



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection Report

**Scholars International
Academy**

Sharjah
United Arab Emirates

Date
Inspection number

28th February – 2nd March 2023
20230228

Contents		page
1	Purpose and scope on the inspection	2
2	Compliance with regulatory requirements	2
3	Overall effectiveness of the school	3
	3.1 What the school does well	3
	3.2 Points for improvement	3
4	The context of the school	4
	4.1 The British nature of the school	5
5	Standard 1 The quality of education provided by the school	6
	5.1 Curriculum	6
	5.2 Teaching and assessment	9
	5.3 Standards achieved by pupils	12
6	Standard 2 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	14
7	Standard 3 The welfare, health and safety of pupils	15
8	Standard 4 The suitability of the proprietor and staff	17
9	Standard 5 The premises and accommodation	18
10	Standard 6 The provision of information for parents, carers and others	20
11	Standard 7 The school's procedures for handling complaints	21
12	Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school	22

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 learners; 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 learners and learners' 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, over 80 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed, and data reviewed. Learners' workbooks were seen in lessons, and discussions were held with the staff, parents and informally with learners. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Nicola Walsh. The team members were Nigel Davis, Nina Hudd and Philippe Poulain.

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

The school provides a good quality of education for learners, who have high aspirations and are keen to learn. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners is particularly strong, with excellent features. By the time learners leave the school, outcomes in external examinations and learners' conduct are high. This is as a result of the school providing many opportunities for learners' personal development, care and academic support so that every learner can do their best and achieve. Learners and staff are happy to work here and enjoy the life of the school.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the:

- learners, who are socially competent and enjoy school;
- highly effective pastoral and enrichment policies and procedures;
- high outcomes at Key Stages (KS) 4 and 5, above UK averages;
- standards in maths in primary;
- creative and attractive school accommodation that enhances learning;
- principal and school leaders share a clear vision and are committed to ensuring the school's success;
- robust safeguarding and welfare systems;
- EYFS nurturing environment that enables learners to thrive.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Teaching strategies to be more sharply focussed on enabling all EAL learners to make rapid and sustained progress.
- Seek creative solutions to recruit and retain high quality teachers.
- Ensure the KS4 curriculum promotes opportunities for increased creativity, performing arts and design.

The context of the school

Full name of School	Scholars International Academy				
Address	Industrial Area - Muwailih Commercial – Sharjah, UAE				
Telephone Number/s	+971 065197000				
Website Address	https://sia.ae/				
Key Email Address	principal@sia.ae				
Headteacher/ Principal	Mr James Batts				
Chair of board/Proprietor	Ms Janet O’Keefe (Chair of Governors) Ms Aparna Verma (CEO)				
Age Range	3-19 years				
Total number of pupils	1,178	Boys	642	Girls	536
Numbers by age	<i>0-2 years</i>	0	<i>12-16 years</i>	348	
	<i>3-5 years</i>	188	<i>17-18 years</i>	45	
	<i>6-11 years</i>	595	<i>18+ years</i>	2	
Total number of part-time children	0				

The school is one of 3 in the Scholars International Group of schools and was established in 2007. Over half the learners on roll at the school are of Indian, Pakistan or Egyptian nationalities. Almost all learners speak English as a second language (EAL), as only 4% of learners on roll are from English speaking countries, such as the UK or the USA.

3.1 British nature of the school

- The school delivers the English National Curriculum (ENC) and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) adapted to meet local requirements.
- The school's leadership team are British.
- A board of governors similar to that in a UK school, supports the school in its strategic direction
- The academic calendar replicates that of a British school.
- The school is organised into key stages and year groups.
- The school's assessments and resources are UK sourced.
- The school promotes British values through the school's curriculum, ethos, displays and events.
- The school has a uniform policy, like many English schools.
- The school's rewards system reflects those used in English schools.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

4.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

The school's curriculum meets the needs of all learners. The school follows the early years foundation stage (EYFS), adapted to the 2021 guidance, and English national curriculum (ENC). Both are adapted to include the requirements of the ministry.

Curriculum long term plans and mid-term plans are in place across year groups. Teachers plan lessons using learning objectives based upon the ENC or EYFS. English and maths are delivered daily in primary, and across the primary section a published maths scheme is in place. This ensures progression and is beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes at the end of KS2. In KS3 a well-structured English scheme of work 'Writing to Entertain' was in place. This provides support for teachers across the department and reduces variance in a school where staff turnover can be high. However, there is not yet a curriculum map which details progression by subject from FS to the end of KS3.

