

# Primary Years Programme Evaluation Report

*International School Almhult*

*Almhult, Sweden*

*IBIS code: 001931*

*11 – 13 May 2011*

## The visiting team

Darren Arbour, Independent consultant, Canada

Marilyn James, International School of Gothenburg Region, Gothenburg, Sweden

## The school pedagogical leadership team

Vivien Bjornestrand, Head of school

Patricia Hudson, PYP coordinator

## Notable features of the visit

There were no notable features for this visit.

## Introduction

International School Almhult (ISA) was authorized to implement the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate in 2003. This report documents the second evaluation of the school's implementation of the programme. ISA was authorized to offer the MYP in 2009.

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## PART 1: A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

The school was authorized to offer the PYP in 2003 and underwent the first programme evaluation in May 2006. Since then, the school has had a new head of school/principal and a new PYP coordinator in a part time position. The PYP coordinator also teaches in the MYP. However, in the upcoming 2011/2012 school year another teacher will be appointed coordinator and will only have responsibilities in the primary school.

The school has experienced continuous growth with a student population in the PYP from 32 students to 83 students (27 in preschool, 56 in primary school)

The school changed its name from The English School of Almhult to the International School of Almhult in 2010. The library has been developed with a new collection of books and continues to be financed by IKEA. To support the library, a part time library assistant has been appointed since September 2010.

There has been significant turnover of staff over the past 5 years. Only 2 teachers on staff have been at the school prior to the 2006 evaluation visit. Five teachers of PYP students have not received any formal IB PYP training but there are plans to send these individuals to workshops in July 2011 and October 2011.

As the school population has more than doubled and enrolment projections will continue to grow, the school will be relocating in August 2011 to a newly renovated purpose built facility, shared with a local high school.

The school continues to be financed by the local district education authority as well as IKEA providing an annual grant to cover professional development of teachers and school

furnishings. The Head is provided with a budget for which she is responsible, but all overall accounting and auditing procedures are overseen by the local education authority.

The PYP coordinator facilitates an induction programme for teachers new to the PYP. However 10 staff have not been trained by workshops organized by the IB. There is no evidence provided at the time of the visit to show any future planning to meet their professional development needs beyond October 2011.

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## PART 2: A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS REGARDING THE STANDARDS

Section	Standard	School Evaluation	IB Evaluation
A: philosophy	Standard A1	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development
	Standard A2	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development

Section	Standard	School Evaluation	IB Evaluation
B: organization	Standard B	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development

Section	Standard	School Evaluation	IB Evaluation
C: curriculum	Standard C1	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development
	Standard C2	Shows satisfactory development	Requires significant attention
	Standard C3	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development
	Standard C4	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development

Section	Standard	School Evaluation	IB Evaluation
D: the student	Standard D1	Shows satisfactory development	Shows satisfactory development
	Standard D2	Shows satisfactory development	Requires significant attention

The school has taken reasonable measures to ensure that parents and guardians are aware of and have access to the IB General Regulations: Primary Years Programme.

## PART 3: THE DETAILED COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

### Section A: Philosophy

#### Standard A1

There is close alignment between the educational beliefs and values of the school and those of the programme.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### Commendations

1. The school for developing within the school community an awareness of the qualities, attitudes and characteristics described in the learner profile.

#### Recommendations

1. The school revisit their mission statement to reflect the uniqueness of the school.

#### Standard A2

The school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### Commendations

1. The school for creating a comfortable, secure and very friendly learning environment for all students.
2. The school's support for students' mother tongue.

#### Recommendations

1. The school find opportunities to deepen the understanding of international-mindedness across the entire community so that it permeates the culture of teaching and learning.
2. The school continue to establish a procedure to acquire resources that would access different cultures, perspectives and languages to support the units of inquiry.

## Section B: Organization

### Standard B

The school demonstrates ongoing commitment to, and provides support for, the programme through appropriate administrative structures and systems, staffing and resources.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### Commendations

1. The school for initiating the development of a teaching position for learning support
2. The school for the work that has been done to promote parental understanding of and support for the programme, which has led to the development of a supportive community of parents with a commitment to the school and to the philosophy of the PYP.
3. The local education authority for its commitment to support the school with its ongoing development of the PYP as well as for its participation in regional workshops to gain a better understanding of the programme.

#### Recommendations

1. The school revises the job description of the PYP coordinator in accordance with the IB guidelines and provide sufficient support and resources (e.g. release time) to carry out the responsibilities and establish a process of monitoring these responsibilities.
2. The school develops plans to ensure continued professional development support for teachers.
3. The school allots scheduled time for collaborative planning and reflection with the PYP coordinator.
4. The school allocates appropriate print and specialist equipment where needed to further develop the programme.
5. The school take a proactive role in creating documentation for all processes and procedures within the school and making these visible to all stakeholders.

