



Peer Review with The British School of Amsterdam



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PEER REVIEW – SETTING THE SCENE.....	5
TAKING ACTION – WHAT TO FOCUS ON?.....	6
WHAT HAS THE IMPACT BEEN?.....	8
WITH HINDSIGHT	10



INTRODUCTION

Karen Ardley Associates (KAA) have been working with The British School of Amsterdam (BSA) to develop a process that engages and supports leaders in school to explore the '*intent, implementation and impact*' cycle of evaluation.

The British School of Amsterdam is a highly successful 3 – 18 British international school located in the old south area of central Amsterdam. The

school has grown significantly over the last few years, culminating in moving to a new premises in 2021.

The school, having previously been in three locations (EYFS, Juniors and Seniors) and is now under one roof.

The majority of teaching staff have been at the school for 5 years or more and so provide a wealth of historical knowledge of the school and the communities it serves.

The school is about to undertake a compliance inspection with ISI to maintain its BSO / COBIS accreditation.

BSA Principal, Paul Morgan identified the Peer Review process with KAA as an approach to support his senior leaders to evaluate in a collaborative and supportive way, to engage key staff in the process rather than a 'done to model'.

Paul explains “ *as a school we know we have considerable strengths, and we know there is always more that can be done to ensure our students get the best possible experience. We wanted staff to reflect and evaluate both our strengths and the areas we know we need to develop and make even stronger – a peer review process gave us all of this with the added benefit of a fresh pair of eyes*”



Commented [A1]: I've asked Lisa our Marketing Manager to find a photograph of staff meeting. Hopefully we can get something to you by Wednesday.

PEER REVIEW – SETTING THE SCENE

The KAA team are renowned for ensuring approaches are evidence based and grounded in research evidence. Our experience with inspection in England and international accreditation has given us keen insight into effective evaluation. Along with the work of the National College on peer evaluation and the research of Professor John MacBeath, our approach is underpinned by evidence of effective practice.

As Karen Ardley says *“ The KAA team believe that effective evaluation is a habit, not an event, and is best served by involving leaders in the evaluative process. The Peer Review Project with BSA enables internal and external reviewers to explore evidence together, to identify the right questions to ask and to collect and connect evidence together. ”*

TAKING ACTION – WHAT TO FOCUS ON?

BSA chose to focus on English and Mathematics in the Junior and Senior sections, Communication & Language in EYFS and Year 1, and Pastoral Care across the whole school.

This choice emphasised the focus on strengths within the school and setting themselves a challenge to look at a whole school aspect. This was an ideal opportunity to look at consistency and cohesion across the whole school, and to continue to build positive relationships across the phases.

TAKING ACTION – WHO TO INVOLVE?

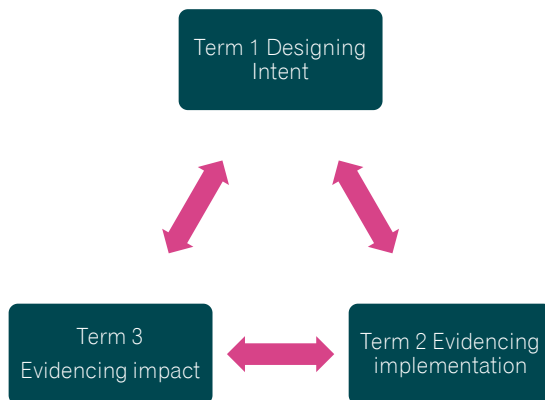
Internal Peer Review Teams were organised (usually involving the curriculum / department leader) and linked to an external peer reviewer from outstanding schools in the North of England and in Cairo. The BSA pastoral team were drawn from each of the sections of the school.

TAKING ACTION – THE PROCESS

A series of conversations were held via the '*magic of Zoom*' – each team negotiated the best time / dates and length of meetings to suit busy schedules. The Pastoral Team chose to meet every 3 weeks for around 40 minutes, whilst the Primary English teams met less frequently but for longer. In all cases, the internal teams carried out evaluative tasks outside of the meetings with the external peer reviewer.

The agenda for the virtual meetings were centred on:

- ➡ Building collaborative relationships
- ➡ The vision or intent for the subject / aspect – asking about the agreed view of excellence
- ➡ Identifying focused questions or enquires that the internal team identified as strengths or areas they want to explore further
- ➡ Collaboratively collecting evidence of implementation and impact over time and during a 2-day visit
- ➡ Evaluating the evidence of impact to inform priorities and next steps



The internal and external Peer Review teams then worked collaboratively to connect and summarise the evidence over time into key messages. This is then used to inform where quick wins can be made and strategic priorities for longer term development.

WHAT HAS THE IMPACT BEEN?

The school Senior Leadership, as well as those involved directly as Peer Reviewers have all described a range of positive impacts – from challenging assumptions to evidencing strengths in the school; from developing confidence to focus monitoring activities to developing evaluative questions. The ‘fresh pair of eyes’ and expertise of the external peer reviewers has provided time and space for reflection that often gets lost in busy schools.

“ Impact for the school has been clear in terms of the confidence of leaders, the strength of the evidence we have and how we connect the various elements. ”

Paul Morgan, Principal BSA.

BSA is involved in a cycle of accreditation with ISI and found this a purposeful and collaborative way to prepare. Vice Principal Stuart May explains

“ This process has helped us to prepare ourselves for re-accreditation – not by rehearsing the inspection process but by strengthening our approach to evaluation of our practice - we know our school well and now have even more evidence to back this up ”

Specific teams within BSA have highlighted the impact of the Peer review Process.

For the pastoral team it was a purposeful opportunity to work and to develop understanding of how pastoral care develops from EYFS to post 16.

Senior School Deputy Head (Pastoral) Gareth Evans said;

“ The opportunity to work with a colleague that can look at our provision with support and an open mind has given us an alternative way at looking at the next phase of development ”

In mathematics the focus on evaluation gave an opportunity to celebrate the great work already in place as well as developing ideas for the future.

In English, it was agreed to focus on reading, and provided an opportunity to refine the monitoring evidence to really see what was working well in the various year groups.

The process also identified some 'quick wins'. As one of the teachers involved wrote:

“ Thank you for visiting and bringing with you your impressive professional experience and advice. I have already put some of the ideas we discussed into practice! It has certainly been the catalyst for a longer journey of departmental development. ”

Because Peer Review is a collaborative process, there has been a clear impact on the external Peer Reviewers as well. Working with other schools is always an opportunity to learn.

“ Although the review is aimed at supporting BSA with evaluating their practice I found I was evaluating my own as well. As I was posing questions, I considered the evidence I had within my own school and where I needed to progress from there. ”

WITH HINDSIGHT ...

KAA 's Jayne Bennion reflects that the nature of the project means that each school involved will be different and adjustments to each context will always be made to ensure the best possible impact for the schools involved.

Key points were made by BSA colleagues:

- ➡ It was challenging at first – really learning to trust the external person was important. Next time, we will give a guided tour of our schools via Zoom.
- ➡ It's not always easy to find regular time slots to meet with an already busy working life. Short regular meetings worked well for most teams as did working in a small team, where we supported each other.
- ➡ Having a member of SLT with oversight of the whole project was essential – from liaising with KAA project lead to encouraging and supporting internal teams made such a difference.
- ➡ Including a whole school focus as well as specific subjects worked well and enabled purposeful connections – the teams are already planning how to continue this work next year.

Acknowledgement:

Thank you to everyone involved at BSA and to our wonderful External Reviewers for helping to create this case study.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at Karen Ardley Associates if you would like more information about KAA Peer Review.