

Summarised inspection findings

International School Aberdeen

Independent

20 June 2023

Key contextual information

International School Aberdeen (ISA) is a co-educational independent school for learners aged five to 18. The school has a pre-school class for children aged three to five years. The pre-school provision was not inspected as part of this visit. ISA was originally known as the American School of Aberdeen and was founded in 1972. Its main purpose was to provide education for families employed in the oil and gas industries, who had relocated on assignment from the United States of America. Over time, the pupil and staff population has become more international in composition, with families joining the school from Europe, South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. In recent years, the proportion of Scottish children and young people who live locally in Aberdeen has increased significantly. At the time of the inspection, there were 530 pupils on the school roll, across the elementary, middle and high school stages. Currently, around one half of learners have parents that are expatriates and work in the oil and gas industries. Almost all of these children and young people will stay at the school for around three to four years, according to their parents' deployment. This means that the school has a significant transient school population across the different ages and stages.

At the high school stages, young people aged 16 to 18 work towards attaining the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Young people aged 14 and 15 follow the Cambridge IGCSE curriculum. At the elementary and middle stages, children aged five to 13 follow carefully planned programmes for all areas of the curriculum, based on international education standards. This provides strong foundations for learning as children progress through the stages of the school or make the transition to another school.

The school is non-selective, in that children and young people are not required to pass an academic test before being offered a place at the school.

1.3 Leadership of change

excellent

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- ISA is a welcoming, vibrant and highly inclusive environment for learning. Senior leaders' clear vision, which is understood by the whole school community, encapsulates the importance of providing very high-quality learning, teaching and care for every child. This vision drives the work of school leaders and all staff each day. The highly relevant values of respect, excellence, diversity, community, integrity and service, underpin the work of the school. These values are tangible in daily interactions between children, young people and adults.
- The head of school has been in post for around five years. He provides outstanding leadership in managing and leading change. On his appointment, he worked with governors, staff and the school community to create an ambitious five-year strategic plan for the future of the school. The clarity of the aims and goals within the strategic plan means that staff, learners and parents understand fully the rationale for change and continuous improvement. Staff, children and young people and parents are empowered to lead and direct key aspects of improvement and school life through well considered working groups, committees and councils.
- The head of school is exceptionally well supported by members of the senior leadership team. Each is highly skilled and experienced in their field. Promoted staff model and reinforce the school values as they successfully fulfil their roles and responsibilities. They work seamlessly together to ensure that very high standards of education and care are continuously maintained across the elementary, middle and high school stages.
- The board of governors provides astute, strategic direction for the school in a changing economic local context. Governors strike the right balance between guidance, challenge and support for school leaders. There are strong, mutually respectful and professional working relationships between governors and school leaders. Children and young people are at the heart of decision making.
- Senior leaders use highly reliable evidence to inform improvement priorities. They gather a wide range of useful data and use this continuously to inform further improvements being taken forward. The head of school ensures that robust self-evaluation is threaded through all areas of school life in highly meaningful, focused ways. There is a strong sense of connectedness and synergy to the school's approaches to self-evaluation. The whole school community understands the purpose of evaluative activities, which are aligned very carefully to the goals in the strategic plan.
- The clearly embedded culture of self-reflection, rooted in high quality, continuous professional learning, is central to school leaders' highly successful approaches. Staff at all levels, including non-teaching staff, have a sound understanding of their key role in school improvement. They are highly committed to their own professional learning. Each year, designated members of the

staff team create a detailed plan for professional learning and training. This plan, for all staff, closely aligns to the school's strategic plan, while also meeting the individual training needs of staff.

