

Kensington School New Parents Information

Introduction

We are one of the oldest established British International Schools in Spain. The school has grown from one class in 1966, when Edward Paul Giles MA (Cantab) began teaching five students, to the current roll of some 250 pupils.

The school is officially recognized by both the UK government, via the British Council in Madrid, and by the Catalan authorities and is inspected on a regular basis.

It was one of the founding members of the National Association of British Schools in Spain (NABSS) with Edward Paul Giles being the first Vice President in 1979. As an active member of the Barcelona International Schools Association (BISA) our students benefit from the close sporting and cultural links with other international schools in the city.

Kensington is located in the pleasant residential district of Pedralbes. Here it enjoys good access being only six kilometres west of the city centre and adjacent to exit 10 of the Ronda del Dalt. Several bus routes pass by the school and we are only a ten minute walk from the green line 3 Zona Universitaria metro station.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second honoured the school by performing the official opening ceremony of our purpose built school in 1988. Facilities include a gymnasium, theatre, canteen, playground and ICT suite on the ground floor, Junior School classrooms on the first floor, Senior School Arts, Languages and Humanities subject areas and Study Room on the second floor with the third floor being devoted to four dedicated science laboratories and a sixth form common room. Our current development plan includes the transformation of large storage areas on the top floor into a multi-use learning centre and separate classroom for English as an Additional Language.

We remain very much a family school today with the Executive Management Committee (Board of Directors) comprising three of Mr Giles' sons who are keen to promote the values and principles established by their father.

Organisation

Kensington is a small co-educational one-form entry school with an advantageous maximum class size of only twenty. This ensures that we are able to offer a quality education with a considerable amount of personal one to one attention.

We admit pupils from the age of three so that on one single site our students can study seamlessly from Nursery to University entrance level.



Although we are an academically non-selective family school we do not accept all those who apply. Admission is dependent upon having a good report from the previous school and a genuine commitment to want to learn. In the Senior School we also require students to sit a test in English since we are an Anglophone school and pupils with a low level of English will not be able to access the curriculum. Given that we do not have specialist teachers for pupils with specific learning difficulties it would be inappropriate to us to enrol those with significant special educational needs.

Our student body is predominantly European (UK, Italy, France, Iceland, Israel & Spain) and Asian (Russia, Japan, China, South Korea, India, & Pakistan). Very few students travel long distances to school and we do not have a school bus as most families are based in the Barcelona conurbation. There is a strong representation from the local diplomatic community within our parent body and many also work for multi-national companies.

As with many international schools many of our families are very mobile and may only reside in Barcelona for a few years before being moved to another international posting.

However, unlike most international schools in Spain we have relatively few host country nationals on the school roll. This is because we are recognized as a centre purely for the education of foreign students and we therefore do not offer lessons in Lengua, Literatura, Sociales or Catalan as is required of schools who admit local Spanish children.

In Spain compulsory state education is from the ages of six to sixteen so we can accept Spanish children into our Nursery and sixth form. However, those who are applying post-ESO would need to demonstrate a high degree of fluency in the English Language in order to access our Advanced Level Sixth Form pre-university programme.

Faculty

In the British system at Junior School level one teacher generally has responsibility for teaching the whole class curriculum and the children spend much of the day in their own classroom. We have eight Primary specialists employed in the Junior School, one for each class from Nursery to Year 6.

There is also a classroom allocated for English as an Additional Language where our full time Special English teacher is based. We also have a classroom assistant who provides valuable support for both teachers and children.

As specialist knowledge is required to teach Spanish, Physical Education and French subject teachers from the Senior school take these lessons in addition to a part-time Primary Spanish teacher. The Head of Juniors is a specialist in the performing arts and ICT so he teaches Music, Drama and Computing to Key Stage Two pupils.

There are eighteen teachers in the Senior School all of whom are graduates in their specialist field. With the exception of the Modern Language teachers, who are mother tongue in either Spanish or French, almost all staff are UK trained with Qualified Teacher Status.

Curriculum

The School follows the National Curriculum of England and Wales with some small modifications to take into account our international context. We use standardized tests in the Junior School to monitor progress in Literacy, Numeracy and Spelling.

One of the key priorities in the Junior School is to support those children for whom English is not their mother tongue. Our specialist EAL teacher meets around 40% of Primary pupils for small group lessons to ensure optimum progress since fluency in the English Language is absolutely crucial to successfully accessing our curriculum.

We also stress the importance of modern foreign language acquisition from an early age so Spanish is taught throughout the Junior School from Reception. These classes are setted in Years 4, 5 and 6. French is also introduced in Year 6.

