

Certification Inspection Report

BRITISH COLUMBIA PROGRAM

at

BUNKA SUGINAMI CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

TOKYO

JAPAN

OCTOBER 23-24, 2023

INTRODUCTION

On October 23 and 24, a certification inspection was completed on Bunka Suginami Canadian International School (BSCIS) in Tokyo, Japan, referred to as the School in this report. The purpose of this inspection was to determine if the requirements for the British Columbia (BC) education program have been met, according to the *BC Offshore School Program Certification Agreement* (the Agreement). The inspection team (the Team), appointed by the Executive Director of the Independent Schools and International Education Branch, British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care (the Ministry) in accordance with the Agreement, consisted of Henry Vanderveen and Cathy Lowenstein who served as Chair for this inspection.

The School's BC program has an enrolment of 249 students in grades 7-12. The entire school, which houses the BC program, enrolls approximately 1,250 students.

During the visit to the School, the Team reviewed all standards required in the *BC Offshore School Program Certification Agreement* and *Operating Manual* and met with the School's Owner/Operator, Principal and vice-principals of the host school, CFO and liaison of the host/offshore schools, Offshore School Representative (OSR), BC Principal, BC Vice-Principal, teachers, and a sampling of BC students throughout the grades.

The Owner/Operator, Bunka Suginami Educational Foundation is responsible for the BC program. The representative of the foundation and the Chair of the board also oversee the host school. The BC program is in its ninth year of operation and the Owner/Operator has been integral in the growth of the BC program.

The BC program’s philosophy, objectives and special features include a mission statement that outlines their purpose: to provide a dual Japanese and BC high school graduation program and to open as many doors as possible for students to actively and meaningfully participate as global citizens. Students are empowered to learn through a “Know, Do and Understand model”.

The Team would like to thank Bunka Suginami Canadian International School for its hospitality, cooperation and preparedness for the inspection visit.

The School has satisfactorily addressed requirements contained in the previous inspection report.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Not Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
<p>Commendation: There were no requirements in the previous report from 2022. However, the School positively and proactively responded to several suggestions made by the previous inspection team.</p>			

BUSINESS PLAN 1.0

The Owner/Operator has submitted a business plan to the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, confirming the sustainability of the program.		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Not Met
<p>Comment: The Owner/Operator has submitted a business plan confirming the sustainability of the program.</p> <p>BSCIS is the first double diploma school in Tokyo and remains as the only co-ed double-diploma program in the city. Current families place value on English as the necessary tool for success in the 21st century. The target market includes families that are seeking both the BC and Japanese graduation diplomas, not just English education. The School ensures that the recruitment of students remains a strong focus. The School continues to explore additional ways to market the School and promote its unique attributes.</p> <p>BSCIS has seen a clear increase in enrolment for this current school year. The acceptance of 26 new grade 7 students has been a positive step, enabling the School to offer a full BC program for grades 7-12. In future years, the School will seek to enroll 40 students per year who enter the grade 7 program. Ultimately, the five-year goal is to have a total of 288 students which would bring the School to maximum capacity.</p>		

One of the goals for this academic year is to develop more formal ways to communicate and engage with parents and the community at large to market the BC program. Marketing and recruitment strategies include gatherings on and off campus to present the BC program. Promotional meetings are also held abroad as well as the School's participation in education fairs and visits to universities.

Considering the challenges of teacher recruitment, the School has been successful in hiring competent and skilled teachers who consistently expressed their satisfaction with their placement at the School.

In the School's 2022 Annual Report, there were some suggestions stated regarding school improvement initiatives. The School acted on those suggestions and has fully embraced proficiency based reporting for grades 7-9 as well as using proficiency scales for grades 10-12.

Incorporating First Peoples Principles of Learning into the program for this year has been embraced by students and faculty. To further support the BC program, a teaching vice-principal position was added for this current school year.