- Staff across the school lead very successfully on key aspects of school improvement. Almost all teachers and early years practitioners are members of a strategic initiative group (SIG). Staff in each SIG have a clear aim to take forward a goal of the strategic plan. The SIGs research innovative practice from around the world and provide a steer for the senior leadership team and school community on possible improvements to practice. Staff feel empowered by senior leaders to be creative and to actively lead change within these groups. The well-embedded collegiate ethos ensures that all staff engage in frequent professional dialogue. They share ideas from external learning events and their own professional research and enquiry. This outward- and forward-looking focus and regular exchange of learning and ideas, enables all members of the school community to contribute particularly well to continuous improvement. Senior leaders make the most of the all-through context of the pre-school and school to share professional knowledge and expertise across the staff team. There is clear and measurable impact of staff's collaborative approach to improvement, within a genuine sense of community and togetherness. Staff across the school say they feel valued, respected and cared for, and that there is a shared sense of belonging in the nurturing school community.
- At all stages of the school, children and young people are empowered to inform and lead change and improvement. From the elementary stages onwards, children lead and self-direct the committees and pupil groups they participate in confidently. They make important decisions about issues that affect them. Through innovative whole-school initiatives, children and young people are developing personal leadership qualities that prepare them particularly well for learning, life and work. The work of pupil groups is clearly underpinned by the school's strategic goals. As a result, children and young people are clear about the difference they are making, and why this important to the school community. For example, children in Grades 4 and 5 in the elementary school act as enthusiastic and creative 'language and cultural advocates'. They talk knowledgeably about their integral role in promoting and celebrating internationalism, a key aim of the school. Young people at the high school stages act as highly responsible school ambassadors. At the middle and high school years, young people represent their peers on student councils, and ably share their views at board of governors' meetings.
- School leaders have embedded an impressive, robust cycle of curriculum review. This is leading to sustained, excellent standards of attainment and achievement. Over a five-year rolling programme, teachers evaluate all curriculum subjects in a thorough and exceptionally well-led and managed approach. In each subject area, elementary, middle and high school teachers focus together on reviewing a different aspect of curriculum provision each year. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of courses, assessment and pedagogical approaches as well as seeking learners' views. They research best practice and new approaches internationally. Teachers' evaluations of the curriculum offer are based on sound, wide-ranging data. This outstanding approach to using self-evaluation for improvement means that all staff continuously review and improve the educational offer for learners of all ages, based on best practice across the world.
- As an international school delivering the IB Diploma programme, school leaders and staff undergo regular external scrutiny and review to maintain accredited status. School leaders welcome this robust assessment and evaluation and act on it with integrity to inform future improvement priorities. The whole staff team contribute significantly to the successful forward and outward looking focus. The highly-skilled and motivated staff contribute actively to system-wide educational improvement, locally in Aberdeen, as well as through Scottish and international networks. For example, school leaders invite staff in local authority schools to

participate in professional learning events on internationalism. Individual teachers write articles in educational journals and publish podcasts to share their expertise widely.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

Elementary school

- Children across the elementary school learn in vibrant, engaging learning spaces. Staff display children's work throughout classrooms and shared areas. These attractive displays showcase children's skills and creativity across the curriculum. Children are proud of their work and talk very positively about their learning experiences. They are particularly proud of their artwork and confidently share their knowledge of international artists and their styles. Children experience very positive relationships with staff and their peers. Relationships are based firmly in the school values of respect, diversity and community. Almost all children are motivated and engaged in their learning. They demonstrate strong digital literacy skills and independently access a range of technology in lessons. For example, children use laptop computers to carry out research and create infographics to share their knowledge in science. Children work very well together in pairs and groups. They demonstrate highly effective communication, analytical thinking and leadership skills across the curriculum. All staff have high expectations of children, in their learning and behaviour across the elementary school.
- Overall, the quality of teaching in the elementary school is very good, with a few examples of outstanding practice. All staff are guided by a clear, agreed set of learning expectations. These learning expectations lead to consistently high-quality learning experiences across the elementary school, and across all curriculum areas. Teachers deliver learning that is well-paced and planned carefully to meet the needs and interests of all children. The structure of the school day ensures time for learning is maximised. Teachers plan interesting learning experiences using relevant and meaningful contexts. For example, children in Grade 5 enjoy researching potential investment opportunities in the local area. They develop skills in research and balancing risks and benefits of potential real-life projects. Children understand the purpose of their learning and how to be successful. Almost all teachers provide helpful feedback to children on the progress they are making. Children articulate particularly well how they will turn any challenges they face in their learning into strengths. In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers are highly skilled at asking learners questions to support their analytical and creative thinking. Teachers work very well across each grade, and with support for learning teachers, to plan supports and interventions to meet the needs of all children. They observe learners closely and adapt their approaches to ensure all children are making the best possible progress with their learning. Through highly successful approaches to team teaching, staff provide highly effective differentiated learning for all children. As a result, almost all children experience appropriate support and challenge in their learning.
- Teachers plan assessment as an integral part of their planning. They are guided by a clear, structured, whole-school assessment policy. Teachers use information from their observations, planned tasks and formative and summative assessments to make accurate judgements on

