

DETAILS OF THE SPECIAL REPORT

Introduction

In cases where more information is needed, or there are “Special Issues” to be addressed, CIS and/or NEASC may require a school to submit a Special Report. The agencies may also decide that a Special Visit is required, and schools will be informed of this either when the Special Report is requested or after it has been read by the Accrediting Agencies.

A Special Report and/or Special Visit could be required at any stage of the Evaluation and Accreditation Process, including:

- Between receipt of the Preliminary Visitors’ Report and the granting of Candidate Status if the former raised doubts or questions.
- Between the submission of the Visiting Team Report and the granting of accredited status if the initial decision on accredited status is in category “c” or possibly category “b” (see Chapter One).
- Between the First and Five Year Reports if the former was considered unsatisfactory or incomplete.
- After submission the Five Year Visitors’ Report if progress at the school was considered unsatisfactory.
- At any other stage if *prima facie* evidence of breach of the Standards for Accreditation arises.

Preparing for a Special Report

Letter(s) from CIS and/or NEASC requesting a Special Report will make clear to the school which are the “Special Issues” which need to be addressed and upon which a report is required. A reasonable time-scale for action and reporting will also be laid down.

It is then the school’s responsibility to:

- Address the Special Issues, taking the actions necessary to bring the school into compliance with the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation in the areas concerned.
- Create small working groups to write the school’s response to each of the Special Issues for inclusion in the Special Report. Each group does not necessarily need to contain representatives of all sections of the school community (as might be the case for Self-Study Committees), but members should be knowledgeable about the issue in question.
- ensure that the Special Report is submitted on electronic support to CIS and/or NEASC by the stipulated date.

Structure of the Special Report

Essentially the Special Report must demonstrate clearly the actions the school has taken in order to address the identified Special Issues, and its structure must be as follows:

A brief introduction outlining the place of this particular report in the accreditation history of the school.

then for each Special Issue

- a) The Special Issue must be re-stated in exactly the words used in the letter from the Accrediting Agency
- b) The school must then make its own evaluation of the present situation by choosing one of these two possible ratings with respect to the issue in question:
“completed” or “in progress”
- c) The school must then give a detailed description of the action taken on this issue, and fully justify the rating it has given. If the rating is *“in progress”*, the school should give its specific plans to ensure completion of the task.
- d) The school must then attach any relevant documentation to support the ratings and explanations given in previous paragraphs.
- e) The names, posts and signatures of those responsible for writing the response to the particular Special Issue should then be given.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A SAMPLE SPECIAL REPORT

**Special Report
to NEASC and CIS
from the
International Community School
of Middleburg (ICSM)**

Submitted 16th November 2007

Introduction

The International Community School of Middleburg (ICSM) was founded in 1979, and first accredited by NEASC in 1991. Early in 2001, the school was visited by a joint CIS-NEASC Team and this resulted in the school being accredited by both agencies later that year. The school's One Year Report was submitted in 2002, and was accepted by both agencies

Following submission of the Five Year Report on Progress and Planning and completion of the Five Year Visit in 2006, the accredited status of ICSM was confirmed by both agencies conditional upon receipt of a satisfactory Special Report one year later outlining the school's response to four Special Issues. This current Special Report has been written in order to fulfil that condition.

As Director of ICSM, I would like to express my thanks to the two Accrediting Agencies for the help and advice they have given the school, particularly over the last year. I would welcome a Special Visit to ICSM should the Accrediting Committees feel on reading this report that such follow-up would be useful.

Joseph C. Bloggs
Director, ICSM
16th Nov. 1997

Special Issue 1.

- a) "The school is required to provide more exits from the recently-built Laboratory Suite on the Third Floor of the Newton Building "
- b) School rating: Completed
- c) Comments: Within six months of the Five Year Visit, two permanent metal stair cases were built externally to provide alternative fire escapes from the Laboratories Suite. Access to these stair cases is through new emergency doors fitted with "anti-panic push bars". In addition, an extra connecting door from the Prep. Room into Lab. B was created near to one of the new exits so that the Laboratory Technician also has an easy secondary escape route. Anyone working or studying in the Laboratories Suite now has two possible exit routes: one through the original doors and down the main staircase, and the other via the new installations described above.
- d) Architects drawings and the latest report from the local Fire Service (which is very favourable) are attached. Also enclosed are the relevant revised pages from the school's published evacuation procedures and copies of the escape route instructions posted in each room of the Laboratories Suite.
- e) Carol Andrew Biology Teacher Signature:
Jim Plesch School Site Manager Signature:
Peter Sithers Head of Science Signature:

