



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

Sara Village School

Dhahran

KSA

Date 12th – 14th March 2023
Inspection number 20230312

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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. 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, 33 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were seen in lessons, and discussions were held with the staff, parents and informally with students. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Alistair Downs. The team member was Emma Paget.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas, except for those that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. These pertain to aspects of the UK Equality Act 2010. The school actively promotes tolerance and a respect for all human differences, within the confines of the law. This is embedded in the culture and ethos of the school. This judgement is endorsed by the British Government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Sara Village School is a school where students are genuinely known as individuals and feel happy, safe, secure and cared for. The students, parents and staff are strongly supportive of the school and there is a profound sense of community.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- Polite, well behaved students who are keen to learn;
- The positive relationships between students and teachers, and amongst the students themselves;
- The high standard of maintenance, operational management, and health and safety procedures at the school;
- The high priority the school has given to student wellbeing;
- The sense of community that exists at SVS and the excellent relationships the school has developed with parents;
- The role and positive impact of International Schools Group (ISG) head office;
- Bright, well-resourced classrooms and attractive, engaging shared areas.

3.2 Points for improvement

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following development points:

1. Improve whole school consistency in lesson planning and differentiation of students' work;
2. Ensure that school improvement plans involve all stakeholders and are based on accurate self-evaluation;
3. Develop an internal quality assurance process which includes the monitoring of teaching and learning, and identifies opportunities to engage staff in impactful professional development.

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	ISG Sara Village School				
Address	Sara Village Al Amwaj-Unit No 7 Al Khobar 34741-6123 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia				
Telephone Number/s	+966 13 869 8100 ext. 4125/4128				
Website Address	svs.isg.edu.sa				
Key Email Address	svs@isg.edu.sa				
Headteacher/Principal	Richard Charlesworth				
Chair of board/Proprietor	Dr Michael Mack, Superintendent Mr Andrew Law, Chair of Board of Governors				
Age Range	4-11 years				
Total number of pupils	67	Boys	37	Girls	30
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	0	<i>12-16 years</i>	0	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	15	<i>17-18 years</i>	0	
	<i>6-11 years</i>	52	<i>18+ years</i>	0	
Total number of part-time children	0				

4.1 British nature of the school

Sara Village School (SVS) is run by the International Schools Group (ISG) on behalf of British Aerospace Engineering (BAE). The school serves the children of families who work for BAE and the British Ministry of Defence (MOD). 84% of the students are British and the majority of teaching staff are also British, as is the principal.

The school follows the National Curriculum of England as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance. Schemes of work from the UK, including *White Rose Maths* and *Rocket Phonics*, are used and many UK themed topics such as WWII, Victorians and Anglo Saxons are covered.

The library contains a wealth of English literature which students have regular access to, and texts by British authors such as Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, David Walliams and Julia Donaldson provide the focus for English lessons across the school. Students have further access to British Authors through the 'Authors abroad' programme.

The majority of the teaching staff are UK trained and benefit from CPD aligned to UK practice. The school is a member of the British Schools of the Middle East group (BSME) and collaborates with other British schools in Saudi Arabia, most notably the British School Dhahran.

English is the language of instruction throughout the school, apart from Spanish and Arabic lessons. Parents receive all the school's letters and reports in English and the school website is also in English. Many classroom resources, both physical and online, are sourced from the UK.

A house system is well established, similar to those in UK schools, and a head boy and head girl are selected in Year 6. British values are promoted through assemblies, classroom displays and reinforcement throughout the school day. 'Diverse Britain' is a theme for PSHE lessons and key events in the British calendar, such as The Queen's Jubilee, Christmas, Bonfire Night and Remembrance Day are recognised.

5. Standard 1 The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by SVS fully meets the BSO standards.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory: the breadth is good, and it is supported by sound documentation.

The school meets the requirements in its provision of a British based curriculum in meeting the needs of its students. It follows the EYFS curriculum in the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum for England in Key Stages (KS) 1 and 2. The curriculum is appropriately adapted to meet local requirements and this is reflected in long-term curriculum maps.

Arabic is offered in all year groups and Spanish is introduced in Year 5. Students have access to a wide range of specialist subjects which include PE, art, music, languages and ICT. The PSHE curriculum is carefully adapted to suit the local culture and weekly empathy lessons take place for all students.

EYFS lessons are taught according to the new EYFS framework and the *Seesaw* platform is used to track and record their progress. Continuous provision is set up well in EYFS which enables the children to explore and extend their learning independently and with confidence. In all lessons children are able to use the variety of spaces available to work in all curriculum areas. Writing and early numbers are embedded within the curriculum and students were able to write sentences using small whiteboards. Dance and movement were observed at the start of the day.

