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**IAPS**

**Report of Diagnostic Review Inspection Visit**

**to**

**Braeburn School**

**by an**

**IAPS Review Team**

**from**

**12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

**IAPS DIAGNOSTIC REVIEW INSPECTION VISIT**  
**REPORT ON**  
**BRAEBURN SCHOOL**

Full name of school: Braeburn School

Address: Braeburn School, Gitanga Road, Lavington, PO Box 45112-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

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Head teacher: Mr Scott Webber

Chairman of the Board of Management: Mr W K Martin MBE

Age Range: 3-13 years

Gender: Mixed

Inspection Dates: 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October 2011

The review does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The reviewers check the general health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter; they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their review of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features. Inspectors do not check in detail the school's compliance with prevailing regulations, nor have they been asked to comment on governance.

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## **1. Background to the school**

- 1.1 Braeburn School was founded in 1979. It is a co-educational day school for boys and girls aged 3-13 years and is situated in its own attractive grounds near the centre of Nairobi. The school is part of The Braeburn Group of International Schools which is managed by a board of directors. The school has experienced prolific growth over the last decade and has greatly developed its facilities, some of which are shared with the senior school. These facilities include specialist teaching rooms, which incorporate a science laboratory, computer suite, pottery workshop, art room, design and technology room, music rooms and an audio-visual suite. The school is also proud of its well-stocked library and its two theatres and sports centre.
- 1.2 The Early Years Curriculum is based on the English 'Early Learning Goals'. These set out what is expected for most children by the end of the Foundation Stage. (3-5 years). Children begin to follow the English National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.
- 1.3 The school caters for 697 pupils between the ages of three and thirteen. Of these, 335 are girls and 362 are boys. In the pre-preparatory department (Reception to Year 2, ages 3-7) there are 190 pupils. In the preparatory section (Years 3-6, ages 7-13) there are 507 pupils. Braeburn School is a multi-cultural and diverse community; over 70 nationalities are represented and the school caters predominantly for the emerging Kenyan middle class and international expatriates. The school has a thriving learning support department, which caters for the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties and for a large number of children who have English as an additional language (EAL), or indeed no English at all. Fifty-three pupils receive support with their language development. Seventy two pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.4 Teachers have a mix of UK and professional qualifications and backgrounds. The school has an open admissions policy and is therefore non selective. Pupils transfer to the senior school without further examination. The ability profile of the school is judged to be above the English national average, but with a wide range of ability.
- 1.5 The school aims to bring out the best in its children through providing a supportive, caring, learner-centred environment in which everyone feels valued. It also aims to equip all pupils with life skills and the positive attitudes necessary for their future success whilst promoting behaviour that is ethical, responsible and shows respect for the rights of every individual.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. Pupils' standards and their attitudes to work and learning**

- 2.1 The pupils of Braeburn School achieve high standards of education and development; these are particularly significant in English and maths. They are able to apply mathematical concepts and ideas and use appropriate vocabulary to good effect when explaining mathematical problems. An example of this was observed in a lesson where pupils were working together to create graphs. Literacy skills build on the strong foundations in the Early Years and consistent progression is made in lessons. Pupils are able to write well for many purposes and read with accuracy and enthusiasm. However, the presentation of their work is not always consistent. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop well and they were seen to be able to download and edit information from the internet and research information for many aspects of their work. Overall, pupils acquire excellent levels of general knowledge about their subjects.
- 2.2 Pupils' attitudes to their work are exemplary and they are excited to learn. They settle quickly, responding well to their teachers. In interviews and informal conversations, pupils are articulate, open and eager to express their opinions. They are fully involved in school life and can explain the reasoning behind the decisions that they make in their roles, for instance as members of the school council, heads of school and prefects. They are able to think on their feet and put together persuasive arguments, giving reasons for their points of view. For example, in a history lesson pupils worked in groups to produce and present news documentaries on the French Revolution which incorporated their thoughts on the rights and wrongs of the historical event. In discussions with the school council about school lunches, pupils wisely commented that "their peers were not always realistic in their expectations for the lunches in the school as they had no understanding of the cost", so displaying further their ability to reason and put forward opinions and ideas eloquently.
- 2.3 Across the school pupils co-operate extremely well in pairs and small groups and are encouraged to make decisions and to problem solve, as was seen in a drama 'Dilemma' lesson, where pupils worked together to resolve a given problem. This collaboration adds much to the ethos of the school and to pupils' attitudes to their work and to each other; it does much to support their achievement.
- 2.4 Pupils' creativity is strong across the school and high levels of art work and creative writing and music are shared and appreciated by the school community. Extremely good standards are achieved in a wide range of physical activities and pupils are successful in competitive sport, such as in swimming, where they have competed both nationally and internationally. There are many opportunities available for pupils to represent their school in these activities.
- 2.5 In National Curriculum tests, pupils reach standards that are at least in line with and sometimes above those reached in good English maintained primary schools. The high levels of attainment begin in the Early Years and continue throughout the school. These levels of attainment result from a well-planned, broad and highly

effective curriculum, as well as good teaching, rigorous planning and effective monitoring of pupils' progress.

- 2.6 Pupils with SEN make good progress because of the support they receive from the staff and their peers, who as part of the school culture support one another. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress when they are given support. Pupils' attitudes towards work and commitment to learning ensure that progress is sustained

### **3. The curriculum**

- 3.1 The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' academic achievement and personal development. It supports pupils at all stages of the school and meets most of their varying needs and abilities.
- 3.2 The school is proactive in ensuring that the curriculum keeps pace with the changing needs of the pupils. Curriculum planning is based on the English National Curriculum and is often adapted to the local area; for example it includes visits by local artists, and topics include the history of Nairobi and Kenyan tribes, regional art and the religions of Kenya and their origins. Although lessons are only thirty minutes long, care has been taken to ensure that many subjects are allocated double lessons, particularly English and maths.
- 3.3 The curriculum is closely monitored by an excellent management structure. This enables planning to be reviewed and amended in accordance with the ever changing pupil body. From Year 2, the curriculum benefits from setting in numeracy and literacy and from Year 3 in French. This allows for pupils at all levels to be fully supported and access appropriate learning.
- 3.4 From the Early Years up to Year 5, there are many cross-curricular links and teaching is often based around topics. From Year 6, pupils are subject taught by specialist teachers. The curriculum is enriched by subject specific days such as International Day in which parents are actively involved. Trips and visits are many and varied and are often planned to introduce pupils to a wealth of experiences to celebrate local culture, such as a visit to a bead workshop and an overnight trip to the William Holden centre, to name but a small sample.
- 3.5 SEN pupils are well supported to enable them to fully access the curriculum and individual education plans set achievable targets which all staff take into consideration when planning lessons. The provision for pupils having EAL is in its early stages of development and the school recognises the need to provide strategies for these pupils to fully access the curriculum. The curricular provision for more able pupils is still developing and the school is rightly aware of the need to enhance this further.

#### **4. Extra-curricular activities**

- 4.1 Children of all ages are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities and opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. The provision is outstanding and the range is exceptional. It is extremely well organised and pertinent to the needs of the pupils. It offers an extensive range of lunch time and after school clubs which are enjoyed and valued by the majority of pupils. The excellent range of activities incorporates areas such as tae-kwondo and horse riding. The programme is innovative in the way it seeks feedback from the school council; they proposed scouts, Spanish, cookery and first aid, all of which the school respected and implemented. Sporting and musical opportunities are many for pupils and play a significant part in after school activities.
- 4.2 Monitoring of clubs is rigorous and ensures provision is of the highest standard. It also ensures that all pupils benefit from appropriate choice opportunities. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits, from the Early Years upwards, and these visits complement the curriculum. They include a Year 1 visit to the arboretum for a science investigation and a Year 4 visit to a tea plantation as part of their literacy work. In addition, there are a wealth of residential trips, for example to Malewa and Laikipia.

