



---

part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

**British Schools Overseas**

**Inspection Report**

**Hillcrest International Schools**

**March 2024**

## Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>School's Details</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Background Information</b>	<b>4</b>
About the school	4
What the school seeks to do	4
About the pupils	4
<b>2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas</b>	<b>5</b>
Preface	5
Key findings	6
Part 1 – Quality of education provided	6
Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	6
Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils	7
Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	8
Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools	8
Part 6 – Provision of information	9
Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled	9
Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools	9
Part 9 – Minimum Standards for Boarding	10
<b>3. Inspection of Educational Quality</b>	<b>11</b>
Preface	11
Recommendations	11
The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement	11
The quality of the pupils' personal development	14
<b>4. Inspection Evidence</b>	<b>17</b>

## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Hillcrest International Schools			
<b>Address</b>	Hillcrest Road 00502 Karen Nairobi Kenya			
<b>Telephone number</b>	+254 724 256 173			
<b>Email address</b>	admin@hillcrest.ac.ke			
<b>Headteacher - secondary school</b>	Mr David Dunn			
<b>Headteacher - preparatory school</b>	Mrs Surbhi Vashisht			
<b>Chair of governors (CEO)</b>	Mrs Helen Kavanagh			
<b>Proprietorial body</b>	Braeburn Group of International Schools			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	605			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	526	<b>Boarders</b>	79
	<b>Early Years</b>	80	<b>Preparatory</b>	240
	<b>Secondary</b>	174	<b>Sixth Form</b>	111
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11 to 14 March 2024			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Hillcrest International School is a co-educational international school, comprising a secondary school, which includes a sixth form, and a preparatory school, which includes early years and pupils up to the age of 13. The schools are on separate self-contained sites adjacent to each other on either side of Hillcrest Road in Nairobi. Boarding accommodation is available for pupils from the age of 12 in two purpose-built blocks that separately accommodate male and female pupils. The different age groups across the preparatory and secondary schools share a number of common facilities, particularly for sport.
- 1.2 The school became part of the Braeburn Group of International Schools in January 2023. Governance is provided by the executive committee of Braeburn Schools Limited. Individual headteachers are responsible for the preparatory and secondary school sections.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide a British curriculum education within an international multi-cultural setting. It aims to provide a happy, stimulating, well-rounded educational experience for children from a diverse range of backgrounds. It encourages its pupils to fully embrace the four school values of respect, determination, curiosity and independence and to grow into well-educated, confident, self-disciplined and compassionate young adults. Additionally, the school seeks to inspire curiosity, develop resilience and a life-long love of learning, and to promote a lasting and positive attitude towards health and fitness.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 The ability profile of the pupils varies throughout the school, but is broadly average as measured by standardised tests compared to those taking the same tests in the United Kingdom (UK). Pupils admitted to the school are expected to have sufficient command of the English language to enable them to benefit from the education provided and to be able to adapt quickly to the demands of learning in an English-speaking school. Over 50 nationalities are represented at the school, the largest proportion of which are from Kenyan business and professional families.
- 1.5 The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and specialist support is provided for them. For the large majority of pupils at the school, English is an additional language (EAL). However, the vast majority of these are bilingual or trilingual and are competent users of English. Specialist EAL support is provided for 28 pupils. Data provided by the school has identified 50 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and they receive additional curriculum support at departmental level and through extra-curricular activities.

## 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 INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection 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 of 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. The school's previous BSO inspection was in November 2016.

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas and the Minimum Standards for Boarding except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified.

