

RS ACADEMICS

International School of Havana

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Candidate Information

INTRODUCTION

An opportunity to lead

A challenging and fascinating opportunity to lead an international school with a distinguished history in a remarkable location. The new Head will follow Chris Lynn, who has provided four years of selfless leadership in Havana.

Founded in 1965 and accredited by NEASC, ISH is a not-for-profit IB World School and the only accredited English-medium school serving the diplomatic and expatriate communities in Havana. The Board of Directors seeks a Head of School who will invest in the school's strong sense of community, insist on high standards and maintain the quality of the experience it offers.

1965 Founded	**~ 165** Students, from age 2½ to Grade 12
40+ Nationalities	**IPC · IGCSE IBDP · GID** Programmes, including the new Global Impact Diploma (GID)





THE SCHOOL

Learning to Make a Difference

Founded in 1965 as the Hillside School for just ten students, the school became the Foreign Student School in 1974 and moved to its current premises as the International School of Havana in 1988. Since 2003, it has been run by the not-for-profit ISH Foundation, registered in Curaçao.

ISH relies almost entirely on tuition and fees, with an annual budget of US$3–4.5 million depending on enrolment. It is the only accredited English-medium international school in Havana; the city's French, Spanish and Russian schools follow their own national curricula.

Around 165 students, from Pre-Kindergarten (from the age of two and a half) to Grade 12, represent more than 40 nationalities. International teachers come from the UK, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Jamaica and Kenya; local teachers bring more than 15 years' experience of the school's inquiry-based approach.

The motto, 'Learning to Make a Difference', sits at the intersection of the school's Learning Principles and Community Principles and drives the curriculum and co-curricular programmes.

ISH has a special status under the umbrella of the diplomatic community. Embassies arrange visas for teachers, import licences and vehicle plates, and the school could hardly operate without them. An active PTSA supports social events, fundraising and new families.







CURRICULUM & ACCREDITATION

ISH is accredited by NEASC, authorised by the International Baccalaureate Organization as an IB World School, and registered with Cambridge International Education and the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). Its curriculum is guided by six Learning Principles:

1. People can learn how to learn and have a right to do so
2. We are all responsible for our own learning
3. Learning is a personal and a social process
4. Learning is both cognitive and emotional
5. Learning transfer happens best in rich, relevant contexts
6. In learning, quality transcends quantity

Primary School	The IPC's inquiry-based themed units, with the Cambridge Frameworks for English and Mathematics and programmes in Spanish and French.
Middle School	Cambridge-aligned subjects and real-world, collaborative learning that prepares students for Grade 9.
Grades 9–10	IGCSEs, with a wide choice across five subject groups.
Grades 11–12	The IB Diploma Programme, the Global Impact Diploma (GID) or the ISH Diploma, with CAS and university guidance for all students.







FACILITIES

Two campuses in Miramar

ISH occupies two sites a block or so apart in Miramar, a leafy, quiet residential neighbourhood of embassies and diplomatic residences.

Calle 18

Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8, the school's home since 1988. Library Learning Commons and Multi-Purpose Area (opened in 2019), a Makerspace, sports areas and playgrounds.

Calle 22

The High School (Grades 9–12) and the main administrative offices since January 2019: three renovated historic homes and one new building.


PTSA
PICKS


building




ISH
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL
OF HAVANA





THE CUBAN CONTEXT

Living in Havana

Cuba, at the centre of the Caribbean, has around 9 million people, about one-fifth of them in the Havana metropolitan area. The climate is subtropical: dry winters in the mid-to-high 20s°C, hot and humid summers, and a hurricane season from June to November.

Music and dance are everywhere. Havana hosts major festivals throughout the year; Old Havana is one of nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Cuba, and the best beaches are a short trip away. Neighbours know each other, and the expatriate community is tight-knit.

As rewarding a place to live as it is challenging.

Life is also far from easy: bureaucracy, shortages of basic goods and of services such as electricity and water, and a dual economy. Private businesses are growing, and there has been a marked shift towards solar energy. Havana is not a location for everyone; those who thrive bring resilience, resourcefulness and an acceptance that life is changeable and unpredictable.





THE ROLE

Leading ISH forward

Chris Lynn has steered ISH through a difficult period. The pandemic and Cuba's systemic crisis reduced the expatriate population: enrolment, which peaked at 436 students in 2016–17, now stands at around 165. It could recover quickly, as it has before, when the roll once rose by 100 students in a single year.

The new Head will be supported by committed staff, who stay at the school for an average of 15 years, and by a talented leadership team:

HEADS OF SECTION	ACADEMIC COORDINATORS	WHOLE-SCHOOL COORDINATORS
Primary School	IPC	Accreditation · PDQ
Middle School	Cambridge Curriculum (Primary)	CAS and Service Learning Arts · PE · ECAP
High School	Pre-K	Student Success Programme
Plus a Head of Libraries and social and emotional counsellors	Cambridge Programmes IB and ISH Diploma	English Language Programme
	Extended Essay	

The Head works closely with an experienced Board and leads the school's relationships with diplomatic missions and international businesses, through which many supplies and services are secured. The post calls for deep experience, resourcefulness, cultural curiosity, kindness and a sense of fun. For the right person, it could be an exceptional and life-enhancing experience.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Head of School is the school's Chief Executive Officer, responsible only to the Board of Directors. The Head attends Board meetings as an ex officio, non-voting participant, along with the Clerk to the Board, to its Governance and Finance Committees. Performance is evaluated each year against goals agreed with the Board.

