



part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

**Akademeia High School
Warsaw**

November 2024

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School's Details

School	Akademeia High School		
Address	Św. Urszuli Ledóchowskiej 2, 02-972 Warszawa, Poland		
Telephone number	0048 22 29 98 787		
Email address	headmaster@akademeia.edu.pl		
Headmaster	Dr Karolina Watras		
Chair of governors	Ms Monique Louis		
Proprietor	International Schools Partnership		
Age range	14 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	328		
	Day pupils	313	Boarders 15
	Secondary	155	Sixth Form 173
Inspection dates	19 to 20th November 2024		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Akademeia High School (AHS) is a co-educational school for pupils aged 14 to 18. The school was originally founded in a historic building located at Plac Trzech Krzyży in 2016, before moving to a purpose-built site in the southern outskirts of the city of Warsaw. Boarders are accommodated on a private floor of a hotel nearby. The school has recently been sold to the International Schools Partnership, which owns schools worldwide. A board of governors drawn from the partnership, and which includes the headmaster, oversees the running of the school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school strives to help pupils realise their intellectual and creative ambitions and stretch their abilities in a pre-university environment.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from Warsaw and the surrounding areas. Boarders come from other areas of Poland and adjacent countries. The majority of pupils are Polish, and others come from a range of other European countries. Data provided by the school shows that pupils' ability on entry is slightly above the average compared to others taking the same tests worldwide. There are 104 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional help. Almost all pupils speak two or more languages and have English as an additional language (EAL). All but a very few are fluent writers and speakers of English.

2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO). It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements. Schools may opt for an inspection of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas. The standards represent minimum requirements, and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. In order to gain BSO accreditation, a school is required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report. If a school does not meet all the standards, it may elect to be re-inspected once it has taken the required actions in order to gain BSO accreditation.

Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.

Accreditation as a British School Overseas lasts for three years. This the school's first BSO inspection.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas and the Minimum Standards for Boarding (MSB) and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

2.2 The Standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

- 2.3 The school's curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work meet the needs of the ages and aptitudes of all pupils from the start of Year 9 to the sixth form. The curriculum provides pupils with experience in a suitably wide range of skills and effectively develops their understanding of English. On entry, pupils are assessed for their level of English. Only a very few require extra support, which is provided for them and meets their needs. The vast majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they were pleased with their children's progress in English.
- 2.4 The curriculum encourages independence and gives pupils opportunities to discover new interests and skills. The school designs its own courses for pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 which draw together social, historical and economic issues across the world, including those of the United Kingdom, and prepare pupils well for their future lives. National law requires pupils with Polish nationality to study Polish language and Polish history. Those who speak no or a little Polish are offered lessons at a level appropriate to their ability.
- 2.5 Pupils follow a broad range of subjects that give experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Almost all parents replying to the questionnaire thought that the range of subjects was suitable for their children and that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activity. Leaders have introduced a personal development scheme (PDS) in which all pupils take part in addition to their examination subjects. Through this scheme pupils develop an ability to draw subject areas together in a personal research project, and to contribute to the school or wider society. Many sixth-form pupils study for an extended project qualification (EPQ), either in an area linked to their A-level subjects or related to their own interests.
- 2.6 Each pupil has an academic mentor who works with them to select their 'academic pathway' in Year 11. The curriculum is structured to allow pupils either to study a broad range of subjects, or to specialise, for example in science or creative arts. Pupils sit international GCSEs (IGCSEs) at the end of Year 11 and four or five A levels at the end of Year 13. Pupils achieve IGCSE and results at A level are significantly above the average for those taking the same examinations worldwide. In most years pupils from the school achieve the highest marks in Poland, and occasionally in the world.
- 2.7 Pupils are prepared well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in both British society and their destinations after leaving school. Sixth-form pupils spoke positively about the advice they had received about careers and university application. Pupils receive offers to study at universities and specialist art or music colleges across the world, almost all of which have demanding and competitive entry requirements.
- 2.8 In the questionnaires, both parents and pupils expressed strong and positive views about all aspects of the teaching. Teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons and suitable teaching methods. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the pupils and their needs, good subject knowledge and understanding, effective use of resources, and effective strategies for managing behaviour. They enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress and foster self-motivation, application and interest. The quality of feedback provided to pupils, both for their written work and in lessons, is significant in supporting their progress. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the ages of pupils and the subject taught. In response to the questionnaires, most pupils and parents cited the positive impact that the quality of teaching had on pupils' progress. Teaching is very well resourced because the school's leadership has prioritised professional learning, and nearly all those in teaching roles take part in internal or external training. Teaching does not undermine fundamental British

values nor discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics. Strategies to manage behaviour are effective, and all pupils are engaged in lessons.