### Part 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 **The standards relating to the quality of education in paragraphs 1, 2(1)(a) and (b), 2(2)(a) to 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(i), 3(a) to (e), and 4 are met, but that relating to paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) (encouraging respect for other people) cannot be met because it is precluded by the host country's legislation.**
- 2.3 Leaders ensure the curriculum in both sections of the school, including in the early years and sixth form, is well balanced and helps the school to meet its aims to provide a well-rounded education in an international environment. It provides pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills whilst developing a secure understanding of English. Policies, plans and schemes of work are well developed in most subject areas and take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils, including those who have SEND for whom appropriate support is provided. In both school sections, the curriculum offers a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and provides opportunities in sport, drama, creative arts and adventurous activities.
- 2.4 Pupils are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life beyond school. Many pupils undertake university courses in Europe, Canada, the USA or within Kenya. The pupils' school experience is underpinned by a good understanding of British and Kenyan values, which closely reflect the values of the school.
- 2.5 Teaching throughout both sections of the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress, a view endorsed by most parents and pupils in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Additional support is provided for the small number of pupils who join the school with more limited English. Teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons, which provide suitable challenge for most pupils. Most lessons employ effective teaching methods, use a variety of resources, and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Pupils are responsive and engaged in most lessons, and their behaviour is of a good standard.
- 2.6 The curriculum is unable, without constraint, to include content and material relating to respect for gender reassignment, civil partnership and same-sex unions as they are not recognised in Kenyan law and the promotion of any such related issues is precluded by Kenyan legislation. The curriculum and teaching are otherwise based on the English national curriculum.
- 2.7 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the quality of the pupils' learning and achievements and the contribution that the curriculum and teaching make to these outcomes.

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

- 2.8 **The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in sub-paragraphs 5(a), (b)(i)-(v) and (vii) are met but that in sub-paragraph 5(b)(vi) (encouraging respect for other people) cannot be met because it is precluded by the country's legislation.**
- 2.9 Leaders promote the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It promotes principles which enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour; contribute to the lives of others; and gain knowledge and respect for public institutions in England and for responsibilities of Kenyan citizenship. Further, it encourages tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions and a balanced

presentation of political views and preclusion of partisan political views. The school encourages respect for other people with regard to the protected characteristics of as set out in the UK Equality Act 2010, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and religion. They are precluded from promoting respect for some aspects relating to gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership and sex by the host country's legislation.

- 2.10 A small minority of pupils stated in their response to the questionnaire that their views on the school are not always listened to. In discussion with pupils across all age groups, they confirmed that they are encouraged to contribute views on the operation of the school and are able to raise concerns and complaints. However, responses from senior leaders are not always delivered in a timely manner.
- 2.11 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the quality of the pupils' personal development and the factors which contribute to their development.

### **Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

#### **2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], and MSB 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.**

- 2.13 Leaders ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Such arrangements take account of Kenyan law and have regard to guidance for schools in the United Kingdom, including having regard to the minimum standards for boarding. The school ensures that staff training, including that for governors, is appropriate. It enables pupils to be listened to and provided with early help. The particular vulnerability of the small number of pupils who have SEND is acknowledged, and allowances are made for them. The training for those with particular responsibility for safeguarding, including for the early years, is up to date. A member of the Braeburn management group oversees the school's safeguarding arrangements and undertakes an annual review of safeguarding procedures. The school adheres to local child protection regulations, including making referrals to the Ministry as required. New staff receive appropriate induction training, and all staff receive annual safeguarding update training.
- 2.14 Pupils receive suitable guidance relating to issues that might affect their welfare, health and safety through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes, assemblies and tutor time. Pupils feel that they are looked after well in the school. However, in their response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that they cannot easily discuss concerns with teachers and are not always treated fairly. Inspection evidence, through discussions with pupils, indicated that they would feel comfortable to approach most members of staff, and they cited the school counsellors as being the key pastoral staff they would choose to go if they had any concerns or worries.
- 2.15 A great majority of staff in the questionnaire felt that the pastoral provision was a strength of the school; however, a number of staff felt that the counselling service, although highly effective, was at times overstretched. Pupils unanimously said that they find the school culture to be friendly and welcoming and that the school leaders do their best to treat them fairly. Most pupils demonstrate a clear sense of pride in being a member of the school community and said they would recommend the school to others.
- 2.16 Procedures to promote good behaviour are known and understood by pupils and are, in most cases, implemented effectively by staff. A suitable system of rewards celebrates pupils' success, efforts and achievements. However, pupils say that there is too much focus on sporting achievements and not enough on the other aspects of their school experience. Inspectors concur with this view. Appropriate sanctions are applied if the need arises. Records of the very few behavioural incidents that occur are kept appropriately, and these are monitored effectively in order to identify any trends. Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is prevented as far as is reasonably practicable. The school meets local requirements with regard to the safe use of the internet and social media. Pupils' behaviour, as seen

around the school, is mostly of a high standard and reflects the school values of empathy and kindness. Records indicate that sanctions, which are rarely required, are applied consistently.

