



**British School  
Overseas**  
Inspected by Penta International

## **Inspection report**

# **Ajman Academy United Arab Emirates**

**Date** 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017  
**Inspection number** 20170528

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## 1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International UK. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

During the inspection visit, 55 full or part lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, governing body, parents and groups of students. Two and a half school days were monitored. Students in Years 11 and 12 were on study leave. The first day of inspection coincided with the start of Ramadan. The number of students in the secondary, particularly boys, was adversely affected.

The lead inspector was John Cranfield. The team members were Matthew Aston, Sasha Crabb and John Nicholls.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Ajman Academy meets all the standards required for British Schools Overseas accreditation.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Overall the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often better. Students are well supported through effective pastoral care and the implementation of sound welfare, health and safety policies and procedures. The school runs well on a day to day basis. Students, parents and staff value the British nature of the curriculum. Most students make progress at least in line with their ability, some better. The national curriculum provides the framework for teaching and learning; it is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths. They include:

- The proactive involvement of the governing body in supporting the development of the school.
- The drive and ambition of the director in striving for continuous school improvement.
- Senior leaders are cohesive, capable and committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising student attainment.
- The school's strategy for identifying and promoting members of staff with the pre-requisite skills and talents ensures continuity of purpose.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities provide students with opportunity to develop their interests and talents.
- Most students in the primary and girls in the secondary are enthusiastic learners.
- Safeguarding of all students is a priority.
- The family feel of the school is a strength.
- The school buildings and facilities provide a very positive learning environment.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

Among the school's strengths, the following are areas for possible development:

- Actively promote clarity of curriculum identity to all stakeholders and ensure this is evidenced in action through consistent practice.
- Raise individual student attainment by planning and delivering learning activities which challenge all learners.
- Implement a range of strategies, including the forthcoming student leadership programme, to ensure all students take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.

#### 4. The context of the school

Full name of School	Ajman Academy		
Address	Sheikh Ammar Street Moweihat 2 Ajman United Arab Emirates		
Telephone Number/s	+971 06 741 3333		
Fax Number	N/A		
Website Address	<a href="http://www.ajmanacademy.com">www.ajmanacademy.com</a>		
Key Email Address/s	<a href="mailto:school@ajmanacademy.com">school@ajmanacademy.com</a>		
Headteacher/Principal	Dr. Tassos Anastasiades		
Chair of Board of Governors/Proprietor	Dr. Karim Shegir		
Age Range	3-16 years		
Number of Pupils	<i>Total</i> 850	<i>Boys</i> 469	<i>Girls</i> 381
Pupil Numbers by Age	<i>0-2 Years</i> 0	<i>3-5 Years</i> 201	<i>6-11 Years</i> 480
	<i>12-16 Years</i> 169	<i>17-18 Years</i> 0	<i>18+ Years</i> 0
Total Number of Part-Time Pupils	0		

Ajman Academy is a private international coeducational, school offering a British style education for students aged 3 to 16 years adapted to meet ministry requirements. There are 850 students in the school, 469 boys and 381 girls. The primary school has 480 pupils and the secondary has 169. The students are predominantly from Ajman itself although students from Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Qwain, Sharjah and Dubai also attend.

Arabic is the most common language of students. The school has a good working relationship with the Ministry of Education, receiving administrative support when required.

The National Curriculum (NC) of England provides the content for the curriculum throughout the school, ensuring that students can join/re-join the UK education system without disadvantage, at any stage.

The vast majority of teachers are from English speaking countries such as Canada, the USA, New Zealand, South Africa or Australia in addition to the UK. The school is a member of BSME.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

The ethos, nature and appearance of the school are recognisably British.

The school is organised according to the structures used in English schools. Classroom management, displays of work, three term year and age-related year groups contribute to a British feel of the school. Membership of the school council, prefects, Head Boy, Head Girl and Deputy Heads provide opportunities for students to exercise leadership and experience responsibility. As well as implementing the curriculum for England, assessments are based on national standards from the UK.

Learning ladders derived from the National Curriculum of England, are implemented across both the primary and secondary. The school has adopted the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) programme for the youngest students. Students in the secondary school follow courses leading to IGSCSE. British practice is evident in approaches to performance management. Resources are UK sourced.

All communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, translated as required; as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips, are in line with British practice. English is the common language of instruction throughout the school, apart from in Arabic, Islamic Studies and modern foreign languages.

Interviewed parents valued the British nature of the curriculum.

## 5. Standard 1

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by Ajman Academy meets the standard for accreditation with aspects of good practice.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

The National Curriculum of England provides the framework for teaching and learning, adapted to meet the Ajman Ministry of Education regulations with regard to Arabic, Social Studies and Islamic Studies. The curriculum provides opportunities for the linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative development of the students. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum supported by a range of extra-curricular activities.

