



ACCREDITATION SERVICE

Calle Almirante 3 - 1º izda
28004 Madrid
Spain

t +34 91 522 6395
f +34 91 521 4068
e cismadrid@cois.org
url www.cois.org

14th December 2009

Steve Alexander
Director
Vientiane International School
PO Box 3180
Ban Saphanthong Tai,
Lao PDR, Vientiane
Laos

Dear Steve,

Award of Candidate Status for CIS Re-Accreditation

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Council of International Schools, the CIS Accreditation Service and its Advisors have now completed their consideration of the November 2009 Preparatory Visitors' Report on your school submitted by Ray Davis and Ali Copple. I am pleased to inform you that the report has been accepted, along with the recommendations it contains. This means that Vientiane International School has been granted candidate status for CIS Re-Accreditation. My congratulations go to you and your school community on this achievement.

In their report, the Visitors noted:

"The caring family atmosphere that pervades Vientiane International School. The academic, administrative and support staff go to great lengths to ensure that every student is valued as a member of a nurturing school community."

The Visitors also commented on the many positive school features which support the recommendation for accreditation candidacy. Amongst these are:

- The commitment of the Board to develop the new school campus and provide an environment that is conducive to high quality learning.
- The professional way in which the Board, the Director and staff of the school have implemented the major developments of the move to a purpose built campus and the introduction of new curricula in the Primary, Middle and Senior schools.
- The commitment of the Board to organizing and undertaking annual training in Board governance from an external consultant.

- The development of a comprehensive Board Policy Manual and Board By-Laws.
- The hardworking staff who support the school's development in a highly professional manner.
- The professional and effective communication to all staff of the essential issues of personnel policies.
- The positive school climate which ensures that generally a harmonious and cooperative working relationship exists between staff.
- The collegial nature of staff interaction and the family atmosphere that exists within the school leading to a great deal of open professional dialogue between teachers and managers about the improvement of individual teacher performance.
- The commitment of the teaching staff to a 'Backwards by Design' approach to ensure the entire curriculum meets the needs of students.
- The provision of a comprehensive and regularly updated staff handbook.
- Individual students' needs and learning styles are well catered for.
- The speedy and yet calm and quiet way in which the practice evacuation took place.
- The employment of a Special Needs teacher in strengthening the SEN program.
- The quality of health care for the students as well as the planning, policies and procedures in place to ensure adequate student health information is available.

Vientiane International School should therefore proceed with the next stages of the re-accreditation process, following the timeline negotiated with the Visitors:

<i>Timeline – Vientiane International School</i>	
Immediately	Set up all committees and begin the Self-Study. Put an early emphasis on Part One and Section A of Part Two. Also begin addressing key suggestions in the conclusion of the Preparatory Visitors' Report.
September 2011	Complete and distribute the Self-Study Report.
October 2011 **	Host the Team Visit.

****** Please note that technically, according to the ten-year cycle, the next Team Visit is due in the first half of 2011 because the last Team Visit was in the first half of 2001. However, CIS is prepared to accept a date in the second half of 2011 if it is more convenient for the school – especially as there are so many key suggested actions in the Preparatory Visitors' Report. Discussions can take place after the 2011 Team Visit about the length of the next full cycle (10 or 9½ years).

The school will be using the 7th Edition of the "Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation" (Version 7.02) which is the agreed protocol when CIS and WASC collaborate in schools. Further practical help can be found in the booklets "The Self-Study" and "The Team Visit". If you do not already have copies, all these documents can be obtained from this address: SueCollins@cois.org.

During the Self-Study period, the school should take into account the "Suggested Actions" highlighted in the Preparatory Visitors' Report. In particular, please note the following points which are given special emphasis in the report's conclusion:

Section A. Philosophy and Objectives.

- In order to more accurately reflect current philosophy and practices and the IB Learner Profiles, VIS is urged to vigorously pursue a full review of its Vision, Mission and Purpose Statements which should involve input from all sections of the school community. A periodic review cycle should be built into the school calendar.
- When the proposed review of the Philosophy and Objectives has been completed, the school should explore ways of ensuring that the resulting P&O statements are generally understood and accepted by all sectors of the school community and by prospective parents.
- The school is strongly encouraged to place a high priority on identifying a set of measurable and or observable objectives which enable it to determine its degree of success in putting its revised Philosophy and Objectives into practice.
- The school should identify and record the current opportunities that it provides to students to develop international and intercultural understanding, and introduce additional practices in support of this philosophical aim.

Section B. Curriculum

- Revisit the VIS Purposes to provide the opportunity to ensure the IB Learner Profiles are reflected in the school curriculum with developed measurable and/or observable descriptors.
- Continue to provide opportunities, including formal, for teachers to meet regularly across school divisions and disciplines to promote more discussion, planning and articulation – especially between PYP and MYP teachers.
- Investigate additional opportunities to enable students to experience Lao culture.
- Continue development of whole school curriculum in a thorough and manageable manner.
- Ensure that effective differentiation is practiced in order to best cater for students' individual learning needs and learning styles.
- Continue providing necessary professional development for the three IB programs as well as utilizing the expertise of the current staff.

- Prioritize whole school curriculum documentation into the IB curriculum review cycle that best fits the school's needs to ensure a thorough documentation process, and to allow for teaching staff to work together across all three program areas (PYP, MYP and DP) to ensure a cohesive curriculum horizontally and vertically.

Section C. Governance and Management

- The school should ensure that all issues raised in the Auditor's Report for the year ended July 2009 relating to compliance with Lao financial regulations are resolved.

Section D. Staff

- The school should explore additional ways of increasing the average stay of expatriate teachers.
- Review the staff appraisal system to ensure that best use is made of teacher and line manager time and to more closely match appraisal criteria to the ages and developmental stages of students taught.

Section F. Resources

- The school should develop an effective 'Lock-Down' procedure.
- The school should develop a comprehensive Crisis Management Plan.
- Ensure that all software used within VIS is legally purchased and or licensed.
- Develop an agreed philosophy for IT usage for both educational and administrative purposes and identify measurable objectives which can be incorporated within the strategic plan.
- Provide a long term financial plan for IT to ensure the planned replacement and extension of hardware and software.
- Develop a Library Philosophy that defines the Library's main purpose and function and develops strategies to ensure a maximization of its potential to support learning throughout the whole school.
- The following health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the school and the cafeteria operator:
 - ◇ Existing fire extinguishers should be more accessibly located close to the cooking area.
 - ◇ A fire blanket should be installed close to the cooking area.
 - ◇ Foodstuffs should not be stored on the floor.
 - ◇ A safety audit should be carried out on all playground equipment.

May I wish you Steve, and the entire VIS community, every success as you continue the drive towards CIS re-accreditation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further help.

With my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Gerry
Dr. Gerry Percy
Director of Accreditation Services
Council of International Schools (CIS)

c.c. Dr. Marilyn George, WASC

Please note:

- i. You should have already received the Preparatory Visitors' Report to which this letter refers. If this is not the case, please contact Sue Collins at the CIS Madrid Office SueCollins@cois.org so that she can re-send you a copy.*
- ii. While CIS and WASC are normally in contact and agreement, the two agencies do make independent decisions on the accreditation status of schools which they jointly evaluate. If the outcomes and follow-up dates you receive from the two agencies differ considerably, please do not hesitate to contact us immediately to discuss possible synchronisation procedures.*