

The Japanese School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	307/6070
Unique Reference Number (URN)	101958
Inspection number	364223
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Japanese School opened in west London in 1976, as an independent primary and secondary day school for pupils from six to 15 years of age. There are currently 417 pupils on roll and none has a statement of special educational needs. It is a Japanese-speaking school that follows the Japanese National Curriculum. The school is part of a worldwide network of Japanese schools and it receives financial support for staffing and other subsidies from the Japanese government.

The school was created to provide for the children of expatriates on secondment from their companies in Japan, so that they could have a continuous education wherever they are in the world. Each year over a third of pupils leave the school and a similar number of pupils join the school. In the previous academic year, over 200 pupils left the school other than at the usual times to continue their education in Japan. The school has no religious affiliation. The school was previously inspected in February 2008.

A key principle is: 'The school aims to educate pupils to be independent citizens (of the world, Japan, and Britain) with broad minds, skills to live robustly, and with humanity.'

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils and meets its aims. Teaching and assessment are good and are supported by a good curriculum. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are inadequate. Procedures do not comply with regulations and the required checks on staff prior to their appointment are not complete. As a consequence, the school's arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are inadequate. The school has made little improvement in meeting the regulatory requirements for independent schools and, as at the time of the previous inspection, the school fails a number of regulations.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and provides pupils with good quality experiences in a broad range of areas of learning. The school draws on the prescribed curriculum documentation issued by the Japanese Education Ministry and covers all the required areas of learning. Separate National Curriculum policies for each subject set out clear objectives and include methodology and appropriate teaching strategies. Schemes of work provide well-defined progression across all year groups and include key assessment criteria. The school has adapted the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive three lessons each week in English as an additional language. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their English speaking, reading and writing skills.

There is good provision for developing pupils' mathematical and communication skills. In addition, the school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop their art and music skills. A well-resourced and efficiently managed school library helps pupils to make good progress in developing their reading skills in both Japanese and English. Pupils play musical instruments confidently and to a good standard. Two fully equipped information and communication technology (ICT) suites within the school help to improve pupils' ICT skills. School development plans confirm that the school intends to improve the number and quality of interactive whiteboards and computers to increase pupils' access to and participation in learning.

The school provides good encouragement in developing pupils' social skills and self-esteem. Pupils are confident and articulate when speaking in lessons or while describing their recent educational experiences over the school's internal sound system. Excellent synchronised dance and music performances are well choreographed and show pupils' good balance and coordination skills. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of after-school activities. Sporting activities are popular and well attended, especially tennis, football and basketball. There are separate after-school music sessions and a Japanese drumming club.

Pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support well matched to their needs. These pupils are provided with individual programmes which include lessons working individually with a specialist teacher. Where they attend whole-class lessons, pupils are well supported by teachers who show a good understanding of their needs and abilities.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good across the school. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures all pupils make good progress, irrespective of their age and ability. In lessons, teachers use questions well to stimulate pupils' thinking and extend their ideas and responses. In a humanities lesson, pupils discussed the Japanese Constitution and were challenged by the teacher's questions to explain their ideas so that they produced thoughtful responses. Relationships are good and

teachers build a very good rapport with pupils, which engenders good and even outstanding behaviour in lessons.

Teachers use effective teaching methods and a variety of activities to reinforce pupils' understanding, which helps them to make good progress. In a science lesson pupils extended their understanding of blood flow by using stethoscopes to listen to the rhythm of their own heartbeat. In English lessons, teachers use particularly good pronunciation techniques to help pupils to become more fluent speakers. In some lessons teachers use computer-based resources and interactive whiteboards to add variety to their teaching. Opportunities for pupils to access ICT to reinforce their learning are limited.

Regular assessments ensure that teachers know their pupils' abilities well and additional support is provided where required. Teachers were quick to provide additional support for a pupil whose reading was slower than that of others. Pupils complete formal tests throughout the year and national tests in April each year. The formal tests are used to monitor their progress and to identify areas to improve. The most recent national test results in April 2011 confirm that pupils' attainment across the school is above Japanese national averages in writing and mathematics, and well above in reading.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show good levels of enjoyment in their education and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive and the sound of gentle laughter is a common event. They make a strong contribution in lessons and participate enthusiastically by answering questions and explaining their ideas. Pupils are encouraged to socialise with each other and they consistently show kindness towards each other. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' social and moral skills and encourages pupils to behave responsibly at all times. As a result, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils value each other's contribution and show a good appreciation of the needs of others. Pupils' daily routines ensure that they suitably develop their spirituality and regularly reflect on their work and relationships with others.

Pupils regularly contribute to the life of the school; a pupil committee includes representatives from all classes. Their good teamwork was observed at 'cleaning time' when they were helping each other to tidy up their classrooms and other areas, for example, by cleaning windows, floor surfaces and teachers' and pupils' desks. Pupil committees include representatives from all classes and make suggestions on improving areas of the school. Opportunities for pupils to more actively shape the work of the school and contribute to the wider community are less well developed than in other areas.

Regular trips, curriculum topics such as 'London Times', and newspaper resources gathered in the library, all help pupils to gain a broad knowledge of public institutions and bodies within the United Kingdom. Pupils' cultural understanding is good; the school links well with a local school and other communities. Pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures is good and reflects the school's aim and ethos of promoting 'broad minds, and skill to live robustly, and with humanity'.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are inadequate because the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils and ensure adults are suitable to work with children are not sufficiently rigorous.

There is a strong commitment from staff to build relationships and to consider pupils' well-being in lessons. The school has produced a suitable written child protection policy. Risk assessment procedures for trips and educational visits are clear and well established. Assessments for recent educational trips include a preliminary visit and detailed instructions for adult helpers. The school has clear first aid procedures; a qualified school nurse is present on site, administers first aid and medicines and maintains well-organised records of accidents. Twice a year the school completes checks on pupils' height, weight and eyesight.