children's progress. They make effective use of assessment information to adapt their daily and weekly teaching plans, to respond flexibly to the needs of learners.

- Teachers use a helpful online tool to support their planning. They create long-term plans using a range of carefully selected international curriculum standards. Teachers' short-term planning is supported very well through a collaborative grade planning approach. Teachers work together effectively to plan learning across all curricular areas. This supports them to share ideas, resources and teaching approaches. Support for learning teachers are actively involved in this process. This ensures any child who requires additional help receives appropriate and timely support with their learning. All teachers in the elementary school plan carefully a range of whole school events. Grade teachers and specialist teachers plan together for events such as book week and international week. This provides children with motivating and exciting interdisciplinary experiences that enrich their learning.

Middle and high school

- The school's values are evident in all learning environments in the middle and high school stages. There is a respectful, calm and nurturing environment in classes and this leads to learners feeling well supported in their learning. Most learners feel that they are encouraged to do the best that they possibly can and that they know who to ask if they are finding their work challenging. Across the middle and high school years, young people are encouraged to take part in volunteering opportunities to demonstrate their commitment and service to the school and wider community.
- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching at the middle and high school stages is very good. Learners in the middle school are engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. Learning at the high school stages takes place in purposeful, focused and encouraging environments. In both middle and high school, learners enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. This helps them to feel valued and cared for. Young people are keen to contribute to discussions in classes and feel confident to share their ideas and responses with others. Teachers encourage all learners to participate and use all contexts, including any difficulties or errors, as learning opportunities. Young people enjoy the balance of individual, paired and group work activities in class and this supports their engagement in lessons very well. Overall, lessons in middle school are well paced, and digital technology is used well to support learning. On a few occasions, lessons at the high school stages could be better paced to meet learners' needs. Young people are very confident in their use of digital technology to support their learning, both in and outwith the classroom setting. In both middle and high school, almost all young people discuss their next steps in learning and are confident in their planning for learning. They value the helpful written and verbal feedback they receive from their teachers as this gives them a clear plan for the next steps in their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of the lesson and the plan for learning. They use effective questioning to check for understanding and to encourage learners to think deeply about the focus for the lesson. Strong, positive relationships are evident in almost all classes, and this ensures learners feel well supported in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of all learners. Young people, in turn, respond to this by trying their best. Parents believe the school provides regular and helpful information about how they can support their child's learning at home. Class teachers and support for learning teachers work very well together to ensure that all appropriate supports are in place for young people who have barriers to their learning. Young people talk appreciatively about the supports put in place for them and the benefits these bring to their confidence and learning.