There is a weekly Junior School assembly to celebrate the achievements of the children during the week. Certificates are awarded for progress in both classroom subjects and extra-curricular activities. Awards are also given for social skills such as kindness to others and thoughtfulness. Classes compete each week for the Golden Coat Hanger Award given to the form that takes most responsibility for their personal belongings.

All Junior School children have swimming lessons on a weekly basis at the local Can Caralleu indoor heated pool. Pupils also participate in two annual concerts: a Christmas Show in our small theatre and a full scale musical production in the splendidly restored local Sarria Theatre.

The broad and balanced Key Stage 3 curriculum includes Art, Drama, English, French, Games, General Science, Geography, History, ICT, Music, PSHE Education, Physical Education and Spanish. Students are entered at the age of 16 for the external i/GCSE examinations of the Edexcel Examinations Board. Normally exams in nine subjects are taken from a choice which currently includes Art, Biology, Chemistry, English Language (First Language or as an Additional Language), English Literature, French, Geography, History, Mathematics, Physics and Spanish. The recent appointment of a Music teacher should allow to us offer twelve i/GCSE subjects in the near future.

Occasionally students will prepare themselves for exams in their mother language since such qualifications are accepted by some universities and colleges.

In addition to their academic studies Key Stage Four students are required to attend Physical Education lessons in a wide range of sporting activities which are offered at the very well-equipped L'Hospitalet Nord local facility.

At sixth form level we offer AS and A2 Advanced Level examination courses, again via Edexcel in London. Conventionally students will follow courses in four subjects although some may decide to do three or five examinations depending on their career aspirations.



We teach Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, French, Geography, History, Mathematics, Physics and Spanish at this level. Students also choose a non-examinable course in either Physical Education or General Studies.

We are a traditional school not a sixth form college. This means that sixth formers are expected to arrive by 9am each morning and they are not free to come and go as they please. We insist on them attending a number of supervised study periods in the Study Room since background reading and research are essential for success at Advanced Level.

However, we also encourage the social development of our senior students and appreciate that a balance needs to be struck between study and relaxation. Our sixth form common room gives the Lower and Upper Sixth a dedicated area in which to socialise.

All Senior students attend a weekly assembly which focuses on moral and contemporary issues. Topics covered in PSHE lessons are often emphasized in assembly. It is common for pupils to lead assemblies as a way of encouraging their public speaking and presentational skills. Student council members often use assembly time to report back to their peers on the content of meetings. Teamwork is also encouraged through the form assemblies given by Forms 1, 2 and 3.

Reporting to Parents

We believe that students make most progress when school and home are working together in the best interests of the pupils. The strength of the bonds between the so-called Trinity (the three pillars of student, school and home) in Education is very important. We therefore ensure that parents are kept regularly informed of progress via half-term grade sheets, and full reports at the conclusion of all three terms.

Parents are also informed if a pupil is being formally monitored – known as being “on-report”. This could be due to lack of effort in class, poor behaviour or persistent lateness to school in the morning. Normally the on-report period lasts for two weeks.

There are Parents’ Evenings in November and February for all year groups and parents are of course encouraged to contact us if they have any concerns about their child, either academic or social. There is no need to wait for the formal Parents’ Evening. The first point of contact is normally the form teacher although parents may wish to speak directly with Mr Bayes, Mr D Giles, Mr Evans or Mrs Langdon-Davies. Please contact the school office to make such appointments.

Public Examination Results

Given that we are academically non-selective, with the vast majority of students working in their second or third language, we have been delighted with the performance of our examination candidates in recent years.

For university entrance worldwide the crucial Advanced Level grades are A and B. During the past six years our results have consistently exceeded the English national norms by an average of 20% at grade A and 14% at grade B. Our six year average A/A star figure is 45% with 66% achieving B or above in the same period.

At I/GCSE our A/A star mean is 62% compared to a national average of 22%. Over six years 79% of Kensington's results have been grade B or above.

These results reflect a situation in which very experienced teachers are working with relatively small groups of well motivated students who enjoy the full backing of supportive families.

Whilst we naturally highlighted last year the achievement of an Upper Sixth former who gained five top A Star grades at Advanced Level, and is now at Cambridge University, the teaching staff were also thrilled by the six C grades achieved by a pupil who always found academic work a real challenge. This is the essence of Kensington. We want all of our pupils, whatever their ability, to achieve their full academic potential.

Edexcel High Achievers Awards

Each year this international examination board make special awards to students who have achieved the highest subject marks in Spain, Europe and globally.

They have around twenty centres in Spain and around the world hundreds of thousands of students enter their exams in ninety two countries.