- 2.17 The school complies with relevant health and safety laws and fire safety standards, including those which apply under local law and the requirements of the Braeburn group. Record keeping in this area is effective and shows that there is effective overview of health and safety procedures. Fire drills are carried out regularly for all sections of the school, including boarding, and are suitably recorded. There is an effective system for the provision and maintenance of emergency routes and exits and an appropriate maintenance programme for fire detectors, alarms and extinguishers. The premises are maintained to a suitable level of safety and hygiene, and logs of checks meet the local requirements and are appropriately maintained. The school has appropriate policies for first aid which are implemented effectively. A school nurse is always in attendance during the school day on both school sites, and a nurse is available for the boarding pupils in the boarding complex.
- 2.18 A satisfactory programme of risk assessments has been drawn up to cover both school sites and any related activities that pupils undertake when off site on trips and excursions. Entrances to and exits from both school sites are monitored effectively, thus creating a secure and safe environment for both pupils and staff. The boarding complex within the secondary school site has its own secure perimeter.
- 2.19 Pupils of all ages are supervised appropriately throughout the school day and on school trips. In the early years, children are in sight and hearing distance of teachers at all times. Overnight supervision is provided for boarding pupils. Rotas require staff to be on duty at break and lunchtimes and when pupils are arriving or departing from school. Extra precautions are taken during periods of extreme heat, during which pupils always play under shaded cover and outdoor sports activities are appropriately restricted. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained as required and also meet the Braeburn group requirements for the registration of pupils and logging of attendance.

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

- 2.20 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and MSB 19 are met.**
- 2.21 The school carries out the required checks on staff, proprietors and any other adults working at the school to ensure their suitability to work with children, in line with Kenyan local requirements and guidance issued to schools in the UK. All non-Kenyan staff are required to obtain an appropriate visa to work in Kenya, which results in the issue of a right-to-work permit once suitable checks are completed. In addition, all UK nationals are checked through the disclosure and barring service (DBS), which includes a barred list check, as well as through the international child protection certificate (ICPC) checks. All staff are required to be vetted by the Ministry of Education before a work permit is issued, and a certificate of good conduct is required for locally recruited staff. All members of the Braeburn management group are subject to appropriate checks and, in addition, must be approved by the Ministry of Education to serve as proprietors of the school.
- 2.22 A suitable single central register of appointments, which details the recruitment checks undertaken, is maintained appropriately. Staff files include all of the required documentation and are well maintained reflecting good practice in recruiting all categories of staff.

#### **Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.23 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and MSB 4, 7, 9 and 23 are met.**
- 2.24 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for pupils of all ages. There is appropriate changing accommodation for all pupils. Medical rooms are located on both school sites with suitable toilet and



washing facilities, which cater for the needs of pupils who are ill or injured. Suitable facilities are also available for boarding pupils within the boarding complex. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety requirements, including those required by Kenyan law. Identified issues are reported promptly and rectified accordingly. Acoustic conditions and both internal and external lighting are suitable. The provision of drinking water is suitable as water dispenser units are located throughout the school, and there is adequate provision of washroom facilities for all age groups.

- 2.25 Boarding facilities offer a good standard of accommodation and have recently been subject to redecoration and the installation of an air source heat pump system, which has improved shower facilities. There is suitable provision of outdoor spaces, including a shaded multi-sports facility, external dining facilities, a swimming pool and extensive playing fields. The prep school has similar facilities with shaded outdoor play areas for pupils, including a separate play area for children in the early years. Boarders benefit from their own dining and recreational areas and have access to their own grassed playing field within their secure part of the campus.

## **Part 6 – Provision of information**

### **2.26 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and MSB 1 are met.**

- 2.27 All of the required information to comply with the requirements is provided or made available to parents of current and prospective pupils. The contact details for the school, the headteachers, the Braeburn management group and a statement of the school's aims and ethos are published on the school's website. Policies and particulars of arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions; provision for pupils who have SEND and those who have EAL; the procedure for complaints; the curriculum; arrangements to promote good behaviour and to prevent bullying; health and safety arrangements and the schools' provision for first aid are also made available to parents. The school's policy on safeguarding pupils is published on the school's website. The school provides a written report on each pupil's progress and attainment on at least a termly basis, and parental meetings are held each year to allow parents to discuss their children's progress.