Language is successfully embedded across the curriculum and children are given the opportunity for a range of speaking and listening tasks which include role play, performance, peer support and class discussions. Reading takes place regularly and reading is timetabled for both lessons and library sessions. Reading was also seen in a Year 6 Arabic lesson where students were successfully able to read and decode Arabic sentences. During the library sessions students are able to choose one library book a week to take home and they also complete an *Accelerated Reader* quiz on the book they have finished. A synthetic, progressive phonics programme is delivered in EYFS and KS1.

Across the school the curriculum is varied and is supported by relevant resources and technology which include laptops, iPad, a 3D printer and interactive whiteboards. Lessons generally demonstrated the good use of the available technology in classes and both teachers and students used this effectively to aid teaching and learning.

A range of policies support the curriculum which include the curriculum policy; assessment and feedback; mathematics and literacy policies. Curriculum reviews take place at management level and subject leaders are responsible for ordering resources for their areas. The curriculum is overseen by the ISG director for teaching and learning. Weekly meetings take place at ISG's district office where discussions are based around aligning the individual schools, whilst also allowing for autonomy with regards to embedding curriculum in order to meet the needs of the students at each location.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good.

All teachers have excellent relationships with the students and the small class sizes allow for personalised support in every lesson. Students feel safe in the classroom environment and as a result they are confident to answer questions and ask for help when required, as well as work independently. This produces a positive learning environment where students persevere when faced with challenges, for example children in EYFS were observed using the phonic cards around the classroom to self-correct when writing their letters and simple sentences.

In the majority of lessons teachers use hands-on learning: as a result, students are highly engaged. For example, making jam sandwiches in Year 1, KS2 pottery workshops, a *Minecraft* Mayan temple lesson, and trading of goods during a Year 4 Viking lesson.

Continuous provision is used effectively in EYFS to cover all learning areas, including roleplay where children are encouraged to actively participate in physical activities and demonstrate their language skills. During the inspection the roleplay was based around the topic of 'space' and linked to the story 'Whatever Next.' The children were provided a variety of activities to embed their learning and were highly engaged throughout. The new EYFS dance strand has been incorporated and the children were able to change movements and adapt dances as part of their early morning warm-ups.

Across the school, most teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the subjects they teach, however in some EYFS and KS1 lessons clear instructions were not provided by the teacher and so students were unclear of the expectations or how to carry out the task. Differentiation was evident in lessons, usually by outcome.

Students demonstrate excellent peer-to-peer support strategies and know what to do when they are unsure. For example, in a Year 6 lesson where a student was helping to close the gaps in learning as his peer had been absent for the previous lesson, and during a Year 2 lesson where a student was seen explaining to the class what homophones are.

Reading has a high profile across the school. Students have access to a wide variety of books and throughout the school reading time and designated class library times are timetabled. A phonics programme has successfully been piloted in Year 2 to improve reading outcomes which has helped to improve reading levels. The school plans to introduce this to Reception and Year 1 next academic year.

In all classrooms the interactive whiteboard is used effectively by both teachers and students, and iPads and chrome books are commonplace in KS2 to support learning.

Online learning platforms such as Google classroom, *Times table Rockstars*, *Rocket Phonics*, *NumBots* and *Seesaw* help to embed learning in class and support learning at home.

Formative verbal feedback is the predominant form of feedback used across the school. The school's assessment policy prioritises formative verbal feedback to guide students in their learning. This was confirmed through lesson observations. Some excellent examples of this practice were observed during the inspection, for example, during a PE lesson the children were provided with personalised verbal feedback to help their feet positions for badminton.

A range of assessments are used at the end of each term which include *No More Marking*, *Renaissance Star Reading* and *Cem Incas Testing*. The assessments are triangulated to give an overall judgement and then used formatively with data being shared with all staff members by the assessment lead during weekly briefings.

Data is tracked and measured against the UK standards. Written work is moderated through the comparative judgement platform *NoMoreMarking*. In addition, internal assessments of unaided writing are undertaken thrice yearly as stated in school assessment policy. After each assessment, individualised targets are set for each student in agreement between class teachers and the literacy coordinator. Most students are aware of their targets in order to move their learning forward and these targets were visible in some classrooms for the students to refer to.

In response to a careful analysis of the assessment data the school has introduced reading and phonics interventions in Year 2 which has positively impacted assessment results. A phonics check is completed in EYFS using flashcards and pictures are then submitted onto *Seesaw*.

Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) attend the 'Treetop' class, where intervention takes place to close any gaps in learning. These are conducted in either one-to-one or small group sessions. This is in accordance with the Learning support policy and the IEP for each student. Systems are in place for supporting less able/SEND students with their learning. Small class sizes and a focus on formative assessment through verbal feedback, as stated in policy, allows teachers to challenge students effectively, including those who are gifted and talented, to progress towards the next step in their learning journey.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students are good.