## Section C: Curriculum

### Standard C1

A comprehensive, coherent, written curriculum, based on the requirements of the programme and developed by the school, is available to all sections of the school community.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### Commendations

1. The pedagogical leadership team and teachers for the development of the learning outcomes within the scope and sequence documents for mathematics, social studies, science and language of instruction in a format which is available and easily understood by both students and parents.

### **Recommendations**

1. The school reviews its practices with regard to having curriculum documents in written form available to all members of the community.
2. The school develops strategies to allow the students to plan for their own learning and assessment and to assume responsibility for their own learning.
3. The school considers ways to make the learning process more visible through the effective use of displays.
4. The pedagogical leadership team ensures that the key concepts are identified on the programme of inquiry and that there is vertical and horizontal alignment of the different components of the transdisciplinary themes.

### **Standard C2**

The school has implemented a system through which all teachers plan and reflect in collaborative teams.

**The IB does not agree with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

### **Commendations**

1. The teachers' willingness to regularly make use of unscheduled time for collaborative planning.
2. The collegial and supportive culture among the staff.

### **Recommendations**

1. The teachers' planning accommodates a range of learning needs and styles, as well as varying levels of competencies.
2. Planning at the school takes place collaboratively and is scheduled into the teacher's timetables as well as during the regular PYP monthly meetings.
3. The school develops and publishes essential agreements regarding collaborative planning, roles of single subject teachers, assessment and inquiry in the context of a coherent programme.
4. The school finds ways to recognize and support all teachers of PYP students as language teachers.
5. The pedagogical team supports teachers in the collaborative planning process by having the PYP coordinator in attendance.

6. The unit of inquiry planners continue to be reviewed to ensure that:
  - the lines of inquiry, the teacher questions, the learning engagements and the formative assessments are more closely connected to each other and to the central idea.
  - the summative assessment task and the central idea of each unit be correlated, so that it is clear that it is student understanding of the central idea that is being assessed.
7. The school ensures that planning at the school makes use of the PYP planner and planning process across the curriculum and by all teachers.

### **Standard C3**

Teaching and learning at the school empowers and encourages students to become lifelong learners, to be responsible towards themselves, their learning, other people and the environment, and to take appropriate action

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### **Commendations**

1. The positive learning environment and atmosphere of the school which allows students to be confident learners and risk-takers.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Teachers consider ways to differentiate the teaching and learning in the classroom to address the needs of students who are at different stages in their development and those who have different learning styles.
2. The teachers provide opportunities to engage students as critical thinkers.
3. The teachers strengthen the student's ability to reflect on their own development and understanding of their work over time and are able to articulate this development to others.
4. Teachers consider their reliance on photocopied worksheets and create alternative means of producing student output.

### **Standard C4**

There is an agreed approach to assessment, and to the recording and reporting of assessment data, which reflects the practices and requirements of the programme.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

#### **Commendations**

1. The development and implementation of a comprehensive assessment policy.

### **Recommendations**

1. The teachers make learning expectations, assessment criteria and strategies clear to students and parents.
2. The school develop and use a balanced range of strategies and tools for formative and summative assessment.
3. The teachers to facilitate good practices to involve students in both peer and self assessment including opportunities to reflect on their own learning.
4. The pedagogical leadership review assessment practices to address all the essential elements of the programme.
5. The pedagogical leadership and teacher review the school's shared understanding and process with regard to developing, maintaining and organizing student portfolios in order to provide optimal collection of authentic student assessment pieces.

## **Section D: the student**

### **Standard D1**

Students learn to choose to act, and to reflect on their actions, so that they contribute to their own well-being and that of the community and the environment.

**The IB agrees with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

### **Commendations**

1. The school for establishing a Student Council to provide students opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes that lead to taking action.
2. Students for embracing the values of the PYP and engaging in meaningful dialogue with teachers and each other.

### **Recommendations**

1. The staff continue to work to broaden their understanding of the PYP action component so that they can recognize (and where appropriate document) student-initiated action both in and outside of the units of inquiry.

### **Standard D2**

In the final year of the programme, all students complete a programme-specific project that allows them to demonstrate a consolidation of their learning, in the case of PYP and MYP, and demonstrate the extension and development of their learning in the Diploma Programme.