## **Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

### **2.28 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and MSB 14 is are met.**

- 2.29 The school's complaints procedure is available on the school's website. It provides for concerns and complaints to be considered on an informal basis and a formal procedure for complaints to be made in writing both to the individual school heads and to the Braeburn group. Should parents remain dissatisfied, they may request a hearing before a panel, which includes an independent member, and allows for parents to be accompanied. The panel may make findings and recommendations and keeps a confidential record of the findings, including action taken by the school, whether or not the complaint is upheld. The school's records indicate that most parents receive prompt responses to any concerns, almost all of which are resolved informally.

## **Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

### **2.30 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and MSB 2 is are met.**

- 2.31 The leadership and management of the school, including the representatives of the Braeburn group, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities so that the BSO standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of the pupils is promoted. Members of the Braeburn group are frequent visitors to the school, and they convene regular operational meetings to ensure they are kept fully informed on school matters. In addition, individual members of the Braeburn group have a

focused overview of safeguarding, health and safety and staff recruitment, and all board members are required to undertake appropriate training. This arrangement ensures that there is effective oversight and monitoring of the school's policies and procedures. Members of the Braeburn group are well informed and have a clear understanding, as do the school staff, of how to safeguard children and promote their wellbeing. The school is adequately resourced to support the curriculum, and pupils' welfare is given a high priority alongside academic achievement.

- 2.32 Since the takeover of the schools by the Braeburn group, there has been an increased focus on the management of both schools, including matters relating to pupils' mental health and wellbeing. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of staff said that leadership does not encourage staff to express their views about the educational and welfare provision at the school. Discussions with staff did not confirm this view as the majority of staff felt that, since the takeover of the school by the Braeburn group, communication and consultation have significantly improved.
- 2.33 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the impact of leadership and management on the pupils' learning, achievement and personal development.

## **Part 9 – Minimum Standards for Boarding**

### **2.34 The Minimum Standards for Boarding [standards 1 – 20] are met.**

- 2.35 Boarding at the school is provided for secondary-aged pupils only. The school leaders and the Braeburn group together provide effective oversight of boarding arrangements and welfare provision for boarders. A designated head of boarding manages the residential team and provides effective leadership. The school has recently conducted an audit to ensure that it follows and maintains the relevant policies, and these are updated suitably as required. There is a suitable statement and effective implementation of the school's boarding principles and practices which is made available to pupils, parents and staff.
- 2.36 There is a satisfactory arrangement for boarders' induction. Boarders have a range of adults to whom they can turn for support, including a school nurse. Boarders can contact their parents or families in private, and the school facilitates this when necessary. Boarders' possessions are kept safe. Positive behaviour is actively promoted through the school's rules and culture. The school ensures that male and female boarders have equal opportunities, and the boarding community has a significantly positive impact on the school as a whole.
- 2.37 Where necessary, there is a written agreement between the school and those over 16 not employed by the school but living occasionally in the same premises as boarders. This agreement specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with pupils and the expectation that they are aware of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.38 Boarders' health and wellbeing are seen as a priority. Boarders are able to access the school's counselling service, and suitable accommodation is provided when boarders are unwell. The school continues to meet the required boarding standards for health and safety and complies with health and safety requirements stipulated by Kenyan law, including those for fire safety. Checks on staff recruited into boarding meet the requirements, and staffing levels for the supervision of boarders, including overnight, are appropriate.
- 2.39 Boarders' accommodation, much of which has been subject to recent upgrading, provides good arrangements for living and sleeping. Boarders have access to a good range of sporting and other facilities, including recreation and sports facilities which are within the secure boarding complex. In addition, there is an appropriate range of activities for boarders outside lesson times, including at weekends. There is suitable provision for food and drink outside meal times. Prefects are suitably trained to assist with supervisory and other duties.