- 2.9 A large majority of pupils said they could take part in a range of activities, including clubs, art, drama, music and sport. Invariably, sixth-form pupils voluntarily remain in school until the early evening to further their own interests. The school organises an extensive range of trips to other countries in Europe to further challenge pupils physically or to broaden their cultural experience. The thriving Model United Nations and debating groups are popular amongst all age groups.
- 2.10 Leaders implement effective strategies to identify and support pupils who have SEND. Almost all parents of children who have SEND feel that their needs are well supported. Specialist teachers provide individual advice to pupils and teachers, and closely monitor the impact of their interventions. The evidence of their written work and test results shows that pupils who have SEND make good progress. Leaders are responding to the challenge to appoint qualified staff to further support this particular group.
- 2.11 The arrangements for, and content of, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education have recently been reviewed. This now includes a full and appropriate programme of relationships and sex education (RSE). A large majority of pupils believe the school encourages them to respect other pupils and, in discussions, both male and female pupils described the positive relationships between the genders.

Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

2.12 The Standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and MSB 13, 17 and 21 are met.

- 2.13 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance, and furthers pupils' personal development. It promotes principles that enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence; distinguish right from wrong; accept responsibility for their behaviour; and contribute to the lives of others. It enables pupils to gain knowledge of and respect for public institutions in England and for the responsibilities of citizenship in Poland, their own native countries, the European Union and the wider world.
- 2.14 Through effective promotion of its values, the school encourages tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions; respect for other people; respect for democracy and the democratic process; and balanced presentation of political issues and preclusion of partisan political views. This includes respect for the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In response to the questionnaire, the very large majority of parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The school does not teach religious education as a separate entity, but many pupils privately follow their own faiths outside school. Understanding of world faiths is promoted in assemblies, cultural events and PSHE lessons. Pupils said they valued being part of a school in which many world religions are represented and the opportunity this presented for learning from each other. In discussion and in questionnaire responses, pupils reported that incidents in which disrespect is shown are extremely rare, and quickly addressed.

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

2.15 The Standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], and MSB 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.

- 2.16 Suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Such arrangements are in line with Polish law and in parallel have regard to the latest statutory and non-statutory guidance in the UK. The school routinely uses professional expertise from the UK to ensure that the effectiveness of its safeguarding arrangements are kept under review.

- 2.17 Staff are aware of the code of conduct and whistleblowing policies and say they would be confident to use them. School leaders are rigorous in following the national requirement to report certain safeguarding issues to statutory authorities, including the police. The leadership of safeguarding is effective, and records show that action is timely and appropriate, with each new concern assessed for risk. The wishes and needs of pupils are prioritised. The effectiveness of any intervention is regularly monitored. Documentation is well ordered with clear chronologies and follows UK statutory guidance.
- 2.18 Pupils are listened to and provided with early help where needed. The school employs a wellbeing team with a variety of skills, and they support pupils' mentors and leaders. In response to the questionnaire, almost all pupils said they could talk to somebody at school about any concerns. Staff training is thorough, and records allow accurate monitoring. Staff state that safeguarding training equips them to deal effectively with any concerns about pupils which may arise.
- 2.19 The safeguarding arrangements for boarders have been recently reassessed and reviewed, and provide protocols that effectively promote their safety and welfare.
- 2.20 The school monitors access to the internet by pupils and staff, and responds promptly to attempts by outside parties to infiltrate the school's system. There is a regular overview and testing of the arrangements, with a formal report to the proprietorial body. Pupils say they feel safe at school and online.
- 2.21 Good behaviour is successfully promoted. The school's system of rewards and sanctions has recently been revised and is effective. Pupils' achievements and successes are regularly recognised in assemblies. The overwhelming majority of pupils replying to the questionnaire said that the school expects them to behave well. Excellent behaviour was observed by inspectors during their visit. In response to the questionnaires, almost every parent and pupil agreed that the school does all that it reasonably can to prevent bullying from happening. In the rare cases when there are friendship issues between pupils, all parties are well supported.
- 2.22 The school complies with Polish health and safety laws and fire safety standards. Documentation related to these areas is exhaustive, detailed and comprehensive, reflecting a proactive and well-planned approach. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure pupils on site are secure, and pupils say that the school provides a safe environment in which to learn. The school and boarding accommodation is maintained to a very high standard. The school has a detailed memorandum explaining the responsibility for health and safety, maintenance and fire checks in the boarding accommodation. Security protocols are robust. Traffic flow at the start and end of the day is carefully controlled.
- 2.23 Pupils are properly supervised, and attendance and admissions procedures ensure that the school can identify the whereabouts of each pupil. Leaders are tenacious in following up unexplained pupil absence, and as a result the attendance rate is well over 90%, which is significantly higher than national expectations.
- 2.24 The risks to pupils involved in all activities are appropriately assessed and recorded. A large proportion of staff are trained in first aid. First aid is administered in a timely manner, although national law does not allow medication to be given to pupils. The school has a contract with a 'rapid-response' private ambulance service.

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.25 **The Standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and MSB 19 are met.**
- 2.26 The suitability of persons appointed as members of staff is checked in line with national requirements and as far as reasonably possible in line with guidance issued to schools in the UK. Appropriate checks are made on those working as contractors and on volunteers. All adults working or volunteering at the school must have documents issued by the Polish authorities. Before appointment, the school makes

appropriate checks of identity and the right to work, receives police checks from overseas and, where relevant, makes checks against the list of those prohibited from teaching and managing schools in the UK. An international child protection certificate (ICPC) is obtained for those candidates who have worked in the UK. The school asks for references from any employer during the preceding three years, and checks candidates' social media accounts and any other online presence that might provide useful information. Those in governance roles are checked to an appropriate level.

