



part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection report

12 to 14 May 2025

Mateas Foundation-Cambridge School of Bucharest

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The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect British Schools Overseas (BSO). Our inspections report on the extent to which the BSO Standards are met, referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

Provision at the school meets the requirements of the BSO Standards.

1. The proprietors provide effective oversight and ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities and actively promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders' decision-making is grounded in evidence from their quality assurance activities. Strategic planning and day-to-day practice reflect both their ambition and the school's values.
2. Potential risks to pupils are actively identified and addressed. Leaders' consideration of risk extends beyond physical issues to areas such as safeguarding and pupils' emotional wellbeing.
3. School policies align with Romanian law and, where possible, the requirements for schools in the UK. The information required by the BSO Standards is published or made available. Parental complaints are resolved by leaders promptly, in line with the school's published policy.
4. The curriculum covers all required areas of learning and progressively builds pupils' skills and knowledge. It draws on the UK national and International Baccalaureate (IB) frameworks, reflects the school's diverse population and ensures access to learning for pupils of all ages and needs.
5. Leaders ensure that teaching is well planned. Pupils are motivated, curious and resilient. They work well with others and apply learning independently across a range of contexts. Teachers use assessment information to adapt teaching. However, in some lessons, inconsistent levels of feedback mean that pupils are not always clear on their next steps in learning.
6. Teaching in the early years is well planned and supports children's development and learning. Staff use continuous assessment to plan next steps for individuals and groups and adapt the learning environment. Children build confidence, independence and curiosity through consistent routines and positive adult interaction.
7. Pupils attain above the averages for those pupils sitting the same IGCSE and international A-level examinations. Most pupils move on to higher education, including destinations in the UK, Europe and the United States, with a small number taking alternative career routes.
8. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well relative to their starting points. Teachers promptly identify their learning needs. They adjust explanations, tasks and materials to support pupils' learning. Progress against individual education plans is tracked, and activities are adapted where needed.
9. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). Staff assess pupils' language levels on entry and adapt lessons and resources to support language development.
10. Pupils demonstrate consistently good behaviour. Bullying is uncommon and, when it occurs, is handled effectively. Staff respond promptly and provide support where needed.
11. Pupils learn to identify their emotions, manage stress and know how to seek help. Pastoral staff monitor concerns and use data to guide support. However, in some year groups, this feedback from pupils on their wellbeing and learning is not elicited consistently to inform leaders' actions.

12. Pupils show respect for one another and for individual differences. They value different perspectives and discuss bias and discrimination sensitively. They learn about life in modern Britain and fundamental British values through clearly planned activities.
13. Leaders provide comprehensive careers guidance. Pupils use online resources, take part in workshops and receive individualised advice and support. Speakers and visits expose pupils to different types of career. Pupils practise and develop their interview and application skills.
14. Pupils gain a robust understanding of economic concepts. Topics such as budgeting, saving and ethical spending are embedded throughout the curriculum.
15. Safeguarding aligns with Romanian law and, where possible, the requirements for UK schools. Staff are well trained and address concerns promptly. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online, and can access trusted adults to discuss any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards

The school meets all the BSO Standards.

- BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- BSO Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- increase the consistency of teacher feedback in lessons so that pupils are clear about their next steps in learning
- ensure all pupils have a range of opportunities to feed back to all staff about their academic needs and emotional wellbeing.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