- 2.40 In their response to the questionnaire, a small number of boarders commented that they do not get help with their academic work during boarding time and that, when they were a new boarder, they did not get enough assistance to settle in. Discussion with boarders established that a number of academic staff are allocated to evening duties in the boarding houses and will assist with academic help where they are able to. Additionally, there is a comprehensive induction programme that helps to integrate new boarders into the school. In response to the questionnaire findings, the school is considering extending this to allow more integration time for new boarders, which will tie in with an extended induction programme for day pupils when they join in Year 9.
- 2.41 A small minority of boarders in their response to the questionnaire also said they are not treated fairly and that they do not feel confident that any concerns they have would be listened to. Discussions with boarders, however, presented a different picture. They said that they are treated fairly and that they can express their views through a number of school forums. These include both a boarding committee and the school parliament. Most boarders said that the warm and friendly relationships they have with their house parents mean that they are confident to discuss worries and concerns directly with their house staff. In discussions, the great majority of staff expressed the view that the boarding facilities and care programme for boarders are well organised and, as a result, support boarders' welfare effectively. The inspection findings agree with this view and feel that boarding makes a significant contribution to the success of the school, most especially in terms of the international dimension it brings to the school community.

### 3. Inspection of Educational Quality

#### Preface

In addition to evaluating whether or not the school met all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas, this inspection evaluated the **quality** of the school's work, focusing on the two key outcomes for pupils:

- the quality of the pupils' learning and achievement;
- the quality of the pupils' personal development;

Headline judgements of educational quality include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'. In addition, the text identifies clearly the impact of the curriculum, teaching, pastoral care, leadership and management and boarding on outcomes for pupils.

As ISI inspections of British schools overseas are for the benefit of the pupils, inspections aim to:

- provide objective and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and build on their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses;
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain;
- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education.

The report refers to year groups in accordance with the system most commonly used in England. Key findings

**3.1 The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement is good.**

**3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.**

#### Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Strengthen pupils' learning and progress across all ability groups by identifying teaching and learning strategies that better engage and involve pupils in their learning experience.
- Ensure that teaching staff in the secondary school consistently implement the marking policy across all subject areas, so that pupils are clear on how they can improve future work.
- Ensure that challenging activities for pupils of all ages are more consistently embedded across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the importance of listening to pupils' voice is recognised more widely in the secondary school in order that pupils feel their views are considered and responded to in a timely manner.
- Ensure that pupils' achievement in the secondary school is consistently recognised and celebrated so that academic achievement and extra-curricular contributions receive the same prominence as sporting achievements.

#### The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement

**3.4 The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement is good.**

3.5 Overall, pupils' achievement is good. The achievement of a number of individual pupils is excellent, and they have been designated top performers at IGCSE and A level in Kenya and Africa. Children in the early years show excellent physical development skills. Their English language development is also excellent as a result of their constant positive interactions and communications with their teachers. The attainment of pupils across all age groups is good, including those pupils who have SEND. These

pupils make good progress because of the targeted support and interventions that are put in place to support their learning.