In the early years and in KS1 teachers plan lessons that are delivered through a timetabled curriculum. Learning environments are organised around the 7 areas of learning through the provision of a themed, play-based curriculum. The curriculum includes many opportunities for the development of English language through circle time, story, show and tell sessions and phonics. Outdoor and adventurous play activities are timetabled to ensure learners' physical development is met. Learners are encouraged to be imaginative and learn through role play. Learners were observed recreating the story of *The Gigantic Turnip* and writing lists in the role play area.

The school has revised its curriculum provision of phonics after a close analysis of the year 1 phonics data at the end of 2022. Now 2 sessions are offered daily, and this is already showing an impact on learners' progress in decoding words. Phonics provision follows a UK DfE approved scheme and is delivered to whole class, small groups and 1:1 provision across EYFS and KS1. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to deliver phonics to small groups and engage learners in their work.

Primary learners visit the library and take a book home to share with parents that is exchanged weekly. Reading is taught through guided reading sessions, but it was

noted that learners were unable to define the meaning of words that they could read. Year 2 learners read books that were below the expected level for learners whose first language is English. Learners were often presented with a worksheet that they struggled to read and the teacher did not pre-read the worksheet or define key vocabulary in the text. A greater focus on vocabulary would enable learners in lower KS2 to understand texts presented to them. However, the strong phonics sessions and focus on high frequency words in EYFS and KS1 are enabling learners to make rapid progress and decode words using phonic strategies. A further emphasis is now required on reading comprehension in KS2.

Specialist teachers deliver weekly sessions in performing arts, computing and PE. From year 4 specialist teachers deliver design and technology and French weekly. This is in addition to the requirements of the ministry to teach Arabic, Islamic, moral and social studies. This ensures learners up to the end of KS3 enjoy a broad curriculum. Learners were observed singing songs to celebrate Mother's Day in music. Specialist areas are well resourced matching the requirements of the curriculum.

The PSHE curriculum is delivered alongside the required ministry moral and social education curriculum. A long-term plan for PSHE was evidenced in the primary school with subjects such as relationships, living in the wider world and digital wellbeing included. In the secondary school this is supported through themed morning assemblies. The inspection visit coincided with International Women's Day, on which the secondary school hosted a range of activities in an assembly and within lessons.

In KS4, option choices are limited and do not build upon the breadth of curriculum at KS3. However, art, PE and psychology are offered in addition to core subjects. The school stated that limitations on facilities and staffing restricts more subjects being offered at KS4 and KS5. Both learners and teachers expressed a desire to study a broader breadth of subjects at advanced level, in view of pursuing them at university.

Transition between key stages is well established. Teachers between secondary and primary communicate regularly regarding learners' pastoral and academic needs. There are specific days for year 6 to try out lessons in year 7 and this eases transition to secondary. Sixth form learners who left the school at the end of the school year in 2022 travelled abroad to study in the UK, North America, Dubai, Pakistan and Bulgaria. However, the school does not yet have a bespoke university and careers counsellor to support year 13 learners. Learners may benefit from this support, making applications earlier to universities. As the sixth form increases in size, this support will need to be a priority.

Homework is provided for learners regularly across the school, and this is communicated in curriculum newsletters. The recent introduction of an AI based software for home learning has been welcomed by teachers, learners and parents. This has added clear structure, and an appropriate level of challenge for learners to work independently beyond school.

The new head of inclusion leader is beginning to develop strategies for the identification of SEND learners and for their provision. This includes detailed IEPs, a stepped approach to provision, and effective links with parents. The school deploys learning assistants and SEND teachers effectively to support where there is an identified need. A teaching assistant was observed supporting a child 1:1 with phonics. Clear progress in learning was evident because of the support well matched to the child's needs.

The school has a very large majority of learners who speak English as a second language. However, there are not enough strategies employed by teachers in whole class teaching to meet their needs. An emphasis on vocabulary and understanding should be more evident. This was most noticeable in primary lessons where learners' misunderstanding of key vocabulary impacted in core subjects such as reading, maths and science.

The *High Performance Learning* framework has been brought in as part of the school's strategic direction. It is beginning to have a significantly positive effect: the school will be going for full accreditation in May 2023.

The timetabled curriculum is complemented by a broader offer of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities. A wide range of sporting, performance and academic opportunities are provided through the ECA programme. These take place weekly on Mondays, with approximately 25% of learners attending. Enrichment activities across the school include competitions through EISSA, BSME and Olympiad competitions. Opportunities for Sixth Form learners to participate in a school-based internship system commenced this year. Both learners and staff have commented on the positive impact it is having on learners.

