



# Making the grade

*The British International School*

International Day is a major event at the British International School of Moscow (BIS). Every year, before the October half-term holiday, pupils and staff gather together to celebrate cultural diversity by wearing national costumes, learning about national foods and contributing to a debate on global issues of the day. The festivities culminate in a major concert, which represents a highlight of the school's social calendar for many who take part.

The event recognises the importance of multiculturalism, in the wider world but also in the school itself, where more than 65 nationalities are represented in a student body of more than 800 children aged between 3 and 18 years. "One of the major contributory factors to our success as an international school is the way in which we celebrate our cultural diversity," says Academic Director Denis Kelly.

Each week, school assemblies focus on a difference aspect of this diversity, which feeds into all aspects of school life, from academic interaction in the classroom to artistic, athletic and social pursuits in the extracurricular programmes. "Our students enjoy their academic successes in a highly diverse community and an atmosphere where they can comfortably mingle with their peers from so many nationalities and cultures," says Kelly.

While academic excellence is at the forefront of the daily agenda, BIS schools also offer students the opportunity to engage in a broad range of extracurricular activities, including art, music, drama and sports. The daily programme as a whole is designed to challenge students and enhance their personal development, the benefits of which are evident in their attitudes and in their outlooks on life.

"I think our students really appreciate and value the rewards they gain for their endeavours, both personally and academically," Kelly explains, adding, "Students who attend BIS feel they are special because they have the opportunity to develop as a valued member of the school community." They also make a contribution towards supporting the wider local community with regular fundraising activities held throughout the year, including the autumn and summer fairs, to support disadvantaged groups in Moscow society, such as young people affected by disability and families living below the poverty line.

Since it was founded in 1994, the underlying principle of BIS has been to provide a first-class education to a multicultural student body. The opening of the school came during a milestone year for British–Russian relations when, just a few months after BIS opened its doors, Her Majesty The Queen made an official state visit to the country, marking the first state visit by a British monarch to Russia since the establishment of the Soviet Union.

BIS is made up of seven schools with separate campuses spread across Moscow. Six of the schools follow a programme based on the English National Curriculum with one offering teaching based on the Russian Federal state system. Both A levels and the International Baccalaureate are offered, giving students a range of routes to achieve their higher education goals.

The coming years will see BIS, in partnership with Cambridge Education UK, pursue the completion of its accreditation as a British School Overseas, which it expects to achieve by the end of 2017, further establishing its status as a top institution for British-style learning in the Russian capital.