

Nordsjællands Grundskole og Gymnasium samt HF (NGG) is an independent school that was founded in 1983 by Jan Thrane. NGG moved to its current location in 1984, and is led today by Principal Thomas Thrane.

NGG is one of Denmark's largest independent schools. The school has three separate departments: a Danish-language section with 700 students; and an international section (North Zealand International School (NIS) with 350 students who are taught in English. Finally a senior high school for students aged 16 – 19.

North Zealand International School (NIS) is a part of NGG which encompasses a Preschool, Primary, Secondary and a High School. All of the multinational teaching staff are highly qualified, most of them studied in the UK or America. The language of instruction is English.

NIS offer the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) in the primary school which is benchmarked against the National Curriculum of England and Wales. The NIS secondary school offer Cambridge Assessment International Education.

The curriculum in the Danish section is aligned with the goals and objectives of the Danish public school system.

This was my first year at NGG as a certified supervisor and external reviewer. To complete the review, I audited classes and daily school activities over the course of four full days, dividing my time between classes taught in the Danish and the international parts of the school. On the whole, my impression was highly favorable. During my visit, I experienced a hospitable environment of friendly students and teachers who were consistently ready to help me navigate the school's buildings and campus. As it says on its website, NGG (and NIS) is an educationally rigorous institution that values inquiry, self-direction, and shared traditions.

In my role as external reviewer, my job is to evaluate whether a given independent school provides an academic foundation that measures up to what is required of municipal schools in the Danish public school system. To answer this question, I speak with leadership and individual teachers about the school's curriculum, and I review the contents and the teaching of the materials that are used across academic disciplines. External reviewers are also required to assess the ability of a given independent school to equip its graduates with the capacity to thrive in a society that prizes self-direction and free speech, and where citizens are expected to value individual freedom and basic human rights, including gender equality. In this sense, the review takes stock of a school's academic level as well as its social values. When visiting schools with international sections, the reviewer must also ascertain that students throughout the institution receive rigorous instruction in Danish language and subject matter.

After auditing classes and engaging teachers in discussions about curricula, teaching designs, and their relationship to their students, I was left with a very favorable impression of NGG and NIS. Just as the faculty struck me as highly qualified and committed to the success of their students, I observed a good balance between teacher and student contribution during classtime. I was also impressed with the way teachers would manage classroom dynamics and maintain academic standards. In all the classes I audited, I made note of students' confidence and their willingness

to participate in class discussion. On the whole, the students at NGG and NIS came across as spirited and cheerful, and I was never left in doubt about the school's culture of academic achievement—a culture that is evident, too, in NGG's annual test scores, which stand out relative to peer schools. Given that many students enroll at NGG only after having first attended other schools, this consistent level of excellence is remarkable.

Having been given an overview of the special education curriculum at NGG, I can also attest to the strength of the school's support of students who are differently abled. In addition to a dedicated special education coordinator, three members of the faculty are certified as specialized reading tutors. The school has a solid grounding in serving students with dyslexia, and it caters well to students who require other forms of individualized learning.

A mark of NGG's distinction is that the school is home to teachers with many different types of experience, a quality I find particularly valuable. A few teachers have been with the school since its founding in 1983, and many others have been continuously employed at NGG for long periods of time. Most teachers in NIS have been educated in English-speaking countries. In general, all teachers at NGG exhibit a high level of comfort with the school's culture of democratic consensus and free inquiry. It was also evident that the school's leadership is committed to making everyone feel seen and heard.

It has been a pleasure to visit NGG and NIS, which is a place of excellent teachers and thriving students. It's clear that the academic programs at the school are well organized, dynamic, and expertly managed.

NGG is home to a Sports College, where student-athletes are in a position to train and compete on a high level. The school's Music Academy offers a wide variety of musical instruction. A recent initiative is the Leadership Academy, where students are trained as youth coaches. There are several other interesting programs besides.

The general spirit of the school became evident to me in the form of the eagerness with which teachers welcomed me into their classrooms. To a person visiting, all of them were keen to engage me in conversation about pedagogical method, curricula, student development, and the practical components of their own teaching. I also spoke with a group of eight graders who were happy to share their views about the school and their classwork. Some of them noted that, although their parents had been instrumental in enrolling them at the school, they had grown very appreciative of their experience at NGG. A major benefit of attending this school, they emphasized, was the breadth of the student population and the many extracurricular activities, such as sports and musical instruction. They all spoke in support of the school's academic expectations and the ability of the teachers to make the curriculum feel relevant and alive — qualities that, for some of them, had not been prevalent at their previous schools.

When I interviewed a group of teachers who had recently joined the school, they all expressed great satisfaction with their new roles. In particular, they appreciated the degree of autonomy they experienced in their daily work, and the openness on part of the leadership to consider new ideas. They valued the diversity of the school's faculty, especially the mix of younger and more senior colleagues, and the combination of educational backgrounds and past professional

experience—all of which added up, they said, to a stimulating and dynamic work environment. On the one hand, there are teachers who, because they have been with the school since the beginning, are good representatives of institutional memory and the original spirit of the school. On the other hand, the school is also seeing a new and growing generation of teachers. What these younger members of the faculty find especially attractive is the autonomy that all teachers seem to enjoy at NGG and NIS.

Overall, the school takes great pride in its level of academic rigor, a quality that is appreciated in particular by the parents of current students. After speaking to students from every grade level, it's clear to me that NGG and NIS is home to a culture of opportunity, and that the school fosters a strong sense of belonging.

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