The Team reviewed a 5-year revised school growth plan. Some areas of the plan addressed the following: annual enrolment statistics, recruitment and marketing, website development, facility expansion, student performance data, professional development, curriculum changes and university transition.

Commendation:

The School is commended for having a strong focus on student recruitment.

The School is commended for making appropriate revisions to their 5-year growth plan.

INSPECTION CATALOGUE 2.0

2.02 The Owner/Operator meets all requirements as set forth in the Agreement.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team confirmed that the Owner/Operator is meeting all items as set forth in the Agreement. The Team met with the representative of the Owner/Operator, and the various leaders that work within the Japanese host school. The Owner/Operator has consistently demonstrated outstanding support for the BC program since its founding nine years ago and continues to model wisdom and vision regarding its expansion and sustainability.

Commendation:

The Owner/Operator is commended for their wisdom and vision regarding the expansion and sustainability of the program.

2.03 The Owner/Operator has written approval from the appropriate government entity to operate the School, as outlined in section 5.03 of the Agreement.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team reviewed the written approvals from the appropriate government entities to operate a school as outlined in section 5.03 of the Agreement. The Owner/Operator has a letter on file dated May 15, 2015, confirming approval for ongoing operations of the BC program. The Team also reviewed a business license certified by the Tokyo government dated March 4, 2020, and a “Letter of No Objection” dated September 19, 2020.

All translations of these letters were verified accordingly.

2.04-2.05 The School meets building inspection/safety, food preparation/cafeteria and fire safety codes/regulations. Facilities are deemed to be suitable to support the BC program.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The BC program is housed in two buildings that meet the strict Japanese building, earthquake and fire code requirements. The facilities are spacious and welcoming. Each class is well equipped with both individual and group workspaces as well as interactive computer project equipment. There is Wi-Fi in every room.

The BC facility has some unique spaces such as a calligraphy and team room. Two large gymnasiums and a multi-use field support the athletic program at the School. The library has a section that is appropriate for English language learners and is well managed by the BC teaching faculty.

The Team reviewed the following documents that serve to fulfill the building inspection/safety, fire safety codes and regulations and deems the buildings ideal to support the BC program:

- Report of Fire Safety Inspection
- Cafeteria Operating License

- Evacuation Drills and Protocols

The Team also observed detailed evacuation plans that have been vetted by the Offshore School Representative (OSR) for accuracy and functionality. The Team reviewed the committee's plans and confirmed they fulfill the expectations of the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

2.06 Offshore School Representative (OSR) - The Owner/Operator must appoint an individual to act as an OSR. This individual must be confirmed by the Province and must meet all the requirements set out in Schedule B, Part II of the Agreement.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Offshore School Representative (OSR) is an experienced and committed educational leader who has been instrumental in the School's ongoing success. She has represented the School since its inception and has been the key driver of effective teacher recruitment and oversight of school initiatives. She has a critical eye on the challenges and successes of the School.

The OSR is hands-on with faculty and school leadership from both the BC and Japanese side and demonstrates ongoing vision when it comes to supporting the School to be sustainable in the future. The Team appreciated the participation of the OSR during the inspection and her contribution towards all aspects of school management.

The Team examined the OSR's job description and confirms that she has the right to legally represent the Owner/Operator in dealings with the Ministry. The job description outlines the responsibility of the OSR to the Owner/Operator and to the School and teachers.

The OSR is aware of her obligation to report critical information relating to changes in the operation of the School or ownership structure that could significantly impact the School's operations.

Commendation:

The OSR is commended for her experience and commitment as an educational leader who has been instrumental in the School's ongoing success. She has a critical eye on the challenges and successes of the School.

2.07 The Principal meets the requirements as outlined in Schedule B, Part III of the Agreement and Section 2.07 (b) of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Principal is an experienced educator and has served in a leadership role in both onshore and offshore schools.

The Principal has collaboratively built a cohesive learning community amongst the BC program teachers. He has also built a strong partnership with the leadership of the Japanese program.