- 3.6 Pupils who speak EAL receive additional targeted support which results in their making rapid progress. Data supplied by the school shows that pupils' attainment in the prep and secondary schools is broadly average when compared to schools with pupils of similar ability.
- 3.7 When compared with other schools in the Braeburn group, Hillcrest is the highest performing school at A level and the third best performing school at IGCSE.
- 3.8 Pupils have high aspirations and are successful in gaining places at universities, some with demanding entry criteria both in the UK and overseas, with an increasing number of pupils opting to study further afield in the United States and Canada.
- 3.9 The development of pupils' knowledge and skills is good. In a number of subjects, such as in English, music and art in the prep school and in art, business, sports, and travel and tourism in the secondary school, it is excellent.
- 3.10 In response to the inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils in the secondary school said that teachers' marking does not help them to improve their work. Inspection findings endorse this view as teachers marking does not always give a clear indication of how pupils can improve their work.
- 3.11 Throughout the school, pupils respond well to the balanced curriculum and demonstrate effective learning skills because, in most cases, the work is matched to their ability. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils did not agree that most lessons are interesting. Inspection evidence shows that a great deal of the teaching in both sections of the school captures the interest of the pupils but does not always appropriately challenge them.
- 3.12 Tracking and monitoring systems enable staff to identify where pupils are underperforming. Where this data is used effectively and suitable interventions are put in place, they have a positive impact on pupils' progress. This practice is not consistently embedded across all departments and sections of the school. Teachers do not always plan activities that are matched to pupils' abilities so that pupils do not engage fully in their lessons.
- 3.13 Boarding pupils commented that being in the boarding environment encourages them to develop independence, discipline and organisation in their learning.
- 3.14 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. From the early years, pupils are actively encouraged to develop strong communication skills and are provided with many opportunities during lessons to collaborate and share ideas and opinions. Most pupils are lucid and mature communicators, often sharing and presenting ideas thoughtfully. For example, an English group in Year 11 used challenging terms such as 'narcissistic', 'pathological', and 'obsessive'. A group in Year 8 spoke very knowledgeably when presenting their individual project qualification (IPQ) work, demonstrating enthusiasm for their work, whilst communicating accurately with an audience.
- 3.15 The development of pupils' competence in numeracy and the application of their knowledge and skills in mathematics to other areas of learning is good and improving. Pupils make effective use of their numeracy skills. For example, in design and technology in Year 10, pupils skilfully used logic, problem solving and understanding of variables in their project work and, in a business studies lesson in Year 12, pupils quickly calculated break-even output and margins of safety. Success in mathematics is due to selected activities being tailored to the pupils' needs, focused teaching and pupils' high aspirations for success in mathematic
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate good information and communication technology (ICT) skills and show confidence in applying them more widely to other areas of learning as they progress through the school. Prep and secondary pupils increasingly use the school's learning platform and related resources to access knowledge that further develops their understanding. For example, in biology in Year 12, pupils used a research site to great effect when undertaking a group project on immunity in creating a revision

site for their peers to use. Prep school pupils were seen to make highly effective use ICT for history research and in making presentations.

- 3.17 The development of pupils' study skills is good and is well supported by the use of IT research platforms which pupils can access with their devices. They draw upon a wide range of resources and use higher-order skills in a number of lessons, namely science, humanities and their projects for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Pupils' study skills develop steadily as they move through the prep school to the secondary school. In a psychology lesson in Year 13, for example, pupils were presented with challenging and detailed material and were able successfully to find elements in common as well as critically assessing the diagnostic criteria for aggression and aggressive models. When giving an IPQ presentation, pupils in Year 8 showed they were able to research and analyse a wide range of sources, to hypothesise and reach conclusions in their individual project work and present them effectively. Pupils' effective use of study skills arises from those teachers who succeed in presenting pupils with well-chosen, often challenging and enjoyable activities to promote their progress in and love of learning.
- 3.18 In addition to the formal curriculum, pupils' achievements are excellent across a wide variety of opportunities including art, drama, music and sport. Success at both individual and team level includes such activities as the Model United Nations, East Africa Model United Nations and the World Scholars Cup. In addition, participation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) club and the community service President's Award, which operates at bronze, silver and gold level, is popular with the older pupils. Pupils with musical talents in both the prep and secondary schools regularly preform in the school orchestra for school assemblies and in other school wide public events.
- 3.19 This academic year, the under 19 boys' basketball team were bronze finalists at county level. In addition, the under 15 girls' netball and hockey teams are, to date, undefeated. The secondary school produces a highly successful and popular annual high-school musical, which significantly promotes pupils' confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm to commit themselves to school life and the activities on offer. Prep school pupils do equally well in music examinations and competitions and in a whole range of sporting and drama events. High levels of achievement are due to the levels of support and coaching provided by the teachers, the high levels of pupils' participation, and the enthusiasm of the pupils for their co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.20 Both pupils' responses to the questionnaire and discussions with pupils during the inspection highlighted the fact that, although pupils' broad range of achievements are recognised across the age groups, this is not as effective in the secondary school. Pupils, in the secondary school in particular, were keen to point out that their achievement in areas such as academics and extra-curricular activities is not as widely recognised and celebrated as their success in sporting events. Senior leaders are aware of this issue and are planning to redress the balance in the latest version of the school development plan.
- 3.21 Pupils' attitudes towards learning, including their ability to demonstrate initiative and independence, are good. Pupils are attentive, listen well and are enthusiastic learners, responding well to their teachers' encouragement. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups, and most show the confidence to collaborate willingly and effectively, for example on President's Award activities. A small minority of pupils, however, feel they are not able to take real ownership of their learning, because some teachers do not routinely allow pupils to engage and contribute to the planning process.
- 3.22 Secondary school activities, such as the Hillcrest Young Leaders and Entrepreneurship Club and The World Scholars programme, allow pupils to champion their own initiatives and projects, whilst also allowing collaborative working which promotes pupils' learning. Leadership opportunities for pupils in the prep school are used extremely well to develop independence and to increase pupil voice, such as student council and prefects.
- 3.23 Children in the early years demonstrate high levels of independence in explorative play and excellent collaboration and resilience. This was observed in a group construction project which fell apart during