**The IB does not agree with the school that this standard shows satisfactory development.**

**Commendations**

1. The school for having the exhibition become an entire community event.

**Recommendations**

1. The school continue to strive to identify authentic issues/problems with which students can engage which allow them to personally propose solutions and/or take action as an outcome of their learning.
2. PYP coordinator and teachers identify ways to broaden the range of student input and choice in terms of the various components and products to provide ownership of the whole process.
3. The pedagogical leadership team ensures that the exhibition reflects all major features of the programme including the five essential elements.
4. The pedagogical leadership and teachers establish provisions for adequate assessment of and reflection on the exhibition, with opportunity provided for input from students, parents and teachers.

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**PART 4: MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED**

None

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**PART 5: CONCLUSION**

ISA began completing the self study in the Spring of 2010. The pedagogical leadership team met to create a plan of action and to start collecting available documents. A timeline was created by the leadership team indicating who was responsible for what and when. Staff members were informed of the evaluation process and the standards and practices were reviewed and the recommendations from the first evaluation visit, noting any that had yet to be addressed.

In Spring 2011, all staff members met to answer all questions in the self study. Results were tallied and shared. The report was compiled by the Head and PYP coordinator and the final statements of conclusion were shared with the entire staff. The pedagogical leadership team reviewed the statements of conclusion and created the summary of main conclusions.

The standards and practices were applied appropriately with a few being not rigorous enough, but this also reflected the school's current understanding of the programme. When questioned about these contradictions, only the Head and PYP coordinator could explain the ratings on the self study as strong evidence was not provided to support the ratings.

The team disagrees with the school that standard C2 and D2 are showing satisfactory development. Although the visiting team agrees with the school that it meets the other standards, on the whole it was the finding of the visiting team that the school's rating of some

of the practices was too high. In discussions during the visit, the reasons given for ratings were sometimes based on opinions rather than on evidence. It was the team's perception that the self-study process was as reflective as it could have been and that a greater emphasis on the use of evidence would have strengthened the self-study.

Consequently, while the visiting team agrees with the points identified in the summary of *Principal Practices in Need of Strengthening* and the *Principal Proposals for Improvement* of the self-study's conclusion, the list was not considered comprehensive. In particular, there are areas the team would highlight:

- PYP training provided by IB approved educators for all faculty, both full-time and part-time, is essential in order to continue to develop the teachers' understanding of the programme (Standard B)
- Collaborative planning time for homeroom teachers with the PYP coordinator has to be scheduled into the teacher's weekly timetable. Further measures to support collaborative planning with the inclusion of single subject teachers when their subject area supports the unit of inquiry at a particular grade level should be taken. The school should look to develop further opportunities for collaborative planning throughout the school year. (Standard C2).
- The school consider sending a teacher to the Exhibition workshop to assist the school in understanding the full spectrum of the process and purposes of the Exhibition. Further support for the students in the form of guidelines and criteria would enhance their understanding and participation. It is suggested that the school look into ways to include the entire primary school staff in the Exhibition process to assist the grade 5 team and to provide support to the students in the role as mentors.

The self-study process has afforded the school the opportunity to identify areas in need of strengthening. It hopefully also allowed the school to celebrate its strengths: the professional and committed staff; students and teachers who believe in establishing a positive learning environment; a leadership team that is open-minded; student learning which is enhanced by strong relationships; a moderately resourced school; and a board that is committed to and care about the school. In particular, however, the visiting team would like to recognize the school's commitment to continuous improvement. It is hoped that the self-study/programme evaluation visit process can assist the school in focusing its energies in the next phase of development of the PYP.

The visiting team believes that the fostering and nurturing of the professional culture of discussion and reflection started during the self-study process, and the commitment of the school to the programme, should be a good basis for the further development of the PYP at the school.

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**The visiting team would like to thank the administration, the board, the staff, the students and the parents for their welcome and hospitality during the visit.**

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## REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP

The school will:

by **1 May 2012**: submit an action plan to the PYP regional manager formatted on the new IB PYP action plan template. The action plan should be accompanied by supporting evidence to satisfy the regional office that the school has acted on the recommendations identified in this report.

The school should use the new PYP action plan template to update their PYP action plan based on the recommendations of this report.

The recommendations from the visit will be followed up at the next evaluation visit.

We would like to draw the school's attention to the publication of new evaluation documents in 2010. The new *Programme evaluation guide and self-study questionnaire* can be downloaded from the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC).

The school is advised to begin its self-study at least 12 months prior to the submission of the requirements for the school's programme evaluation.

Please contact the regional office at [ibaem.schoolservices@ibo.org](mailto:ibaem.schoolservices@ibo.org) should you have any questions about this information.

The school is due for its third PYP programme evaluation visit in **June 2016**.

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