



## The Island School Ethos

Every school talks about ethos, few have one that is as pronounced and strong as Island School. Here it is tangible; you can feel it the moment you walk in. Both students and teachers are fiercely proud to be 'Islanders'. Widely diverse, the school celebrates difference authentically and yet at the same time has an intensely unified community.

Island school is an inclusive family, a place where people love to work and learn, where we create curriculum around individuals' passions, where we encourage 'stage not age' learning, where we embrace the unexpected. We work on creating an education that is valued by all. We provide a safe learning environment, where students needs are at the centre of all decisions. Leadership is shared, developments are co-created and visionary innovation is encouraged.

Our students are the school's best asset. They exude a quiet confidence tinged with humility, are globally aware, creative and proactive.

Island School is led by its ethos. Our values drive everything and do not just comprise a set of vapid mission statements. With the school moving from its home for 50 years to two temporary campuses, keeping the ethos vibrant is of utmost importance.

Key observable features of Island School's Ethos:

- **School values: pursuing excellence, embracing responsibility and celebrating individuality**
- A truly international school, diverse by any measure, yet harmonious in its life and work.
- Relationships:
  - Excellent relationships between staff and students based on mutual respect and shared purpose;
  - Student voice and leadership is conspicuous everywhere. Students sit on school council, they advise about teaching and learning, take responsibility for key school publications, work in partnership with school leaders to reflect and plan.
  - A proudly inclusive school admitting a wide range of abilities and focused on doing what is best for each student:
    - Students go on the courses which are best for them regardless on the impact on the School's overall exam results.
    - The school judges itself on 'Value Added' rather than absolute results.
    - Careful provision is made for students with Individual Needs.
    - In Y12/13 an Applied Learning Pathway taking some BTEC courses and some IB Modules provide a respected path for vocationally focused students.

- [The House system](#). The House represents a family within the whole school community. For new students it is the central point of reference for all that they do. The House group is also their form group for many courses in years 7 and 8. It is the main friendship group throughout the school and the group in which many sporting, artistic and academic activities are undertaken. The House staff – Form Tutor, Head of House and Senior Head of House – will be the first point of contact for parents and the people who get to know individual students best from their arrival to writing university references and beyond
- The [Y9/11 Island Futures](#) programmes with about 30% of the curriculum time teaches subjects in a way which develops skills needed for success in the IB, at University and in students' lives beyond both. There is a strong focus on core skills (The five 'C's of Capacity to learn, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication and Conscience.)
- The Buildings with its internal courtyards/play areas and the walkways connecting each block mean that all that goes on in the school is shared. This helps to create the strong ethos of connectedness and community.
- A school to which parents want to send their children and to which students want to come.
- Outstanding opportunities for students to experience life in and beyond school.

For further insight on Island School's ethos refer to the concluding remarks from the visiting inspectors for the February 2016 CIS/WASC Five Year Review. – See attachment.

## Island School CIS/WASC Five Year Review Visit; February 2016

### Concluding remarks from the visitors

Island School is a high quality and innovative school and one that is confident of its direction, has a clear Vision for its future, and enjoys a high degree of support from its stakeholders. The school enjoys stable, visionary and thoughtful leadership, a faculty and staff dedicated to the well-being and learning of their students, students who are proud of their school and eager to attend it and strong governance provided through the ESF and the School Council. A relaxed but highly purposeful atmosphere greets visitors to the school.

The values of **pursuing excellence, embracing responsibility and celebrating individuality**, are firmly centered on the student as a learner, and there is a strong sense of partnership between and across all constituencies.

In the period since the Team Visit, Island School has embarked upon an innovative review of effective learning, with the end result being the design and implementation of innovative curricula for the middle years: “Island Time” for Years 7-8 and the “Island Futures Curriculum” for Years 9-11. These curricular initiatives are backed by a school definition of learning, “The Learning Journey”, which drives pedagogy and is supported by the Skills Framework that identifies desired skill acquisition. This has been ground-breaking work in itself, and it is appropriate in this context to recognise and acknowledge the outstanding leadership of the Principal and Senior Leadership Team for having the drive and vision to see such a significant undertaking through from conception to implementation.

Through discussions with a wide range of school constituents, the Visitors had no difficulty in identifying Island School’s strengths, which include the wide degree of alignment to the school’s Values, the development of a culture of trust, the degree to which students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, the individual attention and support that students receive from their teachers, and the demonstrated willingness to embrace change and innovation. All of this makes for a very healthy learning culture and bodes well for the further development and implementation of the many initiatives underway.

As highlighted by the school in this report, the major challenge that now faces the school is the redevelopment of the campus to provide facilities that will fully support the students learning journey, and provide the most appropriate environment to sustain the curriculum and associated pedagogies. The Visitors have no doubt that, with the experienced school leadership and the expertise and support provided by ESF, the transition to temporary accommodation and the final move back to the redeveloped campus can be achieved successfully.