

Mr John Brewster,  
Beacon Hill School

10 Feb 2010

Dear Mr Brewster,

I wish to congratulate you and your school community on gaining authorization to offer the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organization. We now officially welcome you into the global community of the PYP.

Arising from the authorization visit we have outlined the recommendations that require follow up action. I request that the school prepare a report that will inform the PYP regional manager of the steps taken to address the recommendations by May 2010.

I look forward to working with you and your staff in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mignon Weckert  
PYP regional manager  
International Baccalaureate Organization Asia Pacific

Cc: School Administration  
PYP Coordinator

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report contains the visiting team's commendations and recommendations. Whilst schools are not expected to meet all the *IB Standards and Practices* at the time of authorization, this report uses them as a format for presenting commendations and recommendations in order to assist your school in the further implementation of the programme.

### **Section A: Philosophy**

#### **Standard A1**

There is close alignment between the educational beliefs and values of the school and those of the PYP.

#### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. committing to the principles defined in the IB mission statement.
2. developing in students the qualities, attitudes and characteristics described in the IB learner profile.
3. having clear and close connections between the school's published statements of mission and philosophy and the beliefs and values of the programme.
4. ensuring that the beliefs and values that drive the programme are shared by all sections of the school community. Parents spoken to during the visit were well informed about PYP and they also spoke positively about the way the school was continuing to give information and inform them about developments in the programme.

#### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. the visiting team make no recommendations

#### **Standard A2**

The school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. providing students with opportunities for learning about issues that have local, national and global significance, leading to an understanding of human commonalities. There is a commitment to local action in the community in a variety of forms and of particular note is the MAD (Making a Difference) programme.
2. developing a climate of open communication and careful expression of ideas, attitudes and feeling. Teams engaged positively with the visiting team and Parents felt that they could approach the school easily and they were able to understand what students were learning through the gateway programme.
3. providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment based on understanding and respect. In all respects the schools reflects that is caring and concerned with student learning and their well-being through the provision of a range of specialist services, programmes and facilities.

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. considers ways to further strengthen learning so that students will continue to develop an understanding of their own cultural identity as well as the identity of others.
2. considers translating the learner profile and other significant aspects of the PYP into Mandarin so that signs and symbols of the programme reflect the unique cultural location of the school. This would help to bring Chinese language (visually and verbally) into the classrooms and the public areas of the school.

### **Section B: Organization**

#### **Standard B1**

The school demonstrates ongoing commitment to, and provides support for, the programme through appropriate administrative structures and systems, staffing and resources.
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### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. the governing body, who are explicitly supportive of the programme, and have allocated sufficient funding for the effective implementation and ongoing development of the programme.
2. appointing a programme coordinator with sufficient support and resources to carry out the responsibilities of the position.

3. the school principal and programme coordinator having a good understanding of the principles of the programme and demonstrate pedagogical leadership.
4. building time for collaborative planning and reflection into all teachers' schedules.
5. systems in place ensuring the continuity of the programme; this includes an induction system for new staff and ongoing staff professional development. There is a clear plan and all teachers continue to receive support both from within the school and through a range of ESF and IB facilitated workshops.
6. providing professional development opportunities for the principal, programme coordinator and teaching staff, including attendance at appropriate IB conferences, meetings and/or workshops, and access to the online curriculum centre (OCC).
7. providing learning environments and opportunities for learning that support the pedagogy of the programme.
8. recognizing and promoting the role of the library/media centre in the implementation of the programme. The school has recently employed a teacher librarian who attends planning meetings and has a close relationship with the units of inquiry and the learning centre.
9. offering a language, in addition to the language of instruction, to students from the age of 5.
10. developing a written language policy (including its provision for second-language teaching and mother-tongue language support) that meets the needs of the students and reflects the principles of the programme.

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. reviews the staffing level of the Mandarin department with a view to lowering the class size for the learning of language. The visiting team felt that the numbers of students that the three teachers were dealing with was problematic in relation to the expectations of providing quality learning (including assessment) for a large number of students.

### **Section C: Curriculum**

#### **Standard C1**

A comprehensive, coherent, written curriculum, based on the requirements of the programme and developed by the school, is available to all sections of the school community.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. developing a curriculum that is sensitive to cultural, gender, linguistic, ethnic and religious differences.

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. carefully reviews its programme of inquiry to:
  - ensure that the central ideas challenge students thinking and are written in a way that provokes inquiry.
  - check vertical alignment to ensure age-appropriate progression under each theme, and check for repetitions or omissions.
  - ensure that lines of inquiry are written conceptually, clarify the central idea and define the scope of the inquiry.
  - ensure central ideas provide provision for the study of the host/home country, the culture of individual students, and the culture of others.
2. continues to develop scope and sequence documents to facilitate clear articulation across the school.