Special Issue 2

- a) "The school must establish, and put into practice, clear and appropriate policies for the assessment of student learning and performance in the approximate age range 14 to 16."
- b) School rating: *In Progress* for Social Sciences and *Completed* for all other curriculum areas.
- c) Comments: This issue arose because at the time of the Five Year Visit ICSM had announced that it would no longer enter students for the Cambridge IGCSE examinations at the end of Grade 11. However, firm decisions had not yet been made on what forms of assessment were to be used instead. Since then, the school has decided fully to apply the IB Middle Years Programme and its associated forms of assessment, with external moderation and certification by the IBO. All subject areas except the Social Sciences have created their own assessment practices consistent with the IBMYP approach, and these went into action from September 2007. The Social Sciences department will be finalising its policy during an in-service weekend towards the end of this month, and will be putting it into practice from January 2008.
- d) Attached are the Secondary School Assessment policies which are currently used by all departments except Social Sciences. The draft Social Sciences policy is also attached, along with the agenda for the up-coming meeting at which this policy will be finalised.
- e) Terry Andrews Head of Mathematics Signature:
Jerry Hodson Head of Social Sciences Signature:
Christine White Secondary Principal Signature:

..... and so on for all the identified Special Issues.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DETAILS OF THE SPECIAL VISIT

Introduction

CIS and/or NEASC may require a school to host a Special Visit as part of the follow-up to the writing of a Special Report. The requirement to host a Special Visit may be communicated to the school at the same time as the notification that a Special Report is required, or the decision may be left until after the Accrediting Agencies have had an opportunity to read the Special Report.

Each agency requiring a Special Visit will normally appoint one person to make an on-site visit of two days duration. If both CIS and NEASC require a Special Visit, the two representatives will normally be on-site at the same time and work in a co-ordinated fashion.

It is possible that a Special Visit may coincide with a “routine” visit such as a Five Year Visit, in which case the whole exercise will be particularly efficient in terms of time, travel costs, etc. However this clearly cannot always be the case, and a Special Visit will more often than not take place at a time when no routine accreditation visit is due.

Purposes of the Special Visit

The main role of the Special Visitors is to evaluate the school’s response to the Special Issues which gave rise to the Special Report, and to offer the school help and advice on the matters in question.

The Special Visitors may also be asked by the Accrediting Agencies to discuss with the school its progress on the other recommendations it is currently addressing, and if this is the case the school will receive prior notice. However, the Special Visit will always be mainly focussed on the previously identified Special Issues.

The Role of the School

The school is responsible for:

1. Sending a copy of the school's Special Report to each agency and to the nominated Visitors on the prescribed date. The Special Visit will normally be arranged to take place soon afterwards.
2. The payment of all basic expenses for transport, accommodation and meals for the Visitors. There is also a small fee payable to CIS for a Special Visit.
3. Providing each Visitor with basic guidelines with regard to practical arrangements for transport etc.. (Normally the Visitors make their own arrangements to travel in the most economical manner and are reimbursed directly by the School.)
4. Making arrangements for accommodation, to include a room in the school for the Visitors to work undisturbed.
5. Provision of all documentation required for the Special Visitors when on-site.

6. Scheduling any meetings with members of the school community which the Special Visitors may require.

The Role of CIS and NEASC

The Accrediting Agencies will:

1. Appoint the Special Visitors.
2. Provide each Special Visitor with copies of:
 - All relevant previous reports produced during the evaluation and accreditation process.
 - The school's Special Report.
 - This booklet "Accreditation Decisions and Subsequent Procedures".
3. Submit the school's Special Report, and the Special Visitors' Report when complete, to the scrutiny within the Accrediting Agencies' committee and Board structures.
4. Send the Special Visitors' Report to the school
5. Inform the school of the Accrediting Agencies' responses to the school's Special Report and the Special Visitors' Report.

The Role of the Visitors

The Visitors are responsible for:

1. Liaising with the school, for example over the scheduling of meetings with any members of the school community with whom they may wish to talk.
2. Making travel arrangements and communicating them to the school (and to CIS and/or NEASC so that travel insurance can be organised).
3. Liaising with each other to ensure that all processes and procedures are clear. This includes deciding how the task of producing the Special Visitors' Report will be distributed between them
4. Arranging with the school for reimbursement of expenses.