The school has a written curriculum policy, supported by schemes of work which enable students to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of students, including those with learning difficulties. The principal language of instruction is English.

EYFS is delivered in full and the methods of delivery closely resemble those offered in British schools. The primary curriculum meets the needs of students and strives to blend the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) with the English National Curriculum. Not all staff are entirely comfortable with delivery of the English National Curriculum using PYP methodology, but this is developing.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum offers the full range of National Curriculum areas of study. The International Baccalaureate's Middle Years Programme will be introduced next year and integrated with the English National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, all students study English and mathematics, in addition to choosing from a full range of option subjects. The school promises to offer a subject option, even if only one student chooses that option. Students' choices are guided by a range of support activities including a comprehensive options' evening. Arabic is taught according to the requirements of the local Ministry regulations. The curriculum promotes an interest and knowledge in the culture, tradition and history of the Emirates. Through integration with the PYP, the Arabic curriculum also explores the wider world and global issues. The curriculum provided meets the needs of the student demographic. The school is sensitive to the demands of the local community without compromising the quality of the programme offered. The primary school special needs coordinator

advises on referrals from teachers and where appropriate ensures appropriate support is available through individual education plans (IEPs) and / or curriculum modification.

The school provides a programme of personal, social and health education underpinned by the International Baccalaureate's Learner Profile; delivering for example a unit of inquiry on children's rights in Year 3. The school provides careers guidance for secondary age students and has invited universities to the school to raise aspirations. Students are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, for example the prefect system and an influential school council.

The curriculum on offer takes account of the curricula and external examination accreditation commonly used in schools in the UK, in a manner that enables students to enter or re-enter the UK educational system without disadvantage.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment meet the standards required with aspects that are good or better.

Teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability increasing their understanding and developing their skills in the subjects taught as they move through the school. Whilst most teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative efforts, to show interest in their work and learn and think for themselves, this is not universal. Lessons are well-planned and mainly delivered effectively using suitable activities. Class time is generally used wisely.

Across the Foundation Stage, in the best classes, students are able to learn through a mixture of teacher and student initiated activities. Teachers provide creative contexts for learning and prepare resources that are age appropriate. e.g. pizza restaurants in role play. The extensive evidence in journals clearly shows the range of independent activities that the students have explored over the year; individuality and creativity are encouraged. Students are given opportunities to use a range of good quality resources to stimulate their imagination. The 'Seesaw' digital portfolio encourages parents to be part of the learning experience.

Throughout the primary phase students' behaviour in lessons is good. They approach learning with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. They are cooperative and able to work independently. In an effective Year 6 class, students were examining evidence of whether the moon landings actually happened. As well as being encouraged to draw their own conclusions, students were challenged and encouraged to justify their opinions. The level of challenge however is not consistent across all lessons. Teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.

The quality of teaching in the secondary school, particularly boys' classes, is not as strong as in the primary. In the best lessons, invariably girls' classes, challenging work is set, accompanied with is a high level of student engagement. Learning objectives are shared and made clear to students who demonstrate a clear understanding of what is required to make progress in lessons. In a particularly effective Year 9 girls' mathematics lesson, the teacher skilfully scaffolded the learning of all the students to maximise their understanding of mathematical equations. In less effective lessons, teaching and learning activities fail to inspire students and progress is limited at best.

Classroom resources are of a good quality, quantity and range. Generally, they are being used effectively by teachers to support learning. The majority of teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, learning

needs and prior attainment of students and generally take these into account when planning and delivering lessons. The school has adopted the Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms (TESMC) Programme. Teachers are currently undergoing training.

The school has a clear framework for assessment with Early Years students assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Across primary there are systems in place to track and assess phonics against Read Write Inc. criteria. Learning is tracked through standardised assessments (GL), Seesaw (iPad application) as well as regular monitoring by class teachers. Internal moderation of the core skills in English, science and mathematics is now in place. Results are standardised against learning ladders by vertical teams led by subject co-ordinators. IGCSE results provide benchmarking opportunities against international standards.

Parents receive regular detailed and informative reports. The styles of teaching, learning and assessment equip pupils with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter or re-enter the UK educational system at an appropriate level.

### 5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall students' progress is broadly in line with ability, some better. On entry, most students are second or third English language speakers. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most students are working broadly in line with UK national expectations, some above. The school has implemented a comprehensive data tracking process to monitor individual progress and identify areas requiring additional support. Good or better progress is made by most students.

Assessment tests taken in October last year and May this year demonstrate most students make expected or better progress across Years 1 and 2. In English at the end of Year 6, 45% of students are working at or above expectation compared to 38% in November. The figures for mathematics are 48% and 35% respectively. For Science 46% and 45%.