The School added a vice-principal position this year which has been helpful in providing needed support to students and planning oversight for the BC program.

Commendation:

The BC Principal is commended for the supportive and collaborative way he has built a cohesive learning community among the BC program teachers. He has also built strong partnerships with the leadership in the Japanese program.

The School is commended for adding a vice-principal position which has been helpful in administering oversight for the BC program and providing needed support to students.

2.08 The School meets the administrative support requirements as outlined in Section 2.08 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The School employs a highly organized and bilingual BC program Executive Assistant. Her responsibilities include the maintenance of all student records, managing the student information system, assisting new staff with documents when transitioning to Japan, providing translation services, and working to prepare inspection documents. She also manages student transcripts for grade 12 students.

The School is also fortunate to have an additional professional who acts as a liaison between the various groups within the host school and the BC staff. She works to help coordinate entrance exam dates and times, calendars and schedules.

The School meets the level of internet connectivity as required by the Ministry. The Team found the internet connectivity to be sufficient during the inspection.

Commendation:

The School is commended for providing strong administrative support to the BC program. An excellent and highly skilled BC program Executive Assistant manages the organization and maintenance of all relevant school records.

2.09 The School meets the Student Record requirements as outlined in Section 2.09 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The inspector verified that upon review, all student records and files contained the required elements stated in section 2.09 of the Annual Report. Student files, housed in the administration office, are maintained by the experienced and organized Administrative Assistant.

2.10-2.18 The School meets the teacher certification requirements as outlined in Sections 2.10-2.18 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team confirmed that all teacher files were reviewed and all educators delivering the BC program have valid and current BC teaching certificates (COQ). One teacher has a Letter of Exemption (LOE) providing her with eligibility to teach in the program until February 24th, 2024. The Principal confirmed his commitment to ensuring that the teacher submits all the requirements to enable her to continue to work with an LOE until her certification is granted.

Teacher contracts and teacher files were reviewed and found to be mostly complete, addressing all the required areas. However, only some staff members' files had evidence of completed teacher and principal evaluations. The Team encouraged the Principal to develop a plan to ensure there is an evaluation process in place and that the School is following it accordingly.

The Team noted the competence and motivation of teachers who are committed to the success of all students. A high percentage of teachers stay for multi-year assignments and the School has ensured that all teachers are fully certified prior to landing in Japan.

The Team confirms that all Authorized Persons under the Agreement possess valid and current certification under the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Commendation:

The School is commended for hiring competent and motivated teachers who are committed to the success of all students. The Team noted that a high percentage of teachers stay for multi-year assignments at the School.

2.19 The School meets the requirements for curriculum implementation outlined in section 2.19 of the Annual Report for offshore schools.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team reviewed all planning materials and held interviews with teachers. BC's curriculum is fully implemented across the grades. Small classes allow teachers to tailor lesson plans and instructional approaches to meet the individualized needs of their students. The Team confirms that Big Ideas, Core and Curricular Competencies, First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) and a variety of assessment strategies are all included in the curriculum documentation.

It is evident that teachers incorporate Core Competencies and First Peoples Principles of Learning into their lessons whenever that can be done meaningfully. Planning documents identify specific Core Competencies and First Peoples Principles of Learning targets for units, weekly or daily lessons.

The Team enjoyed observing the teachers who shared projects that show how students are progressing in their work. Strategies include inquiry-based learning, active learning, and cross-curricular projects. Many projects demonstrate that students are encouraged to think critically and creatively while exploring new ideas. Teachers are committed to providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities and students are fully engaged in their learning. The Team suggested that the teachers continue to find formal ways to share their planning and strategies amongst the faculty.

Assessment strategies include formative and summative assessment. Every teacher utilizes rubrics, many designed with the students, to measure student competency. The Team was pleased to note that teachers have fully embraced the proficiency scale to report student progress.

Commendation:

The School is commended for teachers' personalized and dynamic planning documents that contain all the necessary elements of BC's curriculum.