5. Reading all relevant documentation provided by the school and the accrediting agencies, including the school's Special Report.
6. Writing the Special Visitors' Report, following the guidelines provided in this booklet
7. Submitting a copy of the Special Visitors' Report on electronic support to CIS and NEASC (not the school) within two weeks of completion of the on-site visit.
8. Making a written recommendation to the Accrediting Agencies as to the school's accreditation status, in particular with respect to the identified Special Issues.

Conduct of the On-Site Visit

During the course of the Special Visit, the Visitors should:

1. In general, visit those responsible for writing the Special Report and where necessary others from relevant sectors of the school community (which could include administration/management, staff, board, students, or parents) to ascertain whether the contents of the school's Special Report reflect reality. (NB: It is not necessary to visit classrooms and observe lessons in the manner of a full Team Visit except where there is a particular reason e.g. to follow up on a Special Issue related to delivery of the Programme of Studies).
2. Discuss with appropriate persons any of the responses to the Special Issues which the Visitors consider incomplete or unclear.
3. Follow up the school's efforts to address other recommendations if this has been requested by the Accrediting Agencies, but always keeping in mind that the previously identified Special Issues are the major focus.
4. Discuss the factual elements and the likely major thrusts of the Special Visitors' Report with the Head of School prior to departing. However a copy of the Special Visitors' Report (even if ready at this stage) must not be left at the school, and nor must the Visitors reveal the contents of the recommendation they will be making to CIS and NEASC with respect to the school's accredited status.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DETAILS OF THE SPECIAL VISITORS' REPORT

Introduction

The main role of the Special Visitors' Report is to convey to CIS and NEASC the Visitors' views on the way in which the school has responded to the Special Issues identified by the Accrediting Agencies. The report should also point out to the school any further action the Special Visitors feel is required in these areas.

CIS and/or NEASC may also have asked the Special Visitors to report on the school's progress on other issues, and this will also be reflected in the report (albeit as a minor component).

The Structure of the Special Visitors' Report

The report should begin with a brief introduction to include the Visitors' comments on:

- How this Special Visit fits into the school's history of accreditation.
- The quality of the school's Special Report.
- The quality of organisation of the Special Visit and how it was conducted.

Then, for each Special Issue in turn, the Special Visitors' Report should contain these components:

- a) The Special Issue must be re-stated in exactly the words used in the letter from the Accrediting Agency
- b) The Visitors must first re-state the school's rating with respect to the issue in question. The Visitors should then add their own rating, using the same possible categories: "*completed*" or "*in progress*". The Visitors, but not the school, may also use a third category which is "*not satisfactorily addressed*".
- c) The Visitors should then explain and justify the rating they have given. This can be done in relatively few words if the Visitors' rating coincides with the school's and if the Visitors consider the school's explanation to be accurate and complete. However this component will need to be more detailed if the Visitors' rating or comments differ from the school's.
- d) The Visitors should then recommend what further action, if any, should be taken over this issue by the school and/or the Accrediting Agencies.

The report should be rounded off by a conclusion in which the Special Visitors recommend to CIS and/or NEASC the best course for further action as they perceive it. If all Special Issues have been addressed to the Visitors' satisfaction, this recommendation may well be that the school's accredited status be confirmed with no further action required until the next routine stage in the accreditation cycle. If one or more of the Special Issues have not been satisfactorily addressed there may be a need to recommend a further Special Report and/or Visit within a relatively short period of time or possibly even more drastic action (to be discussed with the agencies). The conclusion should also contain the customary thanks to the school for its hospitality.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SAMPLE SPECIAL VISITORS' REPORT

SPECIAL VISITORS' REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF MIDDLEBURG (ICSM)

NEASC VISITOR
James Smythe
Director,
Newtown Academy, Mass.

CIS VISITOR
Andrew Black
Head
International School of Scunthorpe

Visit dates: 15th and 16th December 2007

Introduction

The International Community School of Middleburg (ICSM) has been accredited by NEASC since 1991 and by CIS since 2001. A Five Year Visit by one representative from each agency in 2006 led to confirmation of the school's accredited status by both agencies, on condition that the school address four identified issues within the following year and submit a Special Report by November 2007. The Special Report was duly submitted, and was followed by a Special Visit the next month giving rise to this present document.

The school's Special Report was produced by separate working parties for each of the four Special Issues, with the Superintendent writing the introduction as well as endorsing the contents of the entire document. Membership of each working party of three or four people was appropriate in each case. The result was a very thorough report, which the Visitors later found to be a generally accurate and honest reflection of the school's current position on the issues in question.