- Teachers make highly effective use of a variety of assessment information to plan learning. They build very well on young people's prior knowledge and feedback to create coherent and challenging courses. Teachers work collegiately to develop courses for each stage in middle school and regularly adapt and amend courses to best suit each group of learners. Learners receive regular feedback from teachers on their progress through learner conversations and written feedback on projects and homework. Young people value the feedback they receive and discuss where they are in their learning. Teachers' regular moderation of assessments ensures that information about learners' progress is reliable and robust. Assessment standards for all courses are moderated on an international basis and teachers' judgements are consistently in line with the international standard. Learners find this reassuring, and this gives them confidence in the progress they are making.
- In all classes, and especially the IB classes, the individualised support that teachers offer to young people is highly valued. Teachers offer additional support sessions at lunch times and after school for individuals and small groups. The majority of young people feel that they are given good advice when choosing subjects to study. Senior leaders should continue to consider the range of information and advice young people have access to regarding course choice.
- Staff rightly pride themselves on their knowledge of young people as individuals. This helps to support young people in their learning, as teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual learners. Young people have daily meetings with teachers who act as their 'advisors'. During these pastoral advisory meetings, teachers check in with all learners on their wellbeing, progress in learning and discuss with them their interests outwith school. Almost all parents believe that staff know their children as individuals, and this helps young people to feel part of the ISA community.
- The whole-school tracking and monitoring system provides all teachers with a detailed overview of each learner's progress. Teachers track each pupil's progress in their own subject area, and across the curriculum. This enables all teachers to see areas where pupils may be making better progress in other subjects. They then discuss strategies with colleagues that work well for some pupils in different learning contexts. Teacher advisors track the progress of all young people within their group and provide early intervention supports for any learners who are not on track to achieve their potential.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Children and young people at ISA experience a highly inclusive school community where wellbeing is valued and promoted. The school values of respect, excellence, diversity, community, integrity and service are highly visible in the relationships and interactions between staff, children and young people, parents and partners. The school is highly inclusive in its support for children and young people and their families. Very positive relationships and respectful interactions exist between staff, children and young people, parents and a range of partners. These positive relationships are key in staff's successful promotion of wellbeing throughout the school community. They are ensuring there is a shared understanding of the importance of wellbeing across the elementary, middle and high school stages. The staff team demonstrates respect for children and young people and values them as individuals. They know all children and young people very well as individuals.
- There is a genuine, whole-school approach to wellbeing. Staff provide extremely effective support to ensure that wellbeing needs are very well met in the school. The cohesive staff team ensures that any learners with wellbeing needs are robustly identified, supported and monitored. This is co-ordinated by a strategic support group, led by the school counsellor. The effective three-level tiered approach to wellbeing support is delivered by young people who are trained as peer supporters, a range of skilled school staff and external agencies. Staff on the 'student wellbeing' SIG collaborate with all staff on the latest research on pupil wellbeing. They provide valuable and relevant professional learning, such as implementing executive function skills. A group of senior pupils take responsibility for continually updating the comprehensive online student wellbeing hub, which their peers find extremely useful.
- Children and young people speak very positively about the impact of the support from staff on their wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic and the return to school. Most children and young people have a very good awareness of the wellbeing indicators. Overall, children and young people across the school understand many factors that can affect their own wellbeing, including the importance of a healthy diet, exercise and managing stress. They feel that they can approach a trusted adult with any issues of concern. They also know they can use the 'don't worry, feel happy boxes', located across the school, to raise issues. School staff raise the profile of wellbeing across the school very effectively through visual displays and communication with the school community, such as the Thistle Blog. Senior leaders carry out regular wellbeing surveys of children and young people, parents and staff. The results of these surveys demonstrate a high level of wellbeing and overall satisfaction across the school. Leaders make effective use of the results of these surveys to further improve wellbeing in the school community. Staff should continue tracking the impact of wellbeing interventions and initiatives to ensure that outcome measures for children are based on robust evidence.