Educational leadership

- Educational policies within the Board's guidelines
- Annual and five-year curriculum review
- Curriculum evaluation, assessment and reporting
- Teacher appraisal and professional development
- Supervision of the academic sections

Administration

- Internal regulations under the Board Policy Manual
- Safeguarding and wellbeing across the school
- Recruitment, evaluation and discipline of all staff
- Admissions policy and annual calendar, once adopted by the Board
- Health, safety, maintenance and communications

Finance

- Operating and capital budgets
- Collection of tuition and fees
- Up to 10% additional operating spend per budget line, and up to US$8,000 additional capital spend; Finance Committee approval above these limits
- Monitoring budgets and investment funds
- Financial control and oversight of the school

Governance

- Contributing to the school's planning and policies
- Advising the Board on new policies
- Implementing and renewing procedures
- Written reports to the Board
- Annual self-appraisal against agreed goals
- Strategic thinking




– close borders
– research cure
– solutions, cure
– stop flights all transport, cures









PERSON SPECIFICATION

Experience, education and training

- University degree and teaching qualification; graduate or leadership qualifications preferred
- At least eight years' senior leadership, preferably five or more as Head of School
- Experience of at least two of IPC, IGCSE and IBDP (preferred)
- Extensive international experience; Latin America an advantage
- Effective work with a board; vision, strategy and leading change
- Steering a school through external accreditation and audit
- Recent safeguarding training and a strong record of professional development
- Creative thinker, financial and administrative expertise

Qualities and skills

- Passion for international, student-centred education
- Financial strategic management
- Cultural curiosity and respect
- Strong communicator; Spanish, or a willingness to learn it quickly, desirable
- Considered innovation in learning and teaching
- Deep commitment to safeguarding
- Visionary, energetic and pragmatic
- Empathetic builder of community and teams
- A good listener, slow to judge
- Builds consensus; courageous in decisions
- Resolves conflict fairly and impartially, hearing all parties and establishing the full facts first
- High standards, applied with compassion
- Integrity, warmth, humour and kindness

SAFEGUARDING & REMUNERATION

Safeguarding

The International School of Havana is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and it expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Safeguarding will be discussed throughout the appointment process.

The successful applicant will be subject to child protection screening, including verification of identity and qualifications, criminal record checks from all countries of residence and online searches; references will be taken up both in writing and verbally. ISH's safeguarding policy is available at **www.ishavana.org**.

Remuneration

A competitive salary that reflects the status and profile of the role, plus:

- Accommodation allowance
- Worldwide medical insurance (excluding the USA)
- School fees in full for up to two dependent children
- Communications allowance
- Annual return flight home for the Head and each dependant
- Relocation allowance
- A car

Three-year initial contract; the Board will prefer candidates who view the role as a long-term commitment.








Awesome
85
tokyo
osaka
nagoya
kyo



APPLICATION PROCESS

The recruitment is managed by RSAcademics on behalf of the International School of Havana. All communication will be via RSAcademics:

- Jean Sullivan,
  Head of International Search:
  jeansullivan@rsacademics.com
- Chris Edwards, Senior
  Consultant (International):
  chrisedwards@rsacademics.com

Closing date: Monday 30 November 2026 at 10:00 (UK) / 06:00 (Cuba)

Submit

- A completed application form
- A completed data-sharing agreement
- Your CV/résumé
- A letter of application (no more than two pages) tailored to this role, addressed to Jean Sullivan

The process

- Applications are acknowledged by email within two working days
- Preliminary online interviews with RSAcademics week commencing 30 November 2026
- Longlist interviews by videoconference with the Search Committee
- Final-stage interviews in Cuba; flag any travel limitations early

Apply at **www.rsacademics.com** via the Apply Now link on the announcement of the position.

For help uploading documents, contact Alison Hooper, Project Coordinator, at **applications@rsacademics.com** or +44 (0) 204 6269 791. References are taken up only with your express permission.

RSAcademics is a global executive search and consultancy firm working exclusively with schools. For more than 20 years, we've supported governors and leaders at pivotal moments – whether they are appointing senior staff or making complex strategic decisions.

What makes us distinctive is the depth of first-hand experience in schools across our team – as heads, governors, bursars and senior professionals – combined with specialist expertise in areas such as strategy, research, marketing and finance. This blend is continually enriched by our ongoing consultancy and appointments work with schools worldwide, so our advice is always current, practical and evidence led. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.

RS ACADEMICS

Because the world needs schools to thrive