

## Council of International School

### What does it mean for your child to be at an Accredited School?

Parents naturally seek a quality education for their children. Expatriate parents in particular face a strange environment which offers few guidelines on how best to select the most appropriate school for their child's needs. In some areas there may be only one international school available for the children of the expatriate community. The fact that a school is accredited provides members of the community with assurances that key aspects of the school have been evaluated externally.

The idea for accreditation developed in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the concern of US Colleges and universities over the often disparate standards of school leaving qualifications. Qualifications from an accredited school are a necessary condition for university entry.

The Council of International Schools now accredits close to 300 Member Schools around the world with a further 130 at some stage in the process.

For a school to achieve accredited status the whole school community has to be involved in a process that lasts for 18 months to two years, a process that starts with a Readiness Audit led by a CIS Accreditation Officer to ensure that the school meets stringent entry requirements, followed by:

- An in-depth Self-Study over a one to two year period which examines, among other areas the teaching and learning environment and student achievement results. The analysis which is undertaken aims at strengthening the school's programmes and operations.
- Hosting a visiting team of evaluators from other institutions who examine all aspects of the schools programmes and operations as well as the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that it:
  - delivers that which it promises in its own Philosophy and Objectives
  - meets the rigorous Standards for Accreditation
  - is committed to continuing action to address recommendations arising from the internal and external evaluations i.e. Show a dedication to on-going school improvement.
- After accreditation is granted the school undertakes regular internal audits and visits by evaluators to ensure it continues to meet the requirements for accreditation.

In addition, the school has to demonstrate a deep understanding of "International Mindedness" and its inclination throughout the ethos and curriculum of the school. This is based on the CIS definition of the nature of an international school and the skills necessary to function as a global citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These attributes embrace the concepts of ethics, diversity, communication, community and leadership, together with viewing the issues of peace and conflict,

sustainable development and social equality and justice from a global perspective.

So what are the characteristics of an Accredited School?

- The school is devoted to its mission. It cares enough about what it does to seek validation by a recognized accreditation authority.
- The school knows itself. It has thought deeply about the services it offers to students, family and community.
- The school is student-oriented. Its philosophy of education is suitable for the students on roll, and encompasses the development of the whole individual.
- The school keeps its promises. It promises only what it can deliver.
- The school accepts objective assessment. It is prepared to open its doors particularly to regular evaluation by the school community and by outside experienced evaluators.
- The school is constantly seeking to improve its performance in curricular and other areas, with an on-going focus on student learning and well-being.
- The school plans for the future. As part of the on-going nature of the evaluation process accredited schools are continually planning future developments.

Accreditation does not only reassure parents, it also reassures teachers who themselves value and embrace the standards, and the core concept of a continuous improvement in learning outcomes. In alignment with Gandhi, the students, teachers and community must be the change they want to see in the world.