

SPOTLIGHT ON:

INTER-COMMUNITY SCHOOL ZURICH

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND | WWW.ICSZ.CH



ICS Zurich provides an empowering learning environment where all members of the community are challenged to achieve their potential, encouraged to pursue their passions, and expected to fulfil their responsibilities. We caught up with James Penstone, Secondary Principal, to find out more about their mission to develop leadership and learning at all levels at ICS.

ICS Zurich: Supporting and Enabling Success

ABOUT ICS

ICS is an English-language international school in Zurich, Switzerland. Founded in 1960, it is the oldest international school in the Greater Zurich area.

- Over time the school has grown and evolved, from 80 students representing 10 nationalities, to circa 800 students representing 55 nationalities.
- It's an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, offering primary, middle and diploma IB curricula to students from 18 months to 18 years.
- ICS is ably led by Head of School Lucy Gowdie, and her dedicated team of senior leaders.



James Penstone, Secondary Principal
Lucy Gowdie, Head of School
Nathaniel Atherton, Primary Principal



A REMARKABLE JOURNEY

Embarking on a remarkable journey of leadership development and growth, ICS has [partnered with ECIS](#) to cultivate and enhance leadership at every level within the school. Spearheaded by James, this initiative began with a laser focus on [middle leader development](#).

In this issue, we use James' narrative to explore how ICS engaged with the team at ECIS to foster a dynamic culture of professional growth and learning. This partnership for growth is a testament to ICS's commitment to continuous improvement and building sustainability. James' perspective offers a unique lens into this dynamic collaboration and how it is reshaping leadership across the school.

REFLECTING BACK AND AIMING FORWARD

Before partnering with ECIS, an individual-focused appraisal system was in place at ICS. This implied a staggering, potential 65 teacher meetings with the Secondary Principal. Recognising the need for a more holistic, inclusive, and manageable approach, a review of professional and cultural competencies, based on the IBO standards, was initiated. This resulted in the creation of a robust framework of professional standards for leadership tailored to the ICS context.

Integrating this with a focus on effective teamwork and coaching has now created a strong culture of professional growth, providing clearer pathways. The current phase is to implement professional standards for teaching and learning, connected to the professional standards for leadership.



EMPOWERED AND DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Following the ECIS Leadership Conference in Düsseldorf in April 2023, a conversation between James and [Sarah Kupke](#) sparked a transformative collaboration with ECIS, alongside [Nancy Lhoest-Squicciarini](#) and [Helen Morgan](#). Their shared mission: to enable genuinely empowered and distributed leadership.

Helen got the ball rolling with a series of four virtual sessions aimed at cultivating a coaching culture among senior and middle leaders. These sessions featured peer coaching and live modelling, empowering middle leaders to deconstruct and begin to apply effective coaching techniques.

Simultaneously, Nancy's emphasis on Building and Leading Teams through inperson Saturday events played a pivotal role in nurturing unified leadership and a shared vision of change.

Elevating the value of the programme through [ECIS certification](#) and genuine investment heightened engagement. This fostered meaningful dialogue and genuine collaboration across the whole school. It would be fair to say that leadership is becoming increasingly empowered and distributed.

The initial success and collaborative effort was recently highlighted by presentations from James at the IB Conference in Dublin 2023 and at the 2024 ECIS and NEASC Leadership Conference in Windsor.

The video recording of the live coaching at ICS has now been shared with schools within the ECIS community, inspiring them to embrace similar approaches to leadership and development.



Interested in finding out more about ECIS Middle Leader Certification?

Please contact nancy@ecis.org to discuss how ECIS can help you to deliver a leadership development solution for your own school or setting.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Through a partnership for growth approach with ECIS, the impact and influence of middle leadership on school life at ICS is marked. Using their experience and expertise in teaming and coaching, middle leaders are beginning to play an important role in the facilitation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These communities are aligned with 'ICS Strategic Initiatives', propelling the strategic plan forwards using a professional inquiry model.

Looking ahead, the school is also excited that it continues to cultivate synergy through student mentoring, empowering tutors and teachers to mentor students towards their academic, service-focused, and well-being strengths. This inspiring approach promises an exciting year ahead.



Find out how you can reap the benefits of ECIS Membership by contacting Sarah Kupke: sarah@ecis.org



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