The School is commended for fully implementing the proficiency scale when reporting student progress.

2.20 The School meets the requirements for English language assessment and acquisition as outlined in Section 2.20 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team confirms that the School meets the requirements for English language assessment and acquisition.

The Principal administers an English language assessment to all students who apply to enter the BC program and is responsible for deciding which students have gained enough English proficiency to be successful in the program.

Teachers have developed a variety of strategies designed to support English language proficiency in the context of their lessons. Those include vocabulary enhancement, incorporating written and oral projects in courses other than English, and creating “English only” environments in their classes. One teacher provides additional English language learning to students as needed, but all teachers recognize the need to incorporate language learning strategies into their lessons on a regular basis.

Commendation:

The School is commended for the implementation of a wide variety of strategies into teacher daily lessons to enhance student language acquisition.

2.21(a-e) The School meets the course credit requirements (equivalency, challenge, exemptions and BAA courses) as outlined in Section 2.21 (a-e) of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The School has an equivalency policy, but only utilizes it in exceptional cases. For example, the majority of grade 10 students travel to BC each summer (Nanaimo #68 & Qualicum #69) for their 4 credit Social Studies 10 course. For those few students unable to travel to BC, Social Studies 10 is delivered by way of Online Learning through School District 73—Global Education Business Company, the approved Online Learning service provider. The students are supported at the School by the Principal.

The School offers five courses that are exempted by the Ministry for delivery by locally certified teachers: Instrumental Music: Choral Music 10, Family and Society 10, Physical and Health Education 10, and Fitness and Conditioning 11/12.

The School does not offer any Board/Authority Authorized (BAA) courses.

2.21(f-g) The School meets the course overview/course planning requirements as outlined in Schedule B Part I, 2. (e) of the Agreement; namely, that all BC program courses offered in the School meet or exceed Ministry learning outcomes/learning standards identified in the educational program guides for each course.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team was able to conduct a comprehensive review of all planning documentation including course overviews, unit plans and lesson plans. Teachers use a variety of formats to describe their plans, but all course plans include the required elements such as Big Ideas, Core Competencies, Curricular Competencies, English learning and assessment strategies and First Peoples Principles of Learning. As stated in the School's student/parent handbook, teachers strive to empower students using a "Know, Do and Understand model".

The School is offering Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12 for the first time, meeting the graduation requirement to include an Indigenous-focused course in its program of studies.

Through a review of course planning documents and in interviews with teachers, the Team was able to verify that the School meets the course overview and planning requirements.

Commendation:

The School is commended for the quality of teacher curricular planning documents which contain all essential elements of BC's curriculum.

2.22 The School meets the instructional time allotment requirements as outlined in Section 2.22 of the Annual Report, including the requirements set out in Sections 1.1 to 6, with the exception of s. 4(5)(b), 4(6), 5(8)(a) and (d) and s. 5.3 of Ministerial Order 41/91, the Educational Standards Order, enacted under the Independent School Act.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team confirms that the School exceeds the instructional time allotment requirement of 850 hours. There are 175 instructional days in the 2023/24 school year with six instructional hours per day for a total of 1050 hours of instruction for the year.

2.23 The School meets the assessment methods requirements as outlined in Section 2.23 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

In reviewing planning materials and in interviews with teachers, the Team confirmed that both formative and summative assessment methods are employed by teachers. The School provides professional development in support of developing techniques for assessment. This is evident through the variety of methods listed in planning materials and the rubrics that teachers described.

Students demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways including PowerPoint presentations, diary writing, video productions, visual representations, collages, 3D models, cross-curricular group work, oral quizzes and tests, and several activities aimed at connecting classroom theories to real world applications.

The School's security and invigilation procedures for BC provincial graduation assessments meet Ministry requirements.

2.24 The School meets the learning resources requirements as outlined in Section 2.24 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

All teachers indicated that the School's learning resources suitably meet requirements to effectively deliver BC's curriculum.