mid-construction and needed rebuilding. The children immediately re-started their construction work to put their buildings back together again, overcoming their initial disappointment, and co-operating with each other to complete the final structure.

- 3.24 Boarders say they feel quite strongly that a key feature of boarding is that they have become more collaborative, responsible and more mindful of others' opinions and thoughts since joining the boarding house.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

### **3.25 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.**

- 3.26 Pupils in both sections of the school, as well as children in the early years, demonstrate high levels of self-discipline and come to school ready to learn. Most have high levels of self-esteem and the confidence needed to involve themselves fully in lessons. For example, in an art lesson in Year 9, pupils enthusiastically explained their individual assignment choices and the rationale for their choice of study topic. In a design and technology lesson in Year 10, pupils explained their project work confidently using accurate subject-specific technical terms. Similarly, in the prep school, the school's values are evident in lessons and, as a result, promote in pupils' high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. They respond well to feedback and are keen to improve their learning.
- 3.27 Boarders have a strong understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses which allows them to identify areas of improvement. This is due to the positive relationships with boarding staff and the supportive climate within the boarding house, which allows them to develop resilience, self-discipline and independence. The parental questionnaire responses support this view. Most parents feel that the school promotes and successfully supports their children's personal development and that the boarding experience helps support their children's progress and personal development.
- 3.28 Pupils' decision-making skills are good because the school encourages pupils to make well-informed decisions. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their decisions whether that be in their studies or in areas such as extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils in both the prep and secondary schools enjoy the freedom to choose their own selection of extra-curricular activities during the weekday afternoons. For example, pupils in both the prep and secondary schools enjoy the freedom to choose their own extra-curricular activities on weekday afternoons. Pupils in Years 10 and 13 were able to confidently explain their educational journey and the rationale for their decisions regarding IGCSE, BTEC and A-level options and their university choices as well as career aspirations.
- 3.29 Leaders entrust pupils with responsibilities in many areas such as in the school parliament, as school prefects and as peer mentors and, in some cases, by allowing pupils to determine aspects of their own learning. Pupils respond willingly to these opportunities when they are given the chance by their teachers to do so. This is all supported by the positive relationships between pupils and staff and the safe and secure school environment. In response to the pupils' questionnaire and in discussions, a small number of secondary pupils expressed a view that the school's leaders do not listen to the views of pupils and respond in a timely manner. School leaders are aware of this and are already putting mechanisms into place to address this.
- 3.30 Pupils' spiritual development is good, which is demonstrated particularly well when pupils are discussing their cultural mix and their positive interrelations with each other. This is most noticeable in the case of the boarding pupils. In class discussion and during interviews, most pupils could rationalise the values they espouse and relished the opportunity to engage in debate. All major religions are celebrated in assemblies and special events, and pupils are given wide opportunities to reflect on spiritual matters. A group of prep pupils asked to set up a Bible study activity, and a group was started to facilitate this. A parent recently gave a talk about Islam, and some of the Hindu community organised Diwali activities, whereas others organised Chinese New Year activities. Pupils

appreciate the school sites and the space it gives them to reflect on the non-material aspects of life, including the beauty of nature and in being fortunate enough to live close to the Nairobi National Park.