The organisation of the Special Visit was excellent, and the Visitors were given every facility to ensure they could carry out their work effectively. All those involved were prompt to the scheduled meetings as well as informative and helpful in their comments.

The rest of this report treats each of the Special Issues in turn according to the format laid down by the Accrediting Agencies, and ends with the Visitors' conclusions.

Special Issue 1.

- a) "The school is required to provide more exits from the recently-built Laboratories Suite on the Third Floor of the Newton Building "
- b) School's rating: Completed. Visitors' rating: Completed.
- c) The Visitors carried out a thorough inspection of the Laboratories Suite, and required a surprise evacuation practice to be carried out during class time for the entire building in which it is located. They also checked upon the validity of the Fire Department Certificate included in the school's report. In all respects the Visitors are satisfied that the area now meets CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation.
- d) No further action required, apart from the periodic evacuation practices and checking of installations which would be expected for any other area of the school buildings and grounds.

Special Issue 2

- a) "The school must establish, and put into practice, clear and appropriate policies for the assessment of student learning and performance in the approximate age range 14 to 16."
- b) School's rating: *In Progress* for Social Sciences and *completed* for all other curriculum areas.

Visitors' rating: *Not satisfactorily addressed* for Natural Sciences, *in progress* for Social Sciences, and *completed* for the remaining curriculum areas.

- c) Comments: As explained in the school's Special Report, this issue arose because at the time of the Five Year Visit ICSM had announced that it would no longer enter students for the Cambridge IGCSE examinations at the end of Grade 11 without making firm decisions on what forms of assessment were to be used instead. Since then the school has decided fully to apply the IBMYP programme and its associated forms of assessment, with external moderation and certification by the IBO.

The school reported that all subject areas except the Social Sciences had created their own assessment practices consistent with the MYP approach, and that these went into action from September 2007. The Social Sciences department was said to be about to finalise its policy during an in-service weekend in order to put it into practice from January 2008.

The Visitors' findings did not fully coincide with the school's on this issue in two respects. Firstly, the planned in-service weekend which was to be used by the Social Sciences department to finalise its assessment policy for the student age range in question did not in fact take place. This was due to a factor beyond anyone's control, namely heavy snow which totally disrupted transport and isolated the school from the Thursday evening until Monday noon. The work to finalise the Social Sciences policy is now planned to take place on the first weekend in January 2008 (within a few weeks of writing this report), and from the Visitors' observations of the draft documents and their discussions with department members there seems no reason to doubt that this question will be satisfactorily resolved at that time.

Secondly, the Visitors are concerned that the Natural Sciences department has not in fact produced an appropriate assessment policy for students in the last two years of the MYP. The existing policy and practice lead solely to assessment through a school-based written examination sat at the end of Grade 11. The draft examination papers made available to the Visitors concentrated entirely on factual recall, making no attempt to assess the students' ability to interpret data or to propose methods by which scientific problems might be resolved. In addition there is no provision for the assessment of laboratory skills, or the ability to design and create experiments and equipment, anywhere in the current policy. In the Visitors' opinion, the Natural Sciences assessment policy is neither in line with IBMYP philosophy nor with one of the school's own stated objectives of sponsoring a "student-oriented and investigative approach to learning".

d) The Visitors recommend that:

- (i) The Social Sciences department complete its work on the assessment policy as planned.
- (ii) The Natural Sciences department revise and broaden its assessment policy in time for improved practice from the start of the next school year in September 2008. All feasible measures should also be taken to broaden assessment practice for the cohort of student due to complete the MYP course in five months time.

..... and so on for all the Special Issues.

Conclusion

ICSM has approached all four Special Issues raised by CIS and NEASC in a serious and professional manner. This Visitors' Report shows that the only areas still needing attention are the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences assessment policies for 14 to 16 year old students. The Visitors recommend that the school be required to submit copies of finalised/revised policies for these departments to NEASC and CIS by 15th June 2008. Assuming that the Accrediting Agencies find these documents to be satisfactory, the Visitors recommend that ICSM be confirmed in accredited status until the next routine part of the process without the need for any further special procedures.

The Special Visitors again wish to thank everyone at ICSM, and particularly the Director Mr. Bloggs and the School Secretary Ms. Fernández, for the highly efficient way in which the visit was organised and for the spirit of collaboration which permeated the entire stay on-site.

Respectfully submitted to NEASC and CIS on 20th December 2007.

NEASC VISITOR
James Smythe
Director
Newtown Academy, Mass.

Signature:

CIS VISITOR
Andrew Black
Head
International School of Scunthorpe

Signature: