

The International Primary Curriculum

Accreditation Visit to Panaga School

April 2012

Introduction

Each school using the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) is able to apply for IPC Accreditation. It does this by completing an IPC self-review and then submitting it for validation. To achieve IPC Accreditation, a school must meet nine key criteria at 'Developing' or 'Mastering' level.

Panaga School has applied for accreditation. The validation of its self-review culminated in a visit to the school from 23rd – 26th April 2012. The visit was conducted by Steven Mark (Team Leader), Sarah Brown, Graeme Scott and Katherine Tucker.

Context

Panaga School is a long established IPC member school providing primary education predominantly for families employed by Brunei Shell Company. It is the largest of the Shell schools worldwide, comprising over 30 classes. It is spread over two sites with Milepost 2 and Milepost 3 based at the Teraja Campus and Milepost 1 and some early years classes at the Rampayoh Campus. Beside the Rampayoh Campus is the Mendaram Campus for Nursery aged children.

The school has a Dutch Stream and an International Stream. It serves a range of nationalities, which means that many children do not have English or Dutch as a first language. The teachers in the school are mainly British or Dutch and are helped by learning support assistants who are local Bruneians.

In respect of IPC within the school, the 2010 independent learning-focused review, commissioned on behalf of Shell Educational Services Department, noted that "the IPC has been in the school for approximately 10 years [and] has been relaunched in the school over the last 18 months."

The Accreditation Visit Activities

To check and confirm the school's judgements in the school's self-review the accreditation team:

- Studied the school's judgements set out in its IPC self-review
- Toured the school
- Conducted over 80 classroom visits
- Observed and talked to the children in and around the school
- Studied a wide range of documents and policies

- Talked to the Principal, Head of International Stream and Head of Dutch Stream
- Talked to the IPC Leader for Learning
- Talked to the teachers
- Held meetings with two groups of parents and held further informal discussions with parents during the course of each day
- Talked to 12 groups of children – approximately 60 children in total
- Met as the accreditation team to discuss and agree judgements against each rubric

In addition, the team leader was interrogated by two senior Fieldwork colleagues to justify and explain the evidence base that led to each judgement.

Findings

Criterion 1: A clear focus on children's learning

The school judges its performance against this criterion as 'Mastering'.

From the outset of the visit, it became clear that the school demonstrates a real commitment to being a learning-focused school. As the Chair of Governors said '*it's our way of being*'. Our meetings with children, parents and staff demonstrated that 'learning' is uppermost in the minds of everyone in the school.

All teachers make clear references in their planning to the learning intentions and make sure that children are aware of these and the accompanying success criteria at the beginning of each lesson. In all lessons observed, teachers took time to discuss and explore the learning intention and success criteria with the children and, further, they also ensured that the children were constantly reminded about the learning intention throughout the lessons. The children have many opportunities to reflect on their own learning and the learning of their peers.

The records of the children's learning are well maintained and regularly updated.

Teachers use regular (and very well-received) communications to parents (such as weekly emails and the parent letter sent at the start of each unit of work) to let them know what their children are learning through their IPC units and how they can support their learning at home. The school's 'open-door policy' also enables parents to have easy access to teachers so as to be able to discuss their child's learning. The parents are given opportunities to engage with their children's learning both at home and in school and are often called upon to help in classrooms where appropriate (for example, during some of the Entry Point and Exit Point activities or by providing expert input during some of the IPC research tasks).

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- In every class learning intentions and success criteria were consistently shared and discussed with the children.
- The parents' newsletters are very informative and detailed. They are an excellent example of what a learning-focused newsletter should look like.
- The learning-focused displays showed not only what the children had been and were learning in IPC but were often also used to challenge, celebrate and support children's learning.
- When working with groups of children, the learning support assistants would consistently bring the children's attention back to "*what are we learning?*"
- The new Early Years blog/website, where teachers upload examples of what the children have been learning so that parents can use these as prompt at home for children to talk about their learning, is another good example of the school's determination to be as learning-focused as possible.

- Parents are clearly very happy with levels of engagement and communication with school. During the parents' meetings, when we asked, *"is there anything else the school could do to keep you informed about your child's learning in IPC?"* the answer was no.

The accreditation team concurs with the school's judgement of 'Mastering' for Criterion 1.

Criterion 2: Shared outcomes about the kinds of children we are helping to develop.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as ‘Mastering’.

In its vision statement, ‘*Children of Panaga School*’, the school explicitly sets out the sort of people it would like the children to become. Based on the IPC personal goals, this is a clear and highly visible statement that has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. These goals are very helpfully articulated in short, ‘child-friendly’ statements and are on display throughout the school in various forms. All the people that the team spoke to about the ‘*Children of Panaga School*’ vision not only knew about it but also supported its intentions. New children, teachers and parents are quickly introduced to this vision.

It was clear that not only has the school clearly articulated the outcomes about the kinds of children they are trying to develop, but are also going much further by ensuring the outcomes are reflected, discussed and developed in all aspects of the school life. This ranges from regular discussions in classrooms to the personal goals being the focus for school assemblies and the school’s ‘challenge days’.

Beyond the impact in the school, parents regularly mentioned the impact the goals were having at home where children frequently discussed which personal goals they were working on, what they meant and how they could get better at them. The parents we spoke to really valued this and recognised that it was helping to develop their children in a wider sense than academic learning.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- The personal goals are evident in all teachers’ planning and are constantly referred to in every lesson.
- The personal goals have been translated into all the children’s mother tongues and are visible in classrooms.
- There were lots of instances of children having the opportunity to reflect on their personal learning. For example, many classes used the goals as the basis for individual target setting for children’s personal development.
- The personal goals were frequently being discussed and used by children and teachers outside lessons, which suggests in many respects that they have become the ‘*language of the school*’.

The accreditation team concurs with the school’s judgement of ‘Mastering’ for Criterion 2.

Criterion 3: Implementation of classroom practices that help children develop as we would like.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as ‘Mastering’.

The school, working with all teachers over an extended period of time, has developed a very clear and explicit Teaching for Learning Policy. This policy sets out the types of learning-focused classroom practices that teachers should employ in classrooms to ensure that children are learning successfully, appropriately and sufficiently and where learning is engaging and the learning environment stimulating.

These practices were being rigorously used in every classroom. This was further confirmed during our meetings with children. The children we met from across the school were able to clearly describe the types of approaches that teachers use in the classrooms, for example having the opportunity to learn with others, receiving regular feedback on their learning and having the opportunity to reflect on that feedback so as to improve their learning.

The parents and the Board also referred to the links between classroom practice and the kinds of children the school is helping to develop and all fully support them.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- There is a consistent approach to classroom practices across all subjects and not just in IPC learning.
- The classroom practices are not only employed by class teachers but are also used extensively and very effectively by all specialist teachers.
- Within the Early Years settings, a wide range of excellent age-appropriate practices was observed.
- As noted in Criterion 2, a range of strategies are being used to support children’s personal development and learning: for example through the regular ‘challenge days’, the personal goal target setting and the student council.
- To support the school’s strong emphasis on personal development, a member of staff has been given the role of Leader for Learning in Child Development.

The accreditation team concurs with the school’s judgement of ‘Mastering’ for Criterion 3.

Criterion 4: International Mindedness.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as 'Mastering'.

The school's commitment to developing international mindedness is clearly stated in its vision and is demonstrated in its daily practice. All teachers have a commitment to international mindedness and this is evident in what the children said. They described how connections were made to both home and host countries. The school's definition of international mindedness, which places a strong emphasis on intercultural awareness and learning, was articulated well by the children, parents and the Board. From looking at a range of evidence from the past three years, it is clear that international mindedness is also a consistent and central part of any review of learning and teaching.

Many approaches are in place to ensure that international mindedness has a key place in the life of the school, for example the strong integration between the Dutch Stream and the International Stream. New pupils, teachers and parents, through the school's induction processes, are quickly made aware of the school's drive for international mindedness. The celebration of international mindedness is evident in much of what was seen and heard. The school has produced a Children's Personal Development policy that provides guidance on identifying and resolving conflicts.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- International as a key element in IPC was evident in all teachers' planning.
- Beyond the International tasks in the units of work, teachers would also look for additional international links in other subjects wherever possible.
- Children gave the same weight to international learning as a key element of the units of work as they did with, for example, art or geography.
- A range of classroom displays showed children's own definitions of international mindedness.
- The Early Years classrooms provided lots of opportunities for children to learn about 'self' and then use these to help them to begin making connections to 'others'.
- Community service is becoming an important part of the work of the school: for example through the links being made to work with and help some of the local schools.
- The school is making extensive efforts to link IPC learning to the locality and to life in Brunei
- The school's recent International Day celebrations allowed the children to critically reflect on what international learning they got from the day.