The School has a library that acts as a learning commons. All students are given orientation at the beginning of the school year and are encouraged to visit the library regularly to access resources aimed at improving literacy.

Each student is provided with a Microsoft surface tablet upon enrolment at the School. The tablet is used for classroom work, research, projects and assignments. Technology is used extensively by teachers in support of learning as well as to communicate with students.

2.25 The School meets the student progress report requirements as outlined in Section 2.25 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The student progress reports meet the BC Ministry requirements. The School provides three formal reports per school year (July, December, and March). There are also two informal reporting sessions and one set of student-led conferences (March) as well as two interim report periods per year (June and November).

The School tracks students who might be struggling with their learning and holds team meetings that often include the Japanese teachers to ensure a consistent approach to facilitating student success.

The Team reviewed progress reports from a sampling of student files and noted the presence of teacher comments in English for courses taught in English and in Japanese for courses exempted for delivery in Japanese.

2.26 The School meets the parent/student handbook requirements as outlined in Section 2.26 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Team confirms that the parent/student handbook, offered in English and Japanese, has been updated for the 2023/24 school year.

The handbook is comprehensive. It features a message from the Principal, the School's motto and statement of purpose, an overview of BC's curriculum and assessments, admissions policies progress reports, school policies relevant to students and parents, emergency evacuation procedures, graduation requirements, and information about post-secondary admissions.

2.27 The School meets the teacher handbook requirements as outlined in Section 2.27 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The School's teacher handbook has been updated for the 2023/2024 school year. It includes the annual calendar, an overview of the program, course descriptions, relevant policies, and information supporting teachers' professional needs.

The Team verified that the handbook contains guidelines for teacher evaluation as well as a teacher appeals.

2.28 The School meets the Online Learning requirements (formerly Distributed Learning) as outlined in Section 18 of the Agreement and Section 2.28 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met Not Applicable

Comment:

The School offers one Online Learning course through School District 73—Global Education Business Company: Social Studies 10. The Principal provides students with onsite support and is in regular contact with the course instructors.

2.29 The School meets the requirements for offering Remote Instruction under the BC Offshore School Remote Instruction Policy and as outlined in Section 2.29 of the Annual Report.

Requirement Met Requirement Partially Met Requirement Not Met Not Applicable

Comment:

The School does not currently offer courses via Remote Instruction.

CONCLUSION

Commendations

The Inspection Team wishes to recognize the Owner/Operator, Principal, staff and Offshore School Representative of Bunka Suginami Canadian International School for:

- the quick and pro-active response regarding suggestions from the School's last Annual Report in 2022.
- ensuring a strong focus on student recruitment.
- making appropriate revisions to the 5-year growth plan.
- the Owner/Operator's wisdom and vision regarding the expansion and sustainability of the program.
- the retention of the BC program Executive Assistant whose prime responsibility is the maintenance of all school records. The Executive Assistant has done an exemplary job to ensure that all student records are organized and current.
- the supportive and collaborative way the BC Principal has built a cohesive team amongst the BC program teachers.
- the establishment of a vice-principal position which has been helpful in providing oversight of the BC program and needed support for students.
- the commitment of the OSR as an educational leader who has been instrumental in the School's ongoing success. The OSR has a critical eye on the challenges and successes of the School.
- the hiring of competent and motivated teachers who are committed to the success of all students. The Team noted that a high percentage of teachers stay for multi-year assignments at the School.
- the personalized and dynamic planning documents prepared by teaching staff, that contain all the necessary elements of BC's curriculum.
- the full implementation of the proficiency scale by teaching staff when reporting student progress.
- the implementation of a wide variety of strategies to enhance student language acquisition into daily teaching lessons.

SUMMATIVE RECOMMENDATION

The Inspection Team recommends to the Executive Director of the Independent Schools and International Education Branch that, the British Columbia education program offered at Bunka Suginami Canadian International School continues to be recognized as a British Columbia-certified school.