#### **5. Teaching and assessment**

- 5.1 Consistently good and often excellent teaching enables pupils to progress very well within the supportive aims of the school. The best lessons promote active participation and the expectation that pupils think for themselves and work together collaboratively and independently. Group work is a significant feature in the teaching methods employed. Pupils are regularly encouraged to share their ideas, consider the opinions of others and respect the efforts of their peers. On these occasions pupils make excellent progress. This was seen in a science lesson where pupils worked in small groups to carry out a fair test. However, in the less successful lessons, opportunities are missed to allow pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 5.2 Teachers' rapport with pupils is excellent; and this, combined with their strong subject knowledge and classroom management, are significant factors in the progress pupils make. Pupils are given many opportunities to discuss and review their work. This was evident during a map making activity when pupils fed back to the class. In less successful lessons the lack of pace impacts on pupils' enthusiasm and interest. These lessons often rely heavily on worksheets and a lack of direction and a clear explanation of the lesson objectives.
- 5.3 Planning is thorough and allows for flexibility and input from pupils, whilst still adhering to the curriculum. The setting that takes place in English, mathematics and French enables teaching to be differentiated to better meet the needs of all pupils.

However, in other subjects where setting is not a feature, teaching does not always take into consideration the wide range of abilities of pupils. This results in inconsistent progression. The provision for ICT has been a focus for the school and the installation of interactive whiteboards has greatly enhanced the curriculum and allowed access to a wide range of educational resources. This has enriched the learning experience.

- 5.4 There is a good school policy for marking although it is not always adhered to. The best marking gives targets and clear direction to pupils for self improvement. Often books are left unmarked and the presentation of work is often less than satisfactory. Rigorous assessment takes place throughout the school, including standardised tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 as well as end of year exams for each year group. Many informal assessments are undertaken but these are not always consistent or co-ordinated. The director of studies moderates many of the tests and parents receive termly feedback on their child's progress. The school has not yet decided on an assessment process that identifies which of the assessments used at present can form part of a data base that tracks pupils' progress across the school. The school is aware of this and the need to develop systems that can be accessed and used by teachers to inform planning.

## **6. Pastoral care, welfare, health and safety**

- 6.1 The school's arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are excellent and fulfil the school's aim to provide a supportive caring environment where everyone feels valued. Pastoral care is excellent. Given the large site, staff are vigilant and responsive to any incidents or concerns. Staff know the pupils extremely well and systems are in place ensure that no pupil is bereft of support or feels excluded.
- 6.2 The school responded to a small number of reported issues of unkind behaviour by holding a 'Respect Day' where some of the activities focussed on communication styles and the difference between being assertive and rude. The school council, which empowers the pupils and gives them a voice and a confidence that they are listened to, made some suggestions following this event. They proposed the introduction of 'worry boxes', a new peer buddy system and the construction of the quiet area. All these have now been successfully implemented and are working well.
- 6.3 Excellent relationships exist across the school and form the foundation of both its ethos and its quality of care. Class teachers offer significant support and guidance for pupils in their care and good records are kept to ensure that any concerns are shared and dealt with across the school. The pupils feel well cared for and they are happy to talk to any adult if they have a problem. They support the school rules and are articulate in their celebration of the fairness of them. New pupils say that "when you are new, people are friendly and help you settle in".
- 6.4 The Friends of Braeburn School and the Parents' Forum give parents opportunities to express any concerns or worries they may have. A parent expressed their view in a



recent questionnaire that, “the friendly, multi-cultural, respectful and heartfelt values and attitudes permeate the school. Braeburn is just the kind of launch pad into secondary I imagined for our sons.”

- 6.5 The school has in place highly effective policies to ensure pupils’ welfare. Their safety on the site is carefully monitored and guards ensure that the entry to the site is secure. A formal health and safety committee meet regularly to review safety issues and immediate action is taken when needed. Regular risk assessments are undertaken for all areas of the school and reviewed regularly.
- 6.6 The school also has a detailed anti bullying policy which is known to staff and pupils. Sanctions are rarely needed but the pupils know the clearly defined steps that precede them. No serious sanctions have been invoked recently. The school has a strong culture of praise and rewards good behaviour and effort through a variety of methods, such as ‘Student of the Week’, ‘Golden Child’ and ‘Star of the Week’.
- 6.7 The child protection policy contains all the necessary elements and staff undertake regular training in this area. The staffing recruitment process is rigorous and procedures for checking all concerned are also robust and accurate. Fire prevention measures are in order and a fire risk assessment is undertaken regularly. Fire drills are held every term and all alarms are tested appropriately. The pupils’ dining experience is a less successful aspect of school life. Pupils and parents expressed their concerns about the food and facilities at lunchtimes. The review team endorsed this view.