Good progress continues across Key Stage 3. Assessment data in mathematics, shows that 61% of students in Year 7 are working at or above their target grade. In Year 9, this figure rises to 81%. In science, the figures are 67% and 86% respectively. The school has identified English as an area of concern. Over half the cohort in Years 7,8 & 9 are working towards their target grade.

The first cohort of Year 11 students recently sat iGCSE examinations. The school is awaiting the results. Consequently, there is no historical data to identify any trends.

There is a clear focus on continuous improvement in terms of pupil attendance and punctuality. There is regular and effective communication to parents. Attendance is taken at the start of the school day in EYFS, primary and secondary. In addition, in secondary, registers are also taken at the beginning of every lesson. Attendance for the year to date is 90%. Nearly all pupils arrive at school on time. The main reasons for lateness are traffic or medical appointments. The reasons for absenteeism are illness, Ramadan or extended holiday.

Most students are thoughtful and well behaved. Most students are motivated learners. By the time they leave school, they have the personal and social skills needed to move successfully to the next stage of their lives.

## 6. *Standard 2* Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Overall, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students meets the standards required for accreditation.

Students develop their awareness and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects well. Primarily this is achieved through the aims of the International Baccalaureate learner profile, assemblies, special days and events at school, extra-curricular activities and student council opportunities.

Students develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence through a range of planned curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Many units of inquiry support this across the curriculum including units on “Express yourself” and “Children’s rights”. In the PYP exhibition, students explored central ideas such as cultural diversity, the role of the military and environmental issues. The exhibition was presented to the wider school community and is something that younger students look forward to.

There is a behaviour policy which encourages students to behave responsibly. Across the school ‘Engage’ software is used to record behaviour issues. A four-stage system for dealing with behaviour supported by year leaders as appropriate, has recently been introduced.

Students gain a knowledge of citizenship in the host country through Arabic Social studies lessons. The mix of national curriculum objectives, units of inquiry and the International Baccalaureate learner profile support students in their knowledge of UK and international citizenship. Each morning, the national anthem of the United Arab Emirates is played and this is observed impeccably by staff, students and parents alike.

UK attitudes of tolerance, respect and freedom of expression are promoted through the adoption of the International Baccalaureate programmes across the school. Students also have the opportunity to be part of the student council and experience aspects of democracy at work. The student council organises International Day and provides a clear voice on aspects of school life. Students have the opportunity to join the school’s Eco Council and Green Team in order to raise the profile of environmental issues.

## 7. *Standard 3* The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety of students meets the standard for accreditation.

Effective written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students in school and those taking part in outside activities are in place. A robust and rigorous system of checks is in place to safeguard students. The school has prepared and implemented a written policy to promote good behaviour which includes outlining sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. In addition, the school has prepared and implemented an effective written policy to prevent bullying. There are celebration assemblies in primary for each year group on a monthly rota.

The school has a written policy on first aid which is implemented effectively. Two nurses and a clinic assistant are supported by a visiting doctor to ensure students remain healthy or become healthy again quickly. Dental and vision checks take place in line with ministry requirements. The clinic is well organised and the 'Engage' system enables staff to communicate effectively regarding incidents or concerns. 20 staff have received first aid training. First aiders accompany trips in line with the school's policy. The nurses contribute to the curriculum by giving talks on health issues. Appropriate fire safety and lock down policies and procedures are in place. Fire drills are conducted regularly throughout the year and evacuations are timed and monitored. The site manager ensures that the school site is kept clean throughout the day and that the outdoor areas are safe and well cared for. The school premises are closely supervised. Security guards man all entrances. All visitors to the school have to produce a proof of ID in order to be issued with badges.

School staff are well deployed both at the start and end of school and break times. The school keeps written records of sanction imposed on students for serious disciplinary offences. The admissions register and attendance register exceed local regulatory requirements.

## 8. *Standard 4* The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The owner is a member of the ruling family who delegates responsibility for the well-being of the school to a board of governors. The governing body oversee school policies, ensuring all local requirements are met. They do not interfere with the management of the school; there are clear lines of demarcation.

Responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding and welfare of students are clearly understood and effectively discharged. Clear procedures have been put in place to ensure staff appointed meet best practice regarding safe recruitment procedures.

Prior to the confirmation of staff appointments, appropriate checks, including police checks in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in Saudi Arabia and their previous employment activity. The Ministry of Education must approve the qualifications and status of teachers employed by the school before the issuing of work visas. The process includes the checking of original certification including the attestation of degree certificates and teaching certificates. The school does not employ supply staff.

There is a list maintained of all staff and volunteers who currently work in the school. This shows when they started and stopped working in the school.

## 9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The accommodation and resources at Ajman Academy are outstanding.

The buildings and grounds are very well maintained, clean, spacious and attractive. The pool, gymnasium and specialist rooms are used well to provide a wide range of learning activities. Classrooms are well resourced, with interactive whiteboards and iPads available throughout the school. Classrooms have been designed to be light and spacious, and the corridors are large enough to encourage groups of students to use them as extra learning areas.

The primary library is well stocked, light and engaging. The secondary library is fit for purpose. Sound insulation, air conditioning units, lighting and acoustics allow for effective teaching and communication. The flooring is in excellent condition throughout the school.

The drainage system allows for the effective disposal of wastewater and surface water. There are sufficient bathrooms for staff and students. Numerous drinking water stations are distributed throughout the school and these are regularly tested. The facilities manager ensures health and safety checks take place regularly. Any health and safety issues are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The school meets all national regulations regarding the safety and maintenance of the facilities. Security inside and outside the school building is effective and the dropping off and picking up routines are efficient and safe. No outside organisations use the school during the school day. The canteen facilities are good and ensure hygienic serving and consumption.

The furniture and fittings are appropriate for the age and needs of all students including those with special needs. Access for wheelchairs is possible and a plan for evacuation is in place for wheelchair users. There is a well-resourced and staffed medical room. The building and stairs are designed to enable evacuation efficiently and safely.

## 10. Standard 6

### The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others meets the standard for accreditation.

Appropriate contact details are provided for parents and other stakeholders, including the e-mail contact details of the governing body and senior leaders. The school's ethos is prominently featured in relevant documents and publications. The school's website is informative for potential applicants, who on contacting the school are then well-supported and kept informed at every stage of the admission process. The school's admissions policy is published on the school website and readily available from the school on request.

In addition, particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving are also posted on the website and available on request. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the school on request. In addition, there is a link on the school website for parents to voice their concerns. The school is presently reviewing its educational and welfare provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students for whom English is an additional language.

The website details the programmes of study offered by the school along with curriculum 'Learning ladders'. Curriculum information sessions have been run by heads of department and subject co-ordinators to keep parents fully briefed of any changes.

Appropriate records are kept of complaints and also the outcomes. The school regularly seeks feedback from parents both formally and informally. Face to face meetings are given a high priority. A focus group of parents welcomed weekly PTA meetings with the principal. Teachers in the lower primary provide effective contact points for parents collecting their children. In addition, parents are invited to attend transition meetings, school productions and sports day. Communication platforms such as 'Communicator' and 'Seesaw' are used effectively.

Reporting procedures are detailed and regular, providing information on progress and attainment. Foundation Stage teachers use the 2Simple software and email detailed reports every 6 weeks to parents.

A comprehensive log is kept of all staff employed together with their qualifications and service records. Inspection reports are posted on the school's website.

## 11. *Standard 7*

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

The complaints policy and procedures are available on request.

The policy clearly outlines the steps in the complaints process. Clear time scales are set out for the management of the complaint. The handling of complaints mirrors the management structure of the school. Nearly all cases are dealt with by the tutor, the pastoral coordinator or head of department on an informal basis.

In addition, parents have easy access to class teachers and senior leaders at the start and end of the school day.

If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of an informal approach, they are able to submit a formal written complaint. If a formal complaint has not been resolved by the director, the parent(s) can contact the governing body of the school for a formal review. Parents have the opportunity to be accompanied by a friend.

A copy of the findings and recommendations are made available to the complainant and, where relevant the person complained about, the governing body and director. The policy allows for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating at which stage they were resolved. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are treated confidentially and kept securely. In the last instance parents have recourse to the Ministry of Education.

## 12. *Standard 8*

### The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

### 13. *Standard 9* Leadership and management of the school

Overall the quality of leadership and management meets the standards required for accreditation with aspects of good or better. The director provides clear educational direction. There are positive relationships between the director and the board.

After a period of turbulence, including the appointment of some new senior and middle leaders, the school is now entering a period of stability. Consequently, structures and many policies and procedures are being updated to reflect the new situation. Key leaders and managers, including the board of governors consistently communicate high expectations and ambition. The school development plan identifies clear targets with timeframes and success criteria. Appropriate emphasis is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising student attainment.

Increased focus on monitoring and a more rigorous application of standards are gradually raising the quality of teaching further. Similarly, greater attention to raising student attainment across the whole school is beginning to pay dividends.

Effective policies ensure that most students make progress at least in line with their ability in literacy. The school's curriculum provides organised and effective opportunities for groups of students to learn and make good progress. The school ethos, underpinned by the IB learner profile, promotes positive behaviour and good personal development for students, including aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school runs well on a day-to-day basis. Operational procedures are established and understood. The governing body is successful in securing, supporting and developing sufficient high quality staff and ensuring their suitability to work with children. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and exceed statutory requirements. The school works well with parents and carers.