16. The proprietors provide effective strategic oversight of the work of leaders. They receive regular information about educational outcomes, safeguarding and operations, and scrutinise leaders' actions. As a result, they ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities to effectively promote the wellbeing of pupils and consistently meet the BSO Standards.
17. Leaders articulate and model the school's published values clearly and effectively. These values are evident in school displays, newsletters, assemblies and classroom interactions. Pupils understand what they mean in practice as staff refer to them in conversations and feedback. Leaders demonstrate ambitious expectations for all pupils, which underpins their development planning and daily decision-making.
18. Leaders evaluate provision systematically. They use outcomes from quality assurance activities, emotional wellbeing surveys and academic progress data to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This analysis informs ongoing plans for developing the site, teaching and pastoral systems.
19. Leaders implement procedures that include a structured system for identifying and addressing potential risks to pupils' wellbeing. This system is predicated on leaders' belief that risk should never be considered unavoidable. Staff conduct daily site checks, and changes are made. Mid-week leadership briefings allow staff to review any patterns in minor incidents or near misses. For example, in response to a recorded increase in minor playground injuries, leaders acted quickly by adjusting supervision rotas and extending safety matting in the relevant area. Dedicated floor supervisors mingle with pupils between lessons, and safeguarding staff are readily accessible, ensuring the detection of harder-to-spot risks to emotional wellbeing. Leaders recognise the limitations of local child safeguarding procedures as they can access few external agencies. As mitigation, they have used their influence to help establish a local safeguarding forum for international schools to share knowledge and skills.
20. Leaders resolve complaints quickly and informally, wherever possible, in line with the policy. They take action and learn from outcomes. There is provision for a two-step formal process, including a panel of persons independent of the complaint, with one independent of the school. Leaders publish the number of formal complaints annually.
21. Policies recognise both UK and Romanian requirements. Leaders train and monitor the actions of staff, ensuring that expectations are clearly understood and consistently applied. Training videos are sometimes produced in Romanian to support ancillary staff who do not speak English. Information required by the BSO Standards, such as the complaints and health and safety policies, is provided or made available on the website or by request.
22. In the early years, leaders ensure that provision meets statutory requirements and targets key areas of learning. They use data to prioritise developments in aspects such as phonics and emotional regulation. Staff receive regular training to support children's wellbeing and maintain consistency across classes. Leaders ensure that practitioners understand how to adapt provision to meet children's needs.

23. Parents receive timely, useful information. Termly reports combine feedback on academic progress, learning attitudes and individual targets. Photos and accompanying commentary are uploaded to the early years learning journal app, providing instantaneous feedback to parents. Reports to parents integrate and reinforce the school's values.
24. Leaders promote equality through inclusive policies and daily routines that reflect the school's values. They implement strategies that improve access to both the curriculum and the site for pupils who have SEND.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 25. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

26. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that all areas of learning are covered, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Based on the UK national curriculum, the curriculum policy and plans outline clear principles for sequencing pupils' learning. Leaders introduced the IB curriculum to broaden choice. Long-term plans develop pupils' skills and knowledge progressively. For example, the mathematics curriculum moves from place value to calculation strategies and algebraic reasoning. Staff adapt planning for pupils of all ages and abilities, including meeting the needs of the youngest children and pupils above compulsory school age. Leaders make sure planning does not discriminate against the diverse range of pupils.
27. Lessons are well planned by teachers. They present subject matter clearly and design activities that allow pupils to practise and consolidate key knowledge. Across the school, including in the early years, teachers ask questions that encourage pupils to explain their thinking, in order to support their understanding.
28. Pupils respond confidently to the consistent routines and expectations established in lessons. As a result, they work hard, show curiosity and are not afraid to make mistakes. The atmosphere in the school is purposeful. Pupils revisit content regularly to secure knowledge and apply it in different contexts. Teachers support pupils to analyse their work, collaborate with peers and revise, developing independent learning skills. Consequently, teaching enables pupils to make good progress according to their ability.
29. Teachers assess pupils' learning accurately and use the information to adapt teaching. Subject leaders meet regularly with teachers to review progress and identify pupils who may require additional support or challenge. However, individual feedback to pupils in some lessons lacks consistency and after assessments it can be quite generic. As a result, pupils are sometimes unsure of their next steps in learning or how to improve their work.
30. In the early years classrooms, teaching is shaped by assessment and leaders' understanding of children's developmental needs. Staff adapt provision to support children's emerging communication and early literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders analyse assessment information to identify areas for improvement and provide targeted training. Teachers use this training to adjust teaching and promote consistency across classes, helping children make secure progress from varied starting points.
31. Pupils' outcomes at IGCSE and international A level are above the average in relation to other pupils sitting the same examinations. An overview of these results is published on the school's website. Teachers use a framework based on UK national norms to track individual progress and set ambitious, yet realistic, targets for all pupils. The majority of school leavers move on to higher education. Destinations include universities in the UK, Romania and the rest of Europe, and a small number in the United States.
32. Staff effectively identify pupils who may have SEND. They successfully implement personal plans that allow pupils to access the curriculum and participate fully in lessons. Teachers adapt explanations, questioning, tasks and resources. In the early years, staff provide focused support in small groups and adjust the learning environment to reduce distractions and improve access.

Leaders review the impact of personal plans regularly and amend provision where necessary. Consequently, pupils who have SEND make progress from their starting points commensurate with their peers.

33. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), and teachers throughout the school provide effective support. Assessments on entry to the school identify pupils' starting points and inform language support plans. Teachers use a range of strategies to promote language development in lessons, such as modelling key vocabulary and using visual aids. Trained EAL support staff work alongside classroom teachers to reinforce learning and provide targeted assistance. In the early years, immersive language experiences help children develop vocabulary and confidence in spoken English. Pupils at different stages of language acquisition are fully included in all aspects of learning and make good progress.
34. Staff professional development is effective and focused on identified quality assurance outcomes. Leaders regularly observe teaching and analyse results to understand staff training needs. Teachers participate in training sessions, practise strategies with support from colleagues and invite observation to consolidate new approaches. Regular appraisal supports this work. Leaders also use these monitoring and training opportunities to ensure that British values are not undermined.
35. Pupils take part in regular recreational activities. These include opportunities for music, creative arts, technology and performance. Leaders have integrated the majority of clubs and activities into the weekly timetable. Consequently, all pupils up to Year 11 participate weekly. Clubs such as detective science, Arabic for beginners, mindfulness club and ultimate frisbee support the academic, physical and personal development of pupils in Years 1 to 6. Older pupils access a range of clubs suitable for their age, including podcast club, mock trial and sewing.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

36. **All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

37. Teachers deliver moral education through curriculum choices, such as texts dealing with issues of injustice, poverty and human rights, which enable pupils to engage with wider ethical questions. Pupils analyse songs that highlight social injustice, such as false accusation. They study classical English literature, examining identity and class, and considering how individuals are shaped by society. Younger pupils reflect on their connection with nature in an outdoor woodland classroom. These experiences also support spiritual development by encouraging pupils to reflect on their beliefs and values, deepening their understanding of themselves and others.
38. Pupils learn to recognise and talk about their feelings, manage social interactions and seek help when needed. Topics covered include stress management and how to keep time online at an appropriate level. Many pupils can reflect on their personal growth, such as how they have learnt to overcome challenges or manage themselves during examination periods. In early years, staff consistently support behaviour through strategies that help children recognise and regulate their feelings. Leaders focus on developing consistent approaches across classes to ensure all children experience a nurturing environment that promotes self-awareness, confidence and readiness for learning.
39. Pastoral staff are alert to changes in behaviour or mood. Leaders use an online platform to track attendance, pastoral notes and concerns, allowing them a holistic view of pupils' emotional needs. Pupils who have additional emotional needs receive tailored support to build confidence and manage anxiety. Counsellors and pastoral staff work closely with families and external agencies when appropriate. However, in some year groups, pupils' feedback to teachers about emotional issues and their academic progress is not consistently elicited. As a result, some pupils are not able to share their views about their academic and emotional needs as readily.
40. Relationships and sex education (RSE) are taught in line with the school's policy, covering topics such as personal boundaries, mutual respect of difference and the importance of consent. Teachers support pupils in reflecting on these topics, enabling them to ask questions in a safe, age-appropriate context. As a result, pupils are respectful to their peers and others.
41. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and use positive reinforcement to encourage co-operation and self-discipline. Teachers resolve most incidents through quiet reminders or restorative conversations. Leaders monitor behaviour records and analyse trends, responding where necessary with adapted provision or targeted pastoral input. Leaders have recently reviewed the rewards and sanctions system, and this has led to reduced disruptive behaviour in the classroom.
42. Leaders implement an effective anti-bullying strategy. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and report any occurrences. Staff deal with incidents effectively, and emotional support is implemented to overcome any impact. Discussions in personal, social, citizenship, health and economic education (PSCHEE) and assemblies reinforce the importance of kindness and standing up for others. As a result, the incidence of bullying is low.
43. Health and physical development are supported through the curriculum and school routines. Pupils participate in regular physical education (PE) lessons and understand the benefits of exercise, sleep

and nutrition. Outdoor spaces and sports equipment promote physical activity at breaktimes. In the early years, children have free-flow access to outdoor areas where they develop gross-motor skills and spatial awareness through purposeful play.

44. Classrooms and specialist facilities such as the medical room are well maintained. Leaders ensure that furniture, lighting and ventilation are appropriate for the variation in ages and development of the pupils. Regular checks on the buildings, including those related to fire regulations and site security, are made, adhering to local requirements. Pupils and staff practise emergency evacuations. If risks are identified, leaders act swiftly to mitigate them.
45. Supervision is effective throughout the day. Staff are strategically placed at key points, including corridors, stairwells and playgrounds. First aid, when needed, is given promptly by appropriately trained staff.
46. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained, meeting the requirements of Romanian law. Teachers complete registers consistently, and leaders follow up on unexplained absences swiftly. Staff analyse data, look for trends, spot potential welfare issues and take effective action to increase attendance.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 47. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

48. Leaders ensure that pupils are effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern British and Romanian society. This includes the active promotion of British values such as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils explore democratic principles by comparing systems like those in ancient Greece and modern Britain. They learn about contemporary legal frameworks, including data protection and hate crime legislation. Pupils demonstrate awareness of fairness, the rule of law and individual rights. They take part in structured activities, such as class councils, that enable them to give voice to their ideas and learn to respect the principle of representation. Pupils explore the role of public institutions, including the police, and understand how these services support wider society.
49. Leaders promote inclusion of and respect for people who have protected characteristics through PSCH EE, assemblies and day-to-day interactions. Pupils learn to value difference and understand the importance of treating others with fairness and kindness. Staff respond promptly to incidents of social stigma and use them as opportunities for reflection and learning.
50. Pupils contribute meaningfully to the life of the school and the broader community. They take on leadership roles, for example, as librarians and digital leaders. Pupils in the sixth form support the leadership of recreational clubs and provide online tutoring to disadvantaged pupils. Volunteering and community service are integrated into the curriculum of older pupils. Recent projects have included supporting local non-governmental organisations, co-ordinating food collections and organising charity events. Pupils understand the importance of social responsibility and show empathy in their interactions. Staff ensure these opportunities are purposeful and include all who wish to participate, encouraging all pupils to engage in service.
51. Leaders ensure that respect for different faiths, cultures and backgrounds is rooted in the school's daily routine. Displays, library resources and assemblies reinforce messages of inclusion and equality. In literature and current affairs discussions, pupils engage with issues such as racism, sexism and inequality. In PSCH EE, pupils examine the impact of stereotyping and bias and learn strategies for respectful disagreement. They compare aspects of multi-culturalism and celebrate differences. Teachers ensure a balanced view of political views is presented.
52. In the early years, children explore similarities and differences through stories, songs and celebration of cultural festivals. Recent changes to the timetable made by staff recognise children's wide range of experiences before joining the school. These changes have successfully enabled children to develop their social skills. Teachers provide opportunities for children to make choices and take responsibility, increasing decision-making and turn-taking skills.
53. The well-established careers programme prepares pupils for education and employment and meets internationally recognised benchmarks. Pupils explore different career paths using online tools, which are followed up by individual discussions with staff. They develop an understanding of the skills required for various roles and receive practical guidance about applications and interviews. Visiting speakers and careers events expose pupils to multiple sectors, including medicine, business and engineering. Pupils take part in mock interviews, CV writing and personal statement workshops. They are made aware of alternative routes, such as apprenticeships and internships.