- Staff are fully aware of their statutory duties and have embedded a very effective staged intervention model of support. A minority of children and young people across the school receive targeted intervention and have appropriate individual education plans in place. They receive very well-planned support from the effective, integrated team of specialist staff. The support staff team meet weekly to discuss the needs of all children and young people who require extra help. This staff team also provide professional learning for all staff to meet the needs of all learners more effectively. For example, they have hosted staff webinars on neurodiversity which has helped to improve pedagogy and targeted intervention across the school. They work very effectively with partners to provide support for children and young people and their families. The school has very robust risk assessment arrangements in place for all eventualities.
- All staff undertake relevant training to ensure that they are knowledgeable about safeguarding and child protection. There are appropriate policies and procedures to help to keep children and young people safe and protected from harm. Almost all children and young people feel safe and well cared for in school. Designated child protection officer meetings take place every week to ensure that children and young people, including those who are care experienced, are very well supported.
- Children's and young people's attendance rate is high. Whenever children and young people are absent, there is a robust procedure to respond to any attendance issues. The senior leadership team should consider gathering attendance data by year group to identify any anomalies. There are very few exclusions. Staff across the school support positive behaviours consistently and this is reflected in almost all interactions throughout the school. Children and young people behave very well. The school has a very effective positive behaviour policy based on strong positive relationships and restorative practices. As a result, there are very few incidents of reported bullying behaviour.
- Children and young people are very proud of their school community and its international context. The multi-national and multi-cultural school population enables all children and young people to develop their awareness of diversity very well. Diversity is celebrated effectively across the school and cultural diversity is a school priority. As a result, children and young people are developing an appreciation of cultural differences within an international context. Children and young people themselves play an important role in ensuring that all children celebrate cultural differences. For example, children and young people teach other learners about their first languages by organising fun activities. They evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts by seeking feedback and creating quizzes. Parents are invited into school to share with the school community their festivals and home traditions, such as Ramadan. Cultural diversity has been a strategic goal this year and there has been a series of well-received family cultural events. Children and young people from overseas benefit from the staff-led home language clubs. This ensures that learners who join the school with little or no English can communicate in their home language with others in school. Staff use digital technology particularly well to ensure that children for whom English is a new language are fully included in lessons as soon as they join the school.
- The school's approaches to ensuring inclusion and equality are very good. Very positive actions are taken by the school which are helping ensure that no child or young person misses out and that there is equality, fairness and inclusion. Staff go the extra mile to provide much valued support to children and young people. Staff are highly skilled at identifying and supporting children who experience a range of additional challenges. There is effective monitoring of all children to ensure that everyone can access all the opportunities that the school offers and ensure that all children are engaged and involved with school life.

- Building on the school's equality policy, staff and pupils have worked together to develop more specific policies, such as for gender inclusion. Together, staff and young people have also developed a document that outlines the corporate social responsibility of the school community, highlighting four areas of key responsibility of all: philanthropy, ethics, legality and economics. This is helping young people to develop skills in negotiation and knowledge about social responsibility at a very high level.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

excellent

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

Elementary school

- Staff in the elementary school gather a range of robust evidence on children's progress. Overall, attainment in the elementary school is very good. Almost all children make very good progress in literacy and numeracy. Children who require additional support with their learning make very good progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- Almost all children in the elementary school are making very good progress in literacy. A few children at each stage are working beyond expected levels. Children benefit from learning in a literacy-rich curriculum. They successfully apply their literacy skills across the curriculum. Children across the elementary school engage confidently in conversations with adults, visitors and other children and young people. Almost all children demonstrate very good listening and talking skills. They listen well to others when working in pairs and groups. Almost all children confidently express their ideas and opinions. They build respectfully on the ideas of others during conversations and discussions. Children access a wide range of texts in their learning. Younger children use their knowledge of phonics confidently to decode unfamiliar words. Older children read fluently and with expression. They ask and answer increasingly complex questions as they progress through the school. As a result of the whole school approach to analytical and creative thinking, children articulate confidently their preferences of authors and genre. Across the elementary school, children write very well for a wide range of purposes. Younger children create high-quality texts about personal experiences. Older children research famous poets and compose their own poetry. They proudly shared their work with parents at a well-attended Poetry Café. Children across the elementary school demonstrate their writing skills ably through science reports and social studies presentations.
- Almost all children in the elementary school are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children at each stage are working beyond expected levels. Across the elementary school, children confidently use a wide range of concrete materials to solve problems. Almost all children articulate confidently the strategies they use to solve a range of calculations. Younger children recognise coins up to £2. They match coins to their values and add coins accurately to make a total amount. Older children explain how to answer division problems. They are developing skills in dividing fractions. Children demonstrate a strong knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They apply their knowledge when creating models in art. Almost all children demonstrate effective problem-solving skills. They think creatively and use a range of strategies to explain how they would solve a given problem.

