



International Well Rounded School, UK

## Reaching more students: International Well Rounded School's move to online learning

During the pandemic, International Well Rounded School transitioned from being an in-person after-school academy to a Cambridge International School – registered as online. Alexandra Cigdem Karaman, Director of Education, talks about the benefits.



Alexandra Cigdem  
Director of Education

International Well Rounded School (IWS) was founded with the International Well Rounded Education (IWE) Academy in 2016. It started as a physical school in Romania, offering a supplementary education to international students aged 8 to 19. Alexandra Cigdem Karaman has been its Director of Education for five years.

"We were providing education only to students in Romania but once we became an online

school during the pandemic, we expanded our reach and started to offer learning across the globe," explains Alexandra. As a result of going online, the school increased its student numbers by more than 100 per cent.

### Reasons for choosing the Cambridge Pathway

IWS offers all four stages of the Cambridge Pathway: Cambridge Primary, Cambridge Lower Secondary, Cambridge Upper Secondary and Cambridge Advanced. When registering as a Cambridge online school, Alexandra says: "We received support from Cambridge International at every stage of our accreditation journey, as well as subsequently.

"Cambridge International guides us with digital tools, resources, books and training – everything that a school needs. They also provide a high level of support for online learners and parents at every stage of the education process."

There were a number of other factors leading IWS to choose the Cambridge Pathway, she says: "Cambridge International sets a high goal and standards for schools and learners. It is a holistic curriculum where both academic and pastoral aspects are well implemented in every subject throughout the syllabus. Its values are well aligned with our school's mission and ethos, which is to raise well-rounded citizens."

Alexandra also values the sense of community: "Cambridge creates a learning community across the globe where, as a school, you feel you belong to a very prestigious educational institution," she says.

### A well-designed and flexible curriculum

Alexandra believes the Cambridge Pathway is well suited to online learning: "It is an inclusive, well-designed curriculum that can fit and adapt to each individual student's needs wherever the student is," she says. "Courses can be studied by students on their own due to the curriculum being well structured. Students can choose different pathways to sitting the formative assessments depending on their needs and availability. Access arrangements are also a great support to learners."

IWS has worked hard to make sure its own infrastructure enables smooth delivery of the Cambridge Pathway:

"Teachers and students can work in real time due to the special learning management tools we use," says Alexandra. "Every student has their own digital notebook that teachers can see, analyse and feed back on students' work instantly. Every child is also assigned to a success coach who follows their progress and builds a strong relationship with parents."

Communication is key, says Alexandra: "Students and parents get feedback on a regular basis as well as updates on events and programmes via email, notifications or video conferencing. We have also built a student council and parent-teacher association to involve parents and students in the school's development and hear their voices."



Despite being online, the school places strong emphasis on extra-curricular activities. Alexandra says: "We provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as student-led clubs, debating clubs, clubs to prepare students for international competitions, fast-track clubs for students who want to accelerate their academic progress, and clubs for arts and yoga. We also have a junior leadership team to help students improve their executive skills."

### Challenging perceptions of online schooling

One challenge IWS has needed to work to overcome is a common misconception about online schools, says Alexandra: "Online schooling is still quite a new idea in the world and has only really entered our dictionary with the pandemic – people often mix us up with online course providers. Some countries also do not recognise online education."

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The school provides an admissions interview that Alexandra says helps parents and learners to understand the school's ethos and the structure of the institution. She is confident that as time goes on, more parents in more countries will embrace this form of learning.

"Every child is unique and can achieve greatness. We strive to provide the best approach for each individual child via our teaching style, extra-curricular activities, mentoring and coaching process. We are happy to be a Cambridge International School – registered as online – and we believe we can achieve our goals with the help of the Cambridge Pathway."

### The future with IWS

IWS plans to use the latest technology to overcome some of the challenges of online education. They are currently working to build a virtual reality (VR)-based campus in partnership with British technology company MetaCampus.

"We hope the VR lessons will allow our students to interact with the topics taught and experience them in different ways. Instead of just reading about a subject, students will be able to see and engage with the content they are learning, helping them understand complex topics. By enhancing students' learning with gamification, immersion and AI [artificial intelligence], we hope to increase their engagement with the subject," says Alexandra.

"We're proud to be one of the first Cambridge International Schools working to provide its students with unique VR learning opportunities."

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