EYFS attainment is measured against the EYFS UK standards using the standards rubric. *Seesaw* is used to track the strands.

Over the past two years the school's data shows that the majority of students are either in line with or exceeding UK expected standards by the end of KS 2. In KS2, 100% pupils are at or above the expected standard for reading, and 95% are at or above the expected standard for maths according to the Renaissance Star assessment platform. For Year 2, at the start of the year 67% of students achieved expected or above expected results in maths and 64% in reading. These results should be considered in the context of schools in Saudi Arabia experiencing almost two years of remote learning, one of the longest periods in the world.

Writing samples in KS2 demonstrate that writing levels are secure. Online INCAS English assessments confirm that students are on target or above expectations in writing at Year 6. At the time of the inspection the school was awaiting *NoMoreMarking* results from the recent assessments for Year 2 and Year 6, which will be used to triangulate the data. Data is studied by the team at ISG Head Office to monitor ongoing priorities for the school and progress over time.

At all levels, students talked confidently and articulately. Small class sizes mean that students are supported extensively when needed and the opportunities for speaking and listening are wide. During mathematics lessons, students demonstrated their understanding of mathematical language to answer questions independently through a process of elimination. They were able to spot similarities and differences in fraction part-whole model questions e.g. "all of them have a whole number" and "they are partitioned differently".

There is a clear procedure for SEND identification which utilises assessment data and teacher observation. Many of these students are supported through in-class intervention or withdrawals. For all of those students who are on the SEND register IEP notes were provided. IEP meetings take place throughout the year; however these meetings are not formally recorded and targets do not currently have review dates.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. As students move through the school, they are provided opportunities to develop their awareness and understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects through PSHE lessons, extra-curricular activities, assemblies and the curriculum.

There is a very good rapport between students and teachers and positive relationships are clearly evident across the school. Students reported feeling happy in school, as confirmed by the happiness survey which was completed by all students in January 2023 to help the school better understand the thoughts and feelings of their students. In the most recent parent feedback survey all parents agreed with the statement “My child is happy going to school.”

All students have the opportunity to participate in events and activities outside the classroom through assemblies, productions and after school activities (ASAs). The school is looking at ways to extend ASAs further, particularly in sports, by linking with the British School Dhahran. From conversations with parents this is something they would support.

Students experience other cultures and lifestyles through curriculum topics which focus on different countries. The school hosts an annual International Day and recognises Black History month. Students have the opportunity to participate in educational visits, both within the local area and to different regions of Saudi Arabia. A group of students also recently travelled to Oman to participate in the BSME games.

The school offers many opportunities for students to accept responsibility and learn how to be a leader, for example house captains, empathy ambassadors, and head boy and girl, however currently these are only available to children in Year 6. The student council is highly active and meets weekly. As with other student leadership roles, this is only currently open to Year 6 students.

The behaviour of the students during the inspection was positive and all students were well mannered and polite. Teachers reported that no formal recording of behaviour issues is required. If a behaviour concern arises, parents are contacted to discuss the steps forward. In all classes, children were engaged fully in their learning. Pupils are rewarded through house points and ‘star of the month’ which rewards students in each class who have consistently displayed empathy, behaviour and hard work.

There is a clear programme of PSHE which supports student development at all levels. The PSHE coordinator is passionate about this area of the curriculum and has introduced topics such as ‘Diverse Britain’ and ‘British Values’. The school has worked hard to become more proactive when supporting students socially and emotionally and has introduced weekly empathy lessons for all students, in addition to PSHE.

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

The welfare, health and safety of students is excellent.

The compound in which the school is located is secure from the general public and robust entry/exit procedures are in place which includes the use of ID cards. All outside visitors to the compound have to be signed in and out by the principal. Once on the compound a further layer of security is in place to gain access to the school. Visitors are issued with an ID badge and must sign in/out. Students and parents report that students feel safe in school.

Maintenance processes are highly comprehensive and overseen by BAE systems. They ensure that both preventative and ongoing maintenance is carried out as per established schedules and weekly walkthroughs of the site are held and documented. Any minor matters are reported via a helpdesk and dealt with swiftly.

There is a fire department on the compound and a minimum of two fire drills are carried out annually. Fire safety equipment is evident around the school and serviced regularly. Evacuation maps and procedures are visible in corridors and are in the process of being added to all classrooms. The muster point is clearly signposted and known by all. Students and staff have undergone fire awareness sessions and training. The school also has established procedures for lockdown and conducts regular drills.

All staff are first aid trained and first aid equipment is available in school. Parents and students both confirmed that if a child is injured the parents receive a letter from the school and if it is a bump to the head then parents will be called. For more serious injuries there is a clinic on the compound which is managed by BAE systems. Lists of students suffering from allergies are available in the staff room and signs entering the school building state it is a 'nut-free' zone.