Middle School

- By the end of middle school at Grade 8, almost all young people are achieving expected levels in literacy and numeracy. Commendably, a majority are exceeding expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

High School

- By the end of Grade 12, and throughout all the stages of middle and high school, young people make very strong progress in literacy and numeracy. They describe how they apply skills such as critical reading and problem-solving effectively across all curriculum areas.
- Highly commendably, all young people attain high levels of literacy and numeracy by Grade 10 as part of the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) curriculum. This includes young people who leave school at any point, including the end of Grade 10.

Attainment over time

Elementary school

- Senior leaders track children's progress and attainment meticulously across the elementary school. They gather data on children's levels of attainment across the curriculum, as well as evidence of academic growth over time. The school's robust data clearly demonstrates the strong progress children make during their time at ISA. Staff use this robust data to identify children who are at risk of not making expected progress. They use this data particularly well to plan appropriate support and interventions to ensure that all children make the best possible progress.

Middle and high school

- Overall, by the end of Grade 12 and throughout all the stages of middle and high school in ISA, young people make outstanding progress across all areas of the curriculum. This includes young people who have additional support needs. Their progress is monitored closely by teachers and senior leaders on an individual basis and planned interventions are evaluated rigorously to ensure impact. A highly effective feature of this is the continuous ongoing dialogue across grades and stages amongst all staff. Of particular note is the contribution of learning support staff and school counsellors to these discussions. Staff plan and deliver highly-effective, time-limited interventions for individual young people with barriers to learning, including those whose first language is not English.
- There are robust and comprehensive tracking arrangements to monitor the progress of young people in all subject areas, at a whole school level, as well as in curriculum areas throughout the middle and high School. There is an outstanding team approach to monitoring the progress of young people across all aspects of their learning. This includes regular meetings within the staff team, involving senior leaders, subject specialists, pastoral care staff, advisory teachers and counsellors. They work together using sophisticated tracking systems and make highly effective use of data, benchmarking learners' progress against international standards for each curriculum area. Teachers' sound professional judgement also plays a key role. Young people and their parents play an important part in evaluating young people's progress across their learning and in setting purposeful and effective targets. This is facilitated helpfully by an online platform. Staff and young people review their progress towards their targets termly and identify next steps.
- At Grade 10 in 2021/22, almost all young people achieved an A*-C pass in the IGCSE across a choice of 14 subjects. This is an improving picture from 2020/21, when most young people

achieved an A*-C pass from a choice of 10 subjects. In 2021/22, a significant minority achieved an A or A* pass, which reflects improvement from 2020/21.

