the performance management process. The school also organises in-house training on topics such as the IBD, ICT and learning and assessment. Internal communication is good and all staff have the opportunity to contribute to school development.
- 4.8 Budgetary procedures are robust and expenditure is tightly controlled by the bursar. The school would benefit if the upper school and lower school budgets were discussed in the context of the whole school budget. The school has reached the limits of its accommodation and new premises are now urgent. Resources are adequate. The school is well served by loyal and committed administrative staff and runs efficiently. Catering, cleaning and maintenance are all good.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 SJHS amply fulfils its aims to provide a high quality British education for the British community in Milan and, at the same time, enables young people of Italian and part-Italian origin to have access both to British and Italian qualifications. Pupils get off to an excellent start in the Foundation stage and emerge from Year 13 as high-achieving young people, confident, mature and considerate of others.
- 5.2 Pupils have a rich educational experience based on the English National Curriculum which is enhanced by the provision of extra-curricular activities and the courses in Italian language and culture leading to recognition by the Italian education system. Academic standards are good for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, particularly in view of the fact that for half of the pupils English is an additional language. Pupils have good study skills and excellent attitudes to work. These results are the product of hard work by the pupils and committed and skilful teaching. Nevertheless, some of the teaching, particularly for older students is too narrowly focused on examination requirements and does not offer sufficient intellectual challenge or encourage independent study. Relations among pupils, and between pupils and adults in the school, are strong and considerate, being based on mutual respect, and behaviour around the school is friendly and courteous. Both pupils and parents appreciate the high quality of care and guidance. Parents are very supportive and very involved in the life of the school, both as members of the Friends of SJHS and as governors. The governing body works hard to secure the future of the school and is pro-active in its development. There is, however, room to modify its structure to ensure that a wider range of interest and experience is represented. The school is well led and efficiently managed, but more can be done to strengthen the academic links between the lower and upper school and to bring standards of health and safety even closer to those prevailing in the UK.
- 5.3 The school meets most of the English regulatory requirements either directly or through their local equivalents, but should take the action specified in the next section.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 There are no major recommendations, but to further improve the quality of education the school should:
1. review teaching strategies to encourage approaches which offer greater challenge to the pupils and encourage independent thought and study;
  2. further develop curricular liaison between the lower and upper schools so that the transition becomes seamless;
  3. further develop schemes of work in the upper school to ensure that they are adapted to the needs of the pupils of SJHS and contain more guidance about teaching, assessment and each subject's contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
  4. review the structure of the board of governors to increase representation from outside the parent body and to ensure a greater range of skills and experience.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the English regulatory requirements, the school should:
- (1) tighten registration procedures and the keeping of registers and follow up more promptly unexplained absences;

- (2) review and act on risk assessments, particularly in respect of visits and safety in laboratories.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr John Marshall	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Jill Moore	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Ian Adams	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Mark Albini	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Dr Nick Argent	Principal, HMC school
Mr Chris Cleugh	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Tim Jenkins	Head of Department, HMC school
Dr Charles Runacres	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mr John Orr	Senior Tutor, HMC school