## **7. The quality of leadership and management**

- 7.1 Leadership is excellent and management strong, fully supporting the aims of the school. Parents are appreciative of the head teacher and his connectivity with the pupils. The ethos and direction is clearly set from the head teacher and the school’s leadership team and all staff work hard to maintain these principles in the life of the school. The management structure has developed as the school has grown and each level of management is now firmly established. The senior management team is highly effective under the guidance of the head teacher and has been a catalyst in improving quality, whilst keeping the fulfilment of the school’s aims at the centre of developments.
- 7.2 The school development plan has resulted from wide staff discussion and consultation and all staff are committed to the implementation of the plan. The work of the school improvement group has been a significant element in the identification of areas needing to be addressed. This communication and consultation are a significant strength and enable all staff to feel valued and included.
- 7.3 The school is mindful of the need to recruit high quality staff. A rigorous system of induction is in place. It recognises that all new staff need to embrace the school’s culture and the important roles they play within it. The process of professional

development and appraisal has contributed much to this strength. The recent addition to the senior management team is responsible for staff development, ensuring that the school keeps abreast of innovation and progression. Classroom support and other non-teaching staff strongly contribute to pupils' learning and welfare. Pupils, including those with SEN, benefit from these exceptional staffing levels which ensure that, where possible, outstanding support is given.

- 7.4 Good quality policies and procedures have been produced for all aspects of school life and in the vast majority of cases these have been implemented effectively by all staff. However, this is not always the case, the most noticeable exceptions being the policy relating to the marking and presentation of pupils' work.

## **8. Overall conclusions and recommendations**

- 8.1 Braeburn offers a high quality of education with some excellent features. Overall, pupils make consistently good progress in their learning; their achievements are a result of good and often excellent teaching and the wide range of educational experiences offered. Pupils of all ages use their skills in a range of contexts, are independent thinkers and are highly creative. Their success in curricular and extra-curricular activities is promoted further by their positive attitudes and excellent relations with each other. This ensures that the school's objective to maximise the academic achievement, physical and creative potential of every pupil, is fulfilled. However, on occasions where the quality of teaching is less successful, lessons lack pace, are less focused and opportunities for pupils to think for themselves are limited. Consequently in these lessons pupils make less progress.
- 8.2 Pupils' progress is closely monitored through teachers' knowledge of individual pupils and through regular assessment. However, a tracking system to monitor pupils' progression across the school has not yet been agreed and initiated. Curriculum planning is strong and caters for the many interests and needs of the pupils. Extra-curricular activities significantly enhance the educational experience of the pupils and build on the school's aims.
- 8.3 Pastoral care is excellent and pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured. They are courteous to visitors and treat their peers and staff with great respect. Their care for one another is embedded in all aspects of school life. Kindness and friendship are strongly encouraged throughout the school and are on the lips of all the pupils. Pupils are shown how to communicate their feelings to each other and to adults and how to resolve problems. Their awareness of others through the charitable work they undertake, demonstrates their respect for those less fortunate than themselves.
- 8.4 Leadership and management are a considerable strength of the school. Careful consultation and strong staff appointments have ensured that the staff are wholeheartedly committed to the ethos of the school, are skilled practitioners and are excellent role models for pupils. Policies are in place for all aspects of school life and they are of good quality, thorough and well carried out. However, the marking

policy is not adhered to consistently by all staff. The school development plan is detailed and priorities have been identified for the future. Parents are happy with their children's education. They feel that they have a voice within the school and greatly value the 'open door' policy and approach. Discussions with parents confirmed their appreciation of the school and the education it provides for their children.

## **Recommendations**

1. Develop a data based monitoring system for tracking pupils' progress across the school and enable all staff to access the information.
2. Review the provision for pupils having English as an additional language (EAL) to ensure they can access all aspects of the curriculum.
3. Ensure that the marking policy is consistently adhered to by all staff.

## **9. Evidence Summary**

- 9.1 The visit was carried out from the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October 2011. In advance of the visit many school documents were scrutinised and reviewed. Other documentation was reviewed during the course of the visit. In addition samples of pupils work from all year groups were thoroughly scrutinised. Formal discussions were held with all levels of management and a representative group of parents. Informal discussions were carried out with staff, pupils and others.

### **Review Team**

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