The accreditation team concurs with the school's judgement of 'Mastering' for Criterion 4.

Criterion 5: An appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and reflection leading to understanding.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as 'Mastering'.

The IPC subject, international and personal learning goals form the basis for all children's learning within the IPC. The school is explicit about the knowledge skills and understanding that children will gain from their activities in the IPC units of work. Teachers' planning clearly shows that they are not only aware of the differences between knowledge, skills and understanding, but actively use these differences to plan for effective learning. This is probably most clearly evidenced by the use of integrated lessons between the Dutch and International Streams when it is skills-focused learning and separate lessons when it is knowledge-focused.

Parents receive detailed information from all teachers regarding the types of learning the children will experience in each unit of work and receive weekly updates on this via email.

Classroom activities and tasks are well planned to support the development of knowledge, skills and understanding and the planning takes into consideration children's age and previous learning experiences. It was clear from our meetings with children and from classroom observations, that, throughout the school, the children reflect on their learning in relation to the theme they are studying.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- The Knowledge Harvest (both for the theme as a whole and as a strategy for individual subject tasks) is well used in all classes and children were able to describe how this helps the teacher to know what the children already know about a topic.
- The IPC Assessment for Learning programme is used extensively throughout the school to provide a basis for children's skills development.
- Children spoke confidently about how skills progress from beginning to developing to mastering.
- Progression ladders for skills development are used in science
- Some children described how 'if you put knowledge and skills together, it creates an understanding'
- Displays clearly show the knowledge, skills and understanding that the children have learned and are in the process of learning.

The accreditation team concurs with the school's judgement of 'Mastering' for Criterion 5.

Criterion 6: Appropriately rigorous children's learning and teachers' high expectations of it.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as 'Mastering'.

We saw a range of lessons which demonstrated that teachers have high expectations of children's learning. The learning was challenging and teachers ensured that children were sufficiently stretched. At the same time the learning was often fun and engaging. The combination of challenge and engagement resulted in a deeper learning experience for the children. Children's responses to their learning were clearly as rigorous as possible. Observations also showed that children are supported by teachers using a range of appropriate strategies to ensure rigour.

In all lessons, and further evidenced during our meetings with the children, it is clear that engagement in IPC learning is extremely high. Parents too, described how children would come home from school, 'buzzing' about the themes they were learning.

In all classes, children used a wide range of primary and secondary sources to support the research tasks (this includes visiting speakers, trips into the community, use of learning support assistants to give a Bruneian perspective as well as books and internet). During our meetings with children, they described how they are able to use a range of strategies and approaches for recording their learning. Using ICT was a clear preference for many children when the appropriate ICT resources were available.

Learning intentions were shared, discussed and explored in all lessons observed, with time devoted at the end of the lesson where the children would reflect on these intentions in relation to their learning.

Each child has an IPC Book which charts the child's learning for each unit. These books are clearly well looked after and show that children take a great deal of pride in their IPC learning.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- Teachers and learning support assistants generated much enthusiasm and excitement for the topics and themes being studied.
- The Early Years classrooms were clearly meeting children's needs through providing appropriate challenge and progression.
- The team observed clear links being made to language arts skills in all classes.
- Most children's presentation of learning was immaculate.
- Children were able to choose different recording methods they felt most appropriate to the task.
- A number of classes were using software to connect and collaborate with others resulting in high levels of engagement.

The accreditation team concurs with the school's judgement of 'Mastering' for Criterion 6.

Criterion 7: Implementation of the brain-friendly elements of the IPC.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as ‘Mastering’.

We were struck by the number of children who were able to describe in detail their learning and preferred modalities for learning. In addition, even some of the youngest children were talking about learning in terms of neurons connecting. The school’s use of the Learning to Learn Units (including one for Milepost 1 that they developed internally) is obviously having an impact.

Teachers, too, showed an understanding of how to create effective learning based on knowledge about children’s brains.