Safeguarding is a clear priority at the school and procedures are robust. A comprehensive policy is in place and all staff complete training annually.

All requests for trips off site must be submitted to the principal. A risk assessment must be completed and signed off by the principal. BAE systems is responsible for any buses from the school. The bus driver has undergone rigorous background checks and students are always accompanied by an academic member of staff.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

A robust recruitment process is in place for school staff which is led by the principal and the ISG Director of HR. Prior to appointment all members of staff undergo rigorous checks by the school to confirm their suitability for the position. References are gathered and these are verified via video call with the referee. There is a comprehensive Single Central Register.

The school employs McDowell, a well-regarded company specialising in background and pre-employment screening services, to complete a 10-year background check on all successful candidates. This covers all countries a staff member has previously worked in over the ten-year period.

Online safeguarding training is completed by all staff prior to joining the school and in-person safeguarding training which includes school specific procedures is carried out as part of the onboarding process. When asked, all staff were able to relay the correct safeguarding procedures

BAE systems is responsible for the recruitment and onboarding of all maintenance and facilities staff and has similarly robust procedures in place. Wherever possible the same staff attend to school matters to provide consistency for students and staff.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are excellent.

The school is clean, tidy and maintained to a high standard. Displays throughout the school are excellent, especially in shared areas and corridors.

Classrooms are inviting, engaging and welcoming. They benefit from an abundance of natural light and have a wide range of appropriate resources. Interactive digital screens are installed in each classroom.

The EYFS and KS1 classrooms are designed to allow free flow for the youngest students. They have direct access to a shaded and gated outdoor space which has soft flooring and a range of equipment.

Specialist teaching rooms are provided for languages, art and DT, science, music and IT. The school benefits from an indoor sports hall and there is ample outdoor play space. A sports pitch, located directly adjacent to the school, is used for larger scale sports events such as the annual sports day. The school has recently renovated its library and opened a new garden area where each class has started to grow plants.

The playground area is well equipped with a large climbing frame, along with a range of scooters and bicycles. A new outdoor library has recently been added for those students who wish to sit and read.

Drinking water is available throughout school via water coolers in corridors. There are separate toilets for adults and students.

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 BSO.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and highly supportive. They feel very well informed and highlighted the small size and personalised nature of SVS as key strengths. As one parent commented when talking about the school, “We feel we have hit the jackpot.” A parent handbook is provided to families upon joining the school and policies are available on the school website. On a day to day basis, information is shared with parents and students via email and *Seesaw*. *Google Classroom* is also utilised regularly and there is a weekly newsletter. Formal progress reports are sent to parents at the end of Term 3 and parents’ meetings (PTCs) are held twice each year.

Parents reported that the school is very open and staff are accessible before and after school. Parents commented that the principal is always on the school gate and available should anyone wish to speak to him. An annual parent’s survey is administered by the school, most recently in December 2022.

The principal believes the parents value the close-knit community and the fact that their children come to school looking forward to the day ahead.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO.

A detailed policy is in place and is made available via the school website. This policy clearly outlines how complaints can be made and procedures to follow, including expected timescales. As part of this policy the school provides an easy to follow flow diagram which details which member of staff to contact depending on the nature of the concern and how to escalate these concerns.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with the school on any issue. An open-door policy is in place and parents reported that a member of staff is always available, including the principal. The majority of issues are dealt with quickly and effectively in an informal manner, without the need for escalation.

There have been no formal complaints during the current academic year.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management meets the standard required and is good: some aspects are excellent.

The school is led and managed by a newly appointed principal and a small team of middle leaders who ensure the day-to-day management of the school is efficient and smooth. They are supported, as required, by the principal and head of primary at the British School Dhahran, who meet on a weekly basis.

The literacy coordinator assumes the principal responsibilities when the principal is off campus. The principal and the ISG director meet twice a week to discuss ongoing operations; once at SVS and once at head office. The weekly visit to SVS involves completing documented learning walks with the principal, followed by a meeting. Monitoring of books takes place by the middle leaders for quality assurance purposes. They are responsible for tracking data which is discussed with teachers and the principal on a regular basis. Staff meetings are also held on a weekly basis.

The school is a member of *British Schools Middle East (BSME)*; the principal regularly attends annual conferences. The school has a high regard for the professional development of staff and there is a generous professional development budget. Teachers regularly attend a wide variety of training. Continued professional development is a priority at the school with teachers regularly having access to online and in person courses that link with the core work of improving teaching and learning across the school. Teachers are required to feedback their newly acquired knowledge to the rest of the team.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and benchmarked against the British schools overseas standards. The school improvement plan (SIP) highlights developments for 2022-2024 in which some staff members had an input in creating. The principal has plans to share the SIP with all staff and ensure it is continually updated to incorporate more short-term targets.