- By Grade 12, young people are making excellent progress. Almost all young people achieve the full IB Diploma. Significantly, in both 2020/21 and 2021/22, young people in ISA attained above the world averages for International Schools in the full IB Diploma Programme. Standardised assessment results reflect the outstanding progress over time that young people made by the end of Grade 12 in 2021/22, taken from a baseline measure at the beginning of Grade 11. This is particularly impressive for a non-selective school.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff value and promote a focus on the growth of every learner across the whole school community. Children and young people at all stages of ISA are encouraged to reflect on all aspects of their learning, and in every part of school life, using any mistakes as learning opportunities. This enhances their highly effective understanding of their own learning preferences. They speak highly of the positive impact on their ability to manage their progress in learning. Twice yearly, children and young people from Grade 3 to Grade 12 undertake a standardised assessment which measures their growth as learners, as well as their levels of achievement. In the middle and high school, staff support young people to reflect on their skills development. This is linked firmly to the skills profile that is a requirement of, and embedded in, the IB Diploma. The self-directed learning classes in Grades 9 and 10 are very effectively helping young people to develop skills such as time management and collaboration. In Grades 11 and 12, skills development is timetabled as an integral part of learning through the IB 'Creativity, Activity & Service' programme. In addition to the standardised assessment process, young people discuss their own progress and development of their skills on an ongoing basis through the advisory groups and with their teachers. As a result, young people can articulate clearly how they make highly effective use of skills such as creativity, self-management and open-mindedness across all aspects of their learning. Young people describe how these skills contribute to their development as effective learners. They are confident, reflective and highly committed to internationalism, sustainability, and to protecting the environment.
- Young people have a wide variety of opportunities to demonstrate their leadership, knowledge and skills through community and school-based activities. These include the health and citizenship course, Duke of Edinburgh Award and student councils. Young people value these opportunities and can identify the difference their contributions make. This supports them very well to see themselves as active members of local and international communities.

Equity for all learners

- Staff across the school are very aware of the needs of all children and young people. They monitor and track the progress of all learners highly effectively at an individual level. School counsellors, in discussion with staff, draw up learning plans that meet individual children's or young people's needs, to enable them to engage in the full curriculum. Many children and young people join and leave the school across all grades and at a range of points during the year. This often includes a young person unfamiliar with the challenging requirements of IB, or a child whose first language is not English or who comes from another country. Teachers are skilled and fully empowered to address swiftly and highly effectively any gaps in learning or where children and young people are not on track with their expected progress.
- All young people move on to a positive destination on leaving ISA. Throughout high school, young people engage in ongoing discussion with subject specialists, school counsellors and pastoral care staff through the advisory groups. They explore learner pathways that are most appropriate for their skills, knowledge and levels of achievement. In almost all cases, this is to

continue to IB Diploma level. A stated aim of ISA is to equip young people with the knowledge and skills required in preparation for a university education. Almost all young people go on to attend the university of their choice, post school.

Practice worth sharing more widely

School leaders use highly reliable evidence to inform improvement priorities. They gather a wide range of useful data and use this continuously to inform further improvements being taken forward. The head of school ensures that robust self-evaluation is threaded through all areas of school life in highly meaningful, focused ways. There is a strong sense of connectedness and synergy to the school's approaches to self-evaluation. The whole school community understand the purpose of evaluative activities, that are aligned very carefully to the goals in the strategic plan.

The whole school tracking and monitoring system provides all teachers with a detailed overview of each learner's progress. Teachers can track each pupil's progress in their own subject area, but also across the curriculum. This enables all teachers to see areas where pupils may be making better progress in other subjects. They then discuss strategies with colleagues that work well for some pupils in different learning contexts. Teacher advisors track the progress of all young people within their group and provide early intervention supports for any learners who are not on track to achieve their potential.

School leaders have embedded an impressive, robust cycle of curriculum review. This is leading to sustained, excellent standards of attainment and achievement. Over a five-year rolling programme, teachers evaluate all curriculum subjects in a thorough and exceptionally well-led and managed approach. In each subject area, elementary and secondary school teachers focus together on reviewing a different aspect of curriculum provision each year. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of courses, assessment and pedagogical approaches and seeking learners' views. They research best practice and new approaches internationally. Teachers' evaluations are based on sound, wide-ranging data. This outstanding approach to using self-evaluation for improvement means that all staff continuously review and improve the educational offer for learners of all ages, based on best practice across the world. As a result, by the end of Grade 12, young people achieve excellent results in examinations, above world averages.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.