British values such as democracy, diplomacy and freedom and respect were evidenced through the curriculum, leadership opportunities and ethos. Displays throughout the school showcased links between shared values and curriculum content which celebrated British values of equality, diversity and inclusion. In a history lesson learners debated the benefits and disadvantages of mediaeval society in Britain.

4.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good.

Across the school all staff encourage learners to behave responsibly. Learning behaviours of learners in lessons are good, they listen attentively and are keen to learn. The use of learning objectives was consistently employed, so that learners know what they are learning to do. Teachers recalled the previous learning before commencing the new learning. Lessons follow the same structure and time is used well. In the strongest lessons in KSs 4 and 5 where there is a sharp focus by subject specialist teachers on the exam syllabus, teachers provide purposeful and timely feedback and questioning routinely checks on learners' understanding. However, this was not consistent across the whole school.

Early years teachers plan timetabled activities that develop the interests and development of learners. They regularly ask questions of learners and engage learners in conversations. Carefully planned activities enabled group work on a variety of tasks that are engaging and purposeful. Children sequenced pictures from the story *The Gigantic Turnip*, whilst others read high frequency word flashcards with a teaching assistant. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support children's personal, social and emotional development through play activities in shared outdoor and indoor areas. They engage children in play and encourage interaction and taking turns. Physical education specialists deliver timetabled sessions, in addition to opportunities for children to use small, wheeled trikes and climbing equipment in outdoor areas.

Teachers in early years and KS1 demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading. There is a strong focus on children learning the sounds of letters following a UK approved phonics scheme. Learners were seen segmenting and blending sounds and using high frequency words. However, teachers must also ensure that learners understand the words they read and enjoy learning English through the wider use of stories, rhymes and songs.

Tasks set by teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge for most children. In the shared area year 2 learners were seen solving maths multiplication problems using practical apparatus. In an Arabic lesson, learners were highly motivated and responded enthusiastically to questioning.

In KS2 teachers shared the learning objective and relevant success criteria. The strongest teachers planned activities that enabled learners to assess the work of their peers. Learners were encouraged to think critically about a piece of writing in English, giving feedback against the success criteria. Where questioning was used effectively to prompt deeper thinking learners responded well. In a maths lesson, a starter activity encouraged learners to make the connection between fractions and

decimals. Questioning challenged learners' understanding and they were able to explain their reasoning using maths vocabulary. In an art lesson the teacher built on understanding of perspective by asking how they would compare the size of objects and why the colours might change in intensity. Where teachers used collaborative learning through pair talk and group discussion, learners were quick to engage in discussion. Practical activities such as finding locations on an atlas allowed for some collaboration and problem solving.

However, across KS2 teachers did not routinely ask questions that prompted deeper thinking and only asked questions to learners who knew the answers. In a few lessons where there was a slow pace, pair talk became an off-task time. Purposeful feedback was very limited. Assessment data was stated on plans however there was little evidence of teachers supporting learners or challenging more able. In a few lessons tasks were pitched too high and learners were unable to access or understand the text.

Assessment in primary happens informatively through a variety of methods such as feedback in marking, use of success criteria rubrics for peer and self-assessment, open-ended questioning, class discussions and white board work. Evidence of this formative assessment was inconsistent across the lessons observed. Books were mostly marked though this did not always align with the school's marking and feedback policy. Many books contained general praise, but not targets for improvement. Some targets were repeated throughout a book, such as spelling and punctuation, without being acted upon. In the weakest books scrutinised learners exercise books were unmarked or just ticked.

In KS3, teachers challenge learners to think, they use excellent questioning to probe and develop ideas. High quality feedback, and reflection from the learners led to improved work and extended learning. The strongest teachers ensured learners were active in their lessons which engaged them in their learning. Learners were offered the opportunity to 'be the teacher' in a geography lesson. Here learning and progress was clear. Teachers in KS3 recognise the need to identify, and support and challenge learners where it is required. An excellent example came in a maths lesson, where a few learners were being supported by the teacher. Other learners worked independently through two different levels of challenge. However, the quality of teaching in KS3 is variable. A few teachers are not yet creating enough active learning opportunities. Although learners were always well behaved and often busy, the work they were asked to do had not been thought through. In a few lessons teachers had failed to plan tasks that were matched to learners' abilities.

Teachