



The Anglo School, Uruguay

## A whole-school view of learning



The Anglo School in Uruguay offers both Cambridge Primary and Cambridge IGCSE. Director General Geraldine Pool explains how Cambridge's School Self-Evaluation can help schools become more effective.

### Evaluation as part of school culture

We are constantly evaluating our practices – it is part of our school culture. At the end of every year, we try to identify areas we need to focus on and improve the following year. We set our improvement objectives and prepare our action plan. The data we use is mainly gathered through observation or through feedback from staff during appraisal meetings.

We heard about the Cambridge School Self-Evaluation service from our local Cambridge International representative. We decided to use it to help us gather feedback from multiple stakeholder groups (school staff, parents and students) on a range of different aspects of school life.

The Cambridge survey addresses different domains and responses are measured against clear standards which make for a reliable picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The results gave us the necessary information to identify specific strategies to help us improve.



*Geraldine Pool,  
Director General*



### Continuous support from Cambridge

We received constant support from Cambridge. The Information Pack contained all essential details. We had the chance to go over the process before implementing the surveys – what was going to happen, when and how. Any questions we had were quickly answered and at the end of the process we had the opportunity to meet with a Cambridge expert to help us analyse the report and plan next steps.

### Adapting surveys to school needs

The surveys provide the school with a detailed description of the perspective of different stakeholders on a range of dimensions covering the school's mission, educational values, management and leadership, teaching and learning, resources and community engagement.

The fact that the questions were in Spanish (our L1) allowed us to share the surveys with all stakeholders. We were also given the option to leave out some questions if they related to aspects we didn't want to measure.

### Insights into school life

Learning about all the dimensions of school life that lead to a successful learning experience for our students was enlightening, as were the standards. It helped give us a whole-school view of learning, identifying aspects we hadn't previously paid much attention to as we were unaware of the impact they had.

This process allowed us to gain valuable insight into the perspectives of all stakeholders and to compare views. In some cases, the results confirmed our thoughts, but it is always helpful to validate this with data. In other cases, there was a discrepancy between perspectives on our performance in some standards. These provided the most fruitful discussions as it encouraged us to put ourselves in other stakeholders' shoes.

### Improving communication and engagement

Involving all stakeholders in School Self-Evaluation opened doors to better communication with everyone.

We sent parents a summary of the survey results and went over the results in class with students. We held meetings with heads and teachers to analyse results.

I was surprised by how engaged staff felt by the whole process and how eager everyone was to see the results. Teachers were particularly interested in looking into the



views of parents and students – it was good to see them working together, interpreting results and finding ways of improving weaker areas.

It was also interesting to see how involved students were. It was the first time we formally asked for their views on different aspects of school life and we had our doubts as to how seriously they would take it.

One of the most significant changes we made was formally acknowledging parents' and students' perspectives as relevant and valid, as well as formally acknowledging the importance of involving teachers in the process of analysing results and identifying priorities.

### Action plan for improvement

The School Self-Evaluation raised awareness of all the different aspects that contribute to effective teaching and learning and identifying specific indicators of effective schools.

We held planning sessions at the beginning of the year to agree on priorities and write our action plan.

We focused on the dimension of Quality of Teaching and Learning and, with teachers' help, redesigned our quality assurance policy and accompanying documents (self-reflection and appraisal forms, class observation forms, etc).

### Creating effective schools

I would recommend this service to any school looking to be more effective as the whole process runs smoothly, the surveys are easy to implement and the report from Cambridge is simple to interpret, with results clearly described and supported with graphs. Based on all the data, it is relatively easy to identify what is working well and what needs looking into.