### **Standard C2**

The school has implemented a system through which all teachers plan and reflect in collaborative teams.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. providing staff with the appropriate documentation, including relevant IB publications, in preparation for all planning activities. Documents are available on line on the school's Y drive which is accessible throughout the campus and also externally.
2. planning at the school that takes place collaboratively. Staff meets weekly for planning and the ESF Professional Learning Centre provides support for all schools.
3. making effective use of the PYP planning process across the curriculum and by all teachers. The school has begun using a planner for mathematics and all specialist teachers are using the PYP planner.
4. including provision for easy access to completed PYP planners. There is an extensive electronic folder system
5. documenting planning on PYP planners that are coherent records of the learning experiences of students in developing their understanding of central ideas.

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. continues to foster collaborative planning to ensure that links to disciplines, single subject teachers and classroom teachers are maintained and strengthened.

### **Standard C3**

Teaching and learning at the school empowers and encourages students to become lifelong learners, to be responsible towards themselves, their learning, other people and the environment, and to take appropriate action.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. addressing the needs of students who have reached different stages in their development and those who have different learning styles. There is a very strong commitment to students who learn in different ways and the school's provision of staffing this area is noted.
2. providing for grouping and regrouping students for a variety of learning situations. Teachers spoke of the variety of situations that required fluid grouping during discussions.

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. continues to encourage teachers to ensure that a range and balance of teaching strategies to meet the objectives of the programme is used wherever possible. The visiting team encourage teachers to visit classrooms and share practices within the school, and where practical, by visiting other schools.
2. continues to explore ways to facilitate inquiry across the curriculum, and by all the teachers.

### **Standard C4**

There is an agreed approach to assessment, and to the recording and reporting of assessment data, which reflects the practices and requirements of the programme.

### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. the assessment policy which is in place and the way it is being referred to and used throughout the school.
2. ensuring assessment at the school is viewed as being integral with planning, teaching and learning.
3. reporting evidence of the learner profile to all participants in the learning process.

4. ensuring that there is easy access to student work showing evidence of the process of learning and progress over time. Students were able to describe the processes and the learning included in their portfolios

### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. provides students with regular opportunities for reflection on their own learning.
2. considers ways to ensure that student work is displayed as a reflection of learning throughout the school.

### **Section D: The Student**

#### **Standard D1**

Students learn to choose to act, and to reflect on their actions, so that they contribute to their own well-being and that of the community and the environment.

#### **Commendations**

The visiting team commends the school for:

1. providing opportunities for student action to be an integral part of and/or an extension of the curriculum. The MAD programme, the student council and the green team are giving students opportunities to contribute to the wider environment as well as their school.

#### **Recommendations**

The visiting team recommends that the school:

1. the visiting team make no recommendation

#### **Standard D2**

In the final year of the programme, all students complete a programme-specific project that allows them to demonstrate a consolidation of their learning, in the case of the PYP and MYP, and to demonstrate the extension and development of their learning in the Diploma Programme.

The PYP exhibition becomes a requirement in the year subsequent to authorization.

### **Conclusion**

The visiting team was impressed by many aspects of Beacon Hill School. The administration and its support was the centre of positive staff comment throughout the visit. It was apparent to the team that there was a strong sense of collegiality and

ownership throughout and that the school is clearly focussed on further development of PYP in the coming years.

Students engaged with the team positively and willingly shared their learning. The school places great importance on student learning and providing staff and facilities and resources to ensure that all students enjoy success and have access to quality experiences.

The staff has genuinely embraced the PYP framework and has worked individually and collectively towards developing curriculum documentation and is beginning to further explore inquiry methodology. The school has provided planning and professional development time in recognition that the journey the school is undertaking involves significant paradigm shifts.

We would like to express our appreciation to the administration and the entire staff at **Beacon Hill School** for arranging a very professional and informative visit. We would also like to thank all support staff and significantly, the enthusiastic students who engaged the visiting team in informative dialogue about their learning.

#### **Recommended Action by the visiting team to the IB**

The visiting team recommends to the IB that **Beacon Hill School be authorized to offer the Primary Years Programme** with the following conditions:

The school Action Plan on the recommendations of the report for the next phases of implementation (3 years) is submitted to the regional office by **May 2010**

*The suggested format for the action plan is as follows:*

- *Use the headings of the PYP Standards (as per the report)*
- *Define the specific goals*
- *Define how each goal will be achieved (strategies)*
- *State who will be responsible (team, role)*
- *State when each goal will be achieved*
- *Evidence which will indicate progress/successful achievement of each goal*

The school's action plan to the IBAP regional office developed on the recommendations of this report will assist both the office and the school to adequately prepare for the first Evaluation Visit and should be received by the date stated above.

It is recommended that **Beacon Hill School** (with appropriate action on the recommendations) schedule its evaluation visit for **November 2012**.

We congratulate the management and staff of **Beacon Hill School** on their development and achievements thus far.

Respectfully submitted

Julie Lawton

Bill Fenton

November 2009