Thorough fire safety assessments are completed and evaluations by senior leaders are used effectively to improve procedures. Fire extinguishers and equipment are checked regularly. Fire drills are completed termly and evaluated well to ensure that procedures are clear and understood by new arrivals to the school. However, the school does not complete regular checks on all of its portable electric appliances. The school has not drawn up a three-year plan stating how they will increase the accessibility of the school's curriculum and premises to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Some health and safety concerns were evident in areas of the school; there are unrestrained windows on upper floors and pupils move up and down staircases near glass windows as other pupils mop the stairway.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school's arrangements to check the suitability of staff prior to their appointment are inadequate overall. There are clear procedures to ensure that teachers arriving on secondment from Japan, selected by the Japanese Ministry, are checked for their suitability prior to their transfer to the United Kingdom. In addition, the school completes checks of seconded teachers' right to work within the United Kingdom. Checks on the suitability of staff employed locally are inadequate. The school does not complete checks on medical fitness and take up references from previous employers. The school has completed checks with the United Kingdom Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) on some staff but others have been employed without these checks having been undertaken. Vetting procedures for members of the proprietorial

body are not robust enough. The single central register does not contain all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school premises are enhanced by a spacious and well-furnished library, well-resourced computer suites and design and technology facilities. An extensive and well-equipped outdoor play area includes a sprung running track. An all-weather surface play area for the younger pupils provides a variety of climbing equipment with a safety surface. The school's medical facilities include a well-equipped two-bed infirmary.

The majority of classrooms are spacious and are suitable for learning, although accommodation for some of the larger classes, while adequate, is restricted. The quality of decoration varies and, while satisfactory, is tired and worn in areas of the school. While pupils ensure that classrooms are clean and tidy, standards of cleanliness vary throughout the school building. Bright and colourful displays of pupils' pictorial and written work enhance many areas of the school.

Provision of information

Parents and carers receive an annual report on their children's progress and regular assessment results. They have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress twice a year at parents' and carers' evenings and are invited in to lessons on a regular basis. Information for parents and carers is available on the school's website and in the prospectus. The prospectus provides information on the school's support for pupils with special educational needs, its admission procedures and requirements for entry and how pupils will be taught. While the prospectus and website provide some helpful information for parents, carers and others, the school documentation does not make explicit that particulars of the school's policies on bullying, health and safety, of previous academic year performance and the school's complaints procedures are available. The school has a safeguarding policy but it has not published this on the school website, nor informed parents and carers of its availability in the prospectus.

The large majority of parents and carers are happy with the school and the education provided for their children. A few parents and carers say that they would like the school to take their children's particular needs into account when preparing them for transition to the next stage in their education either in Japan or the United Kingdom.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy includes most, but not all, of the required information. The areas of non-compliance are noted below. Some parents and carers reported that they were not aware of the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure the school's safeguarding arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for England (paragraph 7)
- ensure there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the DfES guidance Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers (DfES 0803/2001) (paragraph 11).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- verify that no member of staff is barred from regulated activity with children (paragraph 19(2)(a))
- complete appropriate recruitment checks on locally employed staff's medical fitness, qualifications and identity (paragraph 19(2)(b))
- complete an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check on all locally employed staff (paragraph 19(2)(c))
- ensure the checks in 19(2)(b) are completed prior to a person's appointment (paragraph 19(3))
- verify that no member of the proprietorial body is barred from regulated activity with children (paragraph 21(6)(a))
- ensure that checks with the Criminal Records Bureau on the right to work in United Kingdom and clearance from criminal conviction prior arrival in the United Kingdom are completed for all members of the proprietorial body (paragraph 21(6)(b))
- ensure that the single central register shows for staff appointed after 1 May 2007 checks on their identity and relevant qualifications (paragraph 22(3))
- ensure that the single central register shows for staff appointed before 1 May 2007 checks on their identity and relevant qualifications (paragraph 22(4))
- ensure that the single central register shows for each member of the proprietorial body appointed after 1 May 2007 an enhanced CRB check and for those having lived outside the United Kingdom their right to work and any further checks in regard to guidance (paragraph 22(6))
- ensure that the single central register shows for each member of the proprietorial body appointed before 1 May 2007 an enhanced CRB and further checks for those having lived outside of the United Kingdom (paragraph 22(7)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that corridors and windows on stairways contain safety glass and are suitably restrained and floors surfaces are dry and clean while children are moving up and down so that no areas of the school compromise health and safety (paragraph 23(i)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- include in the information made available for parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, particulars related to:
 - school policies on bullying and health and safety
 - academic progress from the preceding school year
 - the complaints procedure adopted by the school together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the previous school year (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- ensure that the safeguarding children policy is published on the school website or is sent and/or made available to parents of pupils (and prospective parents on request) (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- make a copy of the complaints procedure available to parents and others (paragraph 25(b))
- ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint that it includes a person who is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- ensure that the procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that the panel's findings and recommendations will be sent to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, by electronic mail or is otherwise available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and headteacher (paragraph 25(i))
- ensure that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints, including whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j))
- ensure that the procedure states that correspondence, statements and records of all complaints will remain confidential (paragraph 25(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				√
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day primary and secondary school		
Date school opened	1976		
Age range of pupils	6–15 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 227	Girls: 190	Total: 417
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,980		
Address of school	87 Creffield Road, Acton London W3 9PU		
Telephone number	020 8993 7145		
Email address	sugano-s@thejapaneseschool.ltd.uk		
Headteacher	Mr K Tomomura		
Proprietor	The Japanese School Limited		