From this huge entry Edexcel annually makes around five hundred special awards. Given our relatively tiny number of candidates our hopeful expectation was to perhaps get an occasional award every few years. This year fifteen Kensington students received certificates!

We are immensely proud of their achievements which include Highest Advanced Level international mark for Spanish, Highest International GCSE mark for Russian, Italian and Spanish, Highest mark in Europe for A Level Biology, Highest GCSE marks in Europe for Japanese and Chinese and Highest GCSE marks in Spain for English Language, English Literature, Geography and Physics.

Higher Education Destinations

Our impressive examination results normally enable our students to proceed to their first choice university. Given that they have followed a British curriculum most choose to go to the UK through the UCAS process.

We currently have many former students at prestigious universities including Bath, Birmingham, Cambridge, London, (Hatfield College, Kings College, London Metropolitan, London School of Economics and University College), Nottingham, Sheffield, Warwick and Nottingham.

Under EU law universities in all member states now have to accept the government approved pre-university courses taught throughout the European Community. These "direct access arrangements" mean that our students can use their AL results to enter Spanish universities both in Barcelona and in other autonomous communities. The well known ESADE business school, located in the same street as Kensington, is increasingly popular as it also offers business degrees in English.

We also have alumni currently reading a wide range of degree subjects in Canada, Japan, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and the USA.

Careers

One of our major responsibilities is to prepare our students for the world beyond school, whether this be transferring to higher education or direct entry into the workplace.

As members of the *Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO)*, a long established educational charity based in the UK, we are able to offer very comprehensive and up to date programme of detailed advice regarding the whole range of careers opportunities.

ISCO representatives visit Kensington twice a year to give presentations and meet with groups or individuals. Students are able to seek expert help throughout the year via the ISCO website.

For an additional fee students may opt in to the *Futurewise Programme*. This process begins with pupils taking the *Morrisby Test*, a psychometric analysis of personal characteristics, traits and interests. Following an analysis of the test results all participants are interviewed by an ISCO expert and given a detailed individual report identifying a number of possible career pathways. *Futurewise* participants are able to seek personal advice throughout their university studies as careers guidance is clearly important for graduates.

Extra Curricular Activities

Sporting activities are very popular after school with the outdoor facilities and gymnasium in constant use by students of all ages. There are five football clubs who meet weekly ranging from Year One to the Upper Sixth. Basketball and table tennis are also popular clubs.

There are displays of Art club paintings around the school which lift the spirits as one walks along the corridors. The chess club is very popular especially with those students who manage to occasionally beat their teachers. The School Choir meet weekly and sing enthusiastically.

A number of school trips are organised by the teachers to enrich the curriculum. For our Nursery children the walk around the corner to the Garden Centre is as exciting as the annual ski trip to the Pyrenees is for the older students. Carnival is celebrated over a period of several days in the Junior School with much effort going into some very elaborate costumes. The Junior summer camp is very popular in June, as is the post exam Colonias where senior pupils enjoy rafting, kayaking and hiking.



Much internal sporting competition takes place between the school houses, which have such quintessentially English names as Lancaster, Middlesex and Victoria. House captains are elected and each team is proud of their house flag. Competitions take place during break times on the playground and the sports days are keenly contested.

Student Council

At the beginning of the academic year two representatives (one boy, one girl) from each year group are democratically elected to represent their form on the Student Council. This body meets regularly, elects its own officers, and is very active within the community. Two students from the Council are proud to represent Kensington on the BISA Student Council.

One of the major contributions made by the Council is to take the lead in fund raising activities. Last term a large sum was raised on *Children-in- Need* day. This was split equally between charities for disadvantaged youngsters in the UK and a residential home in Barcelona for children with cancer.

Currently a sub-committee of Council members is investigating how the school can improve the amount of material it recycles. Members also help organise whole school events such as the very popular Christmas Talent Show.

The K Parents

The school is pleased to have the support of an enthusiastic group of parents who organise a number of social activities throughout the year. There is also an important fund raising element to their work. Each year a committee is formed and this group meets regularly to plan events.

Recently our Junior pupils enjoyed a splendid Halloween evening and a highlight of our Autumn Term calendar was the K Parents Christmas Market for the whole school. A large number of stalls were set up in the Gymnasium, many of which included interactive games for the children to enjoy. Probably the most popular area was the international food stand where a large array of national dishes, made by our parents, were sampled with delight.

Finally...

We realise that children only have one chance to get a good education. At Kensington we have been striving for almost fifty years to give our pupils the best start in life.

We simply want our pupils to enjoy their schooldays since happy children do well.

Michael Bayes

February 2013