- 3.31 The behaviour of pupils is, in most cases, excellent, with the exception of some of the younger pupils in the secondary school. The large majority of pupils across all age groups have a strong comprehension of right and wrong. They are sensitive to the feelings of their peers and willingly take responsibility for ensuring all within their community can learn and exist together in an equitable and tolerant manner. Many pupils relish opportunities to assume leadership roles in both the prep and secondary schools, for example, as prefects, peer mentors and school parliament representatives. In so doing, pupils learn to work together with one another and with staff to encourage all pupils to abide by school rules, show respect for one another and create a school environment that is a safe school community for all.
- 3.32 The behaviour of pupils in the prep school is mainly excellent, and the 'behaviour ladder' system is effective in helping pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Even the very youngest children in the early years are able to sort out conflicts and accept responsibility for their behaviour, showing high levels of respect for each other.
- 3.33 Pupils are socially aware and work very effectively with others to solve problems and achieve common goals. Pupils in both sections of the school co-operate well together in the classroom, in activities and in breaks. They clearly enjoy working and playing together and benefit enormously from doing so. In the prep school, pupils mostly work well together and display excellent teamwork. In a Year 10 team project, largely pupil-led, pupils demonstrated excellent collaborative relationships when planning next steps for their group assignment. This was supported by helpful discussions between teacher and pupils on how best to refine research skills in planning for the group project. Such interactions are indicative of the positive school climate, good relationships between pupils and the good rapport and mutual respect shown between pupils and their teachers.
- 3.34 Pupils contribute extremely positively to the lives of others within the school and also make excellent contributions to the local community and wider society. They have a strong sense of belonging to their school communities, and also Nairobi and Kenya. Most pupils are involved in activities that benefit others, within school and through charitable enterprises. Examples include pupils volunteering to help in animal sanctuaries and children's orphanages, and litter-picking in the Nairobi National Park.
- 3.35 Prep school prefects instigate and organise fund-raising activities, such as bake sales and shoebox appeals as well as organising a talent show for charitable fund raising. Prefects, in particular the boarding prefects, speak of how the responsibility of looking after others has strengthened their personal development and helped them to prepare for the next stages in their lives. All pupils with responsibilities in either the prep or secondary schools take any roles of responsibility seriously, most especially in raising money for local causes.
- 3.36 The pupil body takes great pride in the international nature of their make-up, most especially in the international contribution afforded by the boarding population. Pupils demonstrate high levels of tolerance, open-mindedness, interest and acceptance of one another's cultures and traditions. Pupils feel they belong to a safe community where they are valued, understood and respected in a tolerant and inclusive environment. For example, a group of pupils in Year 8 discussed in a sensitive manner the dangers of stereotypes and the importance of accepting others as individuals. During the inspection, there was a visit to Year 2 from a Maasai tribe leader and pupils listened receptively and respectfully to his explanation of his culture and values.
- 3.37 The school actively promotes cultural festivals and awareness so that pupils can widen their cultural horizons, such as the celebration of Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas and Eid. Regular opportunities to take part in international trips nurture the pupils' awareness and sensitivity to diversity further. Leaders celebrate the multi-national make-up of the full school community, including the annual cultural celebration weeks. In boarding, pupils gave an example of diversity in the form of their shared mutual interest in music. This enables boarders of different nationalities to share music from their



own countries, whilst teaching each other the associated cultural dances, thus promoting the international flavour of the school.

- 3.38 Pupils of all ages feel safe and secure in school because of effective physical security and levels of supervision but also effective teaching on issues such as internet safety. They understand how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly the importance of a balanced lifestyle. This is in part due to the effective use of assemblies and the PSHE lessons. Additionally, the wide-ranging and effective co-curricular and extra-curricular programme allows pupils to experience life beyond the classroom, for example in outdoor education, taking part in training exercises, camp craft and expeditions.
- 3.39 Pupils' personal development is very well supported by the experienced full-time counsellors who are attached to both school sections. The pupils value the work of the counsellors, saying they are often the first port of call should they need support in respect of mental health and wellbeing matters. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and are happy with the sporting opportunities on offer which keep them fit. The prep school has mindfulness moments within the timetable which promote understanding around mental health and how to regulate their own emotions.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the Braeburn group proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings, and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding houses and the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Tony Halliwell	Reporting inspector
Mrs Heidi Berry	Team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS/BSO school, Qatar)
Mr Michael Clack	Team inspector (Regional head of schools, Orbital Education, UK)
Mr Matthew Tansley	Team inspector (Head of secondary, BSO school, Romania)