

ACCREDITATION PROCESS: COUNCIL OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Here are some details about the accreditation process that the school is undergoing this year. We thought the easiest way would be to provide FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). So, here goes!

What is accreditation?

The accreditation process is a highly effective means of addressing whole school improvement. Every aspect of our school's organisation will be reviewed: teaching styles, curriculum, administration, office systems, facilities etc. There is a heavy emphasis on the curriculum and the outcomes of the school's programme. Basically, the process reviews the entire provision in place for your child(ren).

Why are we subjecting ourselves to accreditation?

A very good question but a simple one to answer! All organizations need external scrutiny to find out what they do well and what needs to be improved. We know we are a good school but we want to become even better. The process will be hard work but ultimately worthwhile as it will make the school stronger. Unlike an inspection the CIS self-evaluation and accreditation process establishes a continuous cycle of review over a ten-year period with specific checks at designated points. The school, the Superintendent of ISG and the Board of Trustees are all delighted that the school has been deemed worthy of proceeding with the CIS self-evaluation and accreditation process.

What is the Council of International Schools (CIS)?

The Council of International Schools is a membership organization serving more than 500 schools around the world and has been involved in evaluating schools for the purpose of accreditation since 1970. Many British and international curriculum schools use their services, both in the UK as well as worldwide. CIS is independent in approach and carries out a rigorous process. If you would like to find out more about the track record of CIS their web site is: www.cois.org

How is Accreditation different from an Ofsted inspection?

The Ofsted inspection used in UK schools (Office for Standards in Education) is a statutory and legally binding inspection model that can only operate within the UK in its truest form. DBGS submitted to an Ofsted inspection in November 1997 and it was not the right process for us. Ofsted inspection teams typically do not have international experience and do not understand the dynamics that impact upon schools in the Middle East. CIS, on the other hand, use team members who are well-versed in international schools and international education. An inspection process is like a snap shot – it describes the health of a school at the time of the inspection - whereas the CIS self-evaluation and accreditation model involves the school in a continuous ten-year cycle of review.

What does the accreditation process look like?

There are five essential stages repeated within the ten-year cycle:

Stage 1 - The Preliminary/Preparatory Visit:

In advance of a preliminary visit from a representative of CIS the school is required to submit detailed responses to a range of questions in specific categories. Our four-day preliminary visit was conducted in May 2007 by Dr. Gerry Percy, Director of Accreditation Services for CIS. His assessment was that the school was in a very fit state to go forward to the self-study stage.

Stage 2 - The Self Study:

The self-study is the most important part of the evaluation and accreditation process. The umbrella committee is the Self Study Steering Committee that oversees the entire process. Additional committees are established in the following areas:

- A Philosophy and Objectives
- B Curriculum
- C Governance and Management
- D Staff
- E Student Support Services
- F Resources
- G Student and Community Life

The school has already started the formal committee work under the direction of the Self Study Steering Committee. This will continue throughout the 2007-08 school year and will involve a great deal of work over many committees. Some committees will involve parents, students, Board members, support staff, teachers and administrators. Other committees will involve teachers only, particularly the curriculum committees. A number of parents have already volunteered to sit on committees and we thank them for their interest, support and commitment.

Stage 3 – The Team Visit: The DBGS team visit is scheduled for November 2008 once the self-study is complete. We will host 6 – 8 members of a visiting team put together by CIS and they will spend a week in the school to see it in action. The team members visit classrooms, talk with students, parents, Board members, support staff and teachers. They will examine all aspects of the school in light of the self-study and against the Standards for Accreditation laid down by CIS. A detailed report will then be produced providing commendations and recommendations. An overall recommendation is then made to CIS.

Stage 4 – Decision on Accreditation:

The CIS Accreditation Service carefully reviews the Visiting Team Report and will provide one of four recommendations:

1. Award Accreditation or Re-accreditation;
2. Award Accreditation or Re-accreditation with specific qualifications;
3. Postpone Accreditation or Re-accreditation for some specified reasons;
4. Not award Accreditation or Re-accreditation.

The most common recommendation is No. 2. Most schools that are awarded accreditation status have recommendations to address through an Action Plan process to complete within eighteen months of the Team Visit.

Stage 5 – Subsequent Procedures:

- The first report on Progress and Planning is prepared by the school roughly 18 months after the Team Visit. This is to respond to any specific issues that were raised in the Team Report;
- A Five Year Report where the school demonstrates how it has addressed any recommendations through an Action Plan process. At this five-year mid-point of the accreditation cycle a further visit takes place from at least two people appointed by CIS;
- At the eight-year point the school will begin preparing for a second round of self-study leading to re-accreditation.

Training for CIS and the Self Study Steering Committee

All DBGS teaching staff attended a day's training session on Thursday 24th May 2007. The training session provided an overview of how committees collect and review information and how to draw balanced conclusions from the information gathered. The school appointed a key committee to oversee the self-study and evaluation process, the Self Study Steering Committee. The committee is comprised of Mrs Wade, Mrs Chapman Mrs Chambers, Mr McMahon, Mr Chapman and Mrs Power. Mrs Power is the designated Chairperson of this key committee.

This part of the school's web site will be used to provide regular updates on the preparations for the Team Visit.