- 2.27 The school has written confirmation that those members of the hotel staff who come into regular contact with boarders have a child protection certificate. A comprehensive and accurate record is maintained of the recruitment checks undertaken on all those listed above.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.28 The Standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and MSB 4, 7, 9 and 23 are met.

- 2.29 The school occupies a large site on a main road. The buildings are new, spacious and airy. All are of a standard that fully meets the needs of educating pupils.
- 2.30 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided, including for disabled pupils. The medical rooms provide accommodation that caters for the medical and therapy needs of all pupils. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a standard that ensures the health, safety and welfare of pupils. The acoustic conditions and lighting are suitable. External lighting ensures that pupils can safely enter and leave the school premises. The provision of water for drinking and washing is suitable. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education (PE) and play.

Part 6 – Provision of information

2.31 The Standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and MSB 1 are met.

- 2.32 All necessary information is provided, including contact details for the school and the regional director of the proprietorial body, and a statement of the school's ethos. The school makes available the policies and particulars of arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions, provision for SEND and EAL, and details of the school's academic performance. It makes available its complaints procedure, curriculum policy, arrangements for promoting good behaviour and preventing bullying, and arrangements for health and safety and first aid. In addition, the safeguarding policy is published on the website. An annual written report of each pupil's progress and attainment is provided for parents or carers.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.33 The Standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and MSB 14 are met.

- 2.34 The school's complaints procedure is made available to the parents of current and registered pupils. It enables initial consideration of any complaint on an informal basis; establishes a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing either to the principal or heads of school; and provides for a third stage, which consists of a hearing before a panel that includes an independent member, at which a parent may be accompanied. It provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. In response to the questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that they receive timely and helpful responses to their questions, concerns or complaints.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.35 The Standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and MSB 2 are met.

- 2.36 The leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfilment of responsibilities so that the BSO Standards are met consistently, and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The new proprietor has proven structures in place for receiving and analysing information about all aspects of the school and supporting senior leaders. In response to the questionnaire, the very large majority of parents said the school is governed, led and managed well.

Part 9 – Minimum Standards for Boarding

2.37 The Minimum Standards for Boarding [Standards 1–20] are met.

- 2.38 Boarders are accommodated on a private floor of a hotel about 20 minutes by bus or tram from the school. Entrance to and exit from the boarder's floor is secure. Adults who need to access the accommodation, for example for maintenance or cleaning, are always accompanied by school staff and only when boarders are in school. Boarders eat breakfast, supper and weekend meals in the hotel dining room, accompanied by boarding staff.
- 2.39 There is an exhaustive set of policies and protocols that reflects the careful assessment of risk to boarders. The school has good communication with the hotel management, which unreservedly co-operates with arrangements that safeguard boarders travelling to and from, and whilst occupying the boarding accommodation. In the questionnaire and in discussion, all boarders said they felt safe.
- 2.40 The boarding supervisor, night-time supervisor and other boarding staff are all teachers or senior managers at school. They regularly talk with boarders and have a formal weekly meeting to discuss any issues or concerns. A member of the wellbeing team visits weekly to monitor boarders' welfare and provide any necessary support. Staff are aware of the particular vulnerability of the small number of male pupils who board. Pupils feel confident that they have somebody to whom they can speak. An independent person outside the school's employment has recently been appointed and pupils have been made aware.
- 2.41 Leaders have created a suite of documentation that meets all the requirements of the Standards. These include a statement of boarding principles and practice, an outline of induction procedures and support, and extensive practical guidelines.
- 2.42 Boarders are well supervised. Their health needs are effectively met, and they have access to specialist services such as dentists or ophthalmologists if needed. National law prevents staff from giving medicine to pupils, and boarding staff monitor pupils who are known to self-medicate. Medicines are locked securely in boarders' rooms. The school ensures that health and safety and fire procedures are effective. In discussion, boarders reported regular fire evacuation practices.
- 2.43 The boarding accommodation is very spacious. Boarders occupy individual rooms with their own toilet and washing facilities. Furnishing is of a high standard. The accommodation is airy and well heated, and boarders report an ample supply of hot water. The boarding floor has a large kitchen where they can prepare their own snacks and drinks, and where most of the socialising takes place.
- 2.44 Night-time supervisors sleep on the same floor in separate accommodation. Access is strictly forbidden to boarders, and protocols are well understood if boarders need support during the night.
- 2.45 In the questionnaire and in discussions, boarders said they were happy, had plenty of opportunities for shared or individual activities, and thought the accommodation clean and comfortable. All confirmed that boarders treat one another with respect.

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work with subject leaders. They held discussions with members of staff and with the regional director, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities. Inspectors visited the facilities for boarding, for sick and injured pupils, and the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Cole

Reporting inspector

Mr John Coombs

Team inspector (School improvement partner, UK)