The school has placed a strong focus on brain-friendly learning this year with workshops and training sessions for teachers and the impact of this is clearly shown in how the IPC Units of Work are used. All five brain-friendly elements of the units of work are deeply implemented. Of particular note, is the teachers’ use of the Knowledge Harvest. Many children we spoke to described how they regularly revisit their Knowledge Harvest and review it as new connections are made

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- Teachers described the training they had on brain-friendly learning and how that has impacted on their teaching and the learning of the children.
- Teachers commitment to brain-friendly learning is further shown with many stating that they want to continue their training in this field so as to deepen their learning about the brain.
- Children are aware of their multiple intelligences and learning styles and use these to reflect on their own learning and that of others.
- Displays of IPC Units of work encourage children to see the ‘journey’ of the theme from Entry Point to Exit Point.

The accreditation team concurs with the school’s judgement of ‘Mastering’ for Criterion 7.

Criterion 8: Implementation of themes through integrated yet separate subjects.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as ‘Mastering’.

All children the team spoke to showed an excellent awareness of subject learning within an overall structure of an IPC theme. It was clear that the children knew they were not just learning about ‘Chocolate’ (or whichever theme they were studying) but instead were learning about ‘Chocolate’ through different and explicit subjects. Parents, too, did not just talk about IPC in terms of themes but also the individual subjects within the theme.

Specialist teachers are aware of all IPC units and whenever appropriate link their work with the children to the theme that the children are studying.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- During discussions with Milepost 3 children, the children articulated how meaningful links can be made through different subjects and how as a whole they help to give a sense of the Big Picture.
- Displays used in the school help children to see the bigger picture of the unit and the contribution of individual subjects – for example the Jigsaw used in MP1

The accreditation team concurs with the school’s judgement of ‘Mastering’ for Criterion 8.

Criterion 9: Assessment and evaluation that supports and informs learning rather than dictates it.

The school judges its performance against this criterion as ‘Mastering’.

All teachers are passionate about what the children learn and how they can help to improve the children’s learning. The Teaching for Learning Policy and the Feedback and Marking Policy set out very effective Assessment for Learning strategies and approaches that teachers are expected to use in classroom (for example, providing feedback and marking which is related to the explicit learning target and which encourages the child to strive to improve). Teachers in all classes were using these Assessment for Learning strategies extensively and very effectively in all lessons.

Due to the strong communication systems in the school, (for example, the regular parent workshops and learning-focused newsletters) stakeholders were able to articulate the different types of assessment procedures in use in the school.

In addition, the school has implemented the IPC Assessment for Learning Programme and teachers use this to assess children’s skills progress in IPC, to help children identify and reflect upon the ‘next steps’ in their learning and to inform future planning. The children are familiar with and confident using the children’s assessment rubrics. Peer-assessment and self-assessment techniques are regular parts of the drive for improved learning.

The following examples are from our observations and discussions:

- Teachers’ planning showed adjustments being made to future learning in response to assessments.
- The assessment newsletter and workshops about assessment help all parents to become fully informed about the assessment approaches the school uses.
- Parents all like the termly reports, with one parent saying they are ‘crystal clear’.
- In some classes the team found success criteria being adapted to make it more appropriate to the learning intention.
- The team found extensive evidence that children are continually self-assessing and peer-assessing.
- The school uses assessment data to plan and monitor individual, class and whole-school targets.

The accreditation team concurs with the school’s judgement of ‘Mastering’ for Criterion 9.

Conclusion and Award

The accreditation team agrees with all of the school's self-review judgements. Panaga School has clearly demonstrated that it is working at mastering level in all nine areas of the IPC accreditation rubric.

The school is therefore awarded accreditation at Mastering level.

Additional Suggestions

Whilst recognising that the school has achieved Mastering in all of the 9 criteria, the below suggestions offered from the team may help to extend and deepen the excellent work that is going on in the school.

- In Criterion 1, '*A Clear Focus on Children's Learning*', the school's commitment to learning is evident in everything we saw. To help to deepen this further, the school may wish to consider its definition of learning and how widely it is shared and understood by all stakeholders. The school's definition of International Mindedness which has been widely shared and was clearly articulated by a range of stakeholders may serve as a model for this.
- In Criterion 6, '*Appropriately rigorous children's learning, and teachers' high expectations of it*', children clearly use a wide range of primary and secondary resources. Using ICT as tool for researching and recording was a preference for many children we spoke to and therefore the school may wish to reflect on how it can further expand ICT provision.
- In Criterion 7, '*Implementation of brain-friendly elements of the IPC*', the recent workshops and training sessions held for staff on brain-friendly learning appear to have sparked much interest from teachers in this field. It may be worth considering how this can be deepened and extended as teachers were clearly keen to continue their learning about the brain.

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