54. Leaders' plans embed economic education into the wider curriculum. Pupils learn about money management, banking, interest rates and consumer awareness. They explore how advertising influences spending and how budgeting can help meet financial goals. In practical sessions, pupils plan simple budgets, compare value for money and discuss ethical choices in spending. Activities such as the winter bazaar provide opportunities to apply these skills in real-world contexts, including pricing, marketing and profit calculation. Consequently, pupils have a well-developed economic understanding.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

55. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.

Safeguarding

56. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders' actions take account of Romanian legal requirements and are based on guidance for UK schools. The safeguarding policy is clear, updated at least annually to reflect current guidance and is available to staff and families. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is central to the school's work, and a culture of vigilance is evident across the site.
57. The school has established an effective safeguarding culture. The safeguarding leader is part of the senior leadership team and has the appropriate authority and training to undertake the role. The safeguarding team, which includes suitably trained deputies, ensures that all procedures are followed consistently.
58. All staff receive training on induction and regular updates throughout their employment. Safeguarding is understood to be everyone's responsibility. Staff are confident in recognising signs of harm, neglect and potential extremism, and report concerns promptly, however minor.
59. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The personal development curriculum includes regular teaching about personal safety. Lessons also address online behaviour, including digital risks and the influence of media. The internet in school is robustly filtered and monitored, and the safeguarding team acts on any potentially harmful reports. Pupils learn to understand online risks and to seek help when needed. They know who to speak to if they have a welfare concern and are confident that adults will take their concerns seriously. Systems such as 'worry boxes' in the primary school and online messaging to the safeguarding team for pupils in Years 7 to 13 provide alternative methods of sharing concerns.
60. Staff consistently implement daily routines and systems, such as visitor sign-in, supervision at key transition times, and secure perimeter access.
61. Leaders have trained staff effectively to spot and report potential concerns about adults in the school, however minor they may seem. They consistently take appropriate action in response.
62. The school maintains an up-to-date single central record of pre-employment safeguarding checks. All required checks, including those for staff recruited from overseas, are carried out before an adult starts working at the school. Leaders have systems to verify references and follow up on any queries.
63. The school collaborates with outside agencies where appropriate and keeps accurate, confidential records of concerns and actions. Leaders review safeguarding procedures regularly and adapt them in light of new guidance or school developments.

The extent to which the school meets the BSO Standards relating to safeguarding

- 64. All the relevant BSO Standards are met.**

School details

School	Mateas Foundation-Cambridge School of Bucharest
Department for Education number	000/6164
Address	Mateas Foundation-Cambridge School of Bucharest Strada Erou Iancu Nicolae Nr. 126 C Voluntari Ilfov 077190 Romania
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Proprietor	Mateas Foundation
Chair	Mr Joseph Khoury
Headteacher	Ms Rita Hayek Maalouf
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	1106
Date of previous BSO inspection	23 to 26 May 2022

Information about the school

65. The Cambridge School of Bucharest is a co-educational day school located in Bucharest. It is owned by the Mateas Foundation. The three members of the foundation, together with the school director (headteacher), act as the governing body.
66. The school consists of a nursery, junior school and a senior school which includes a sixth form.
67. There are 87 children in the early years comprising two Nursery and three Reception classes.
68. The school has identified 31 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
69. English is an additional language (EAL) for almost all pupils.
70. The school states its aims are to promote the wellbeing of its pupils and the strength of its community, and it measures its success by those outcomes. The school seeks to support, challenge and encourage pupils as they pursue their passions, develop their confidence, create their success and invest in their community.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 May 2025

71. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for three days.

72. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

73. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are British Schools Overseas inspected?

- The Department for Education accredits British international schools which meet the BSO Standards. Accreditation last for three years from the date of inspection.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect BSO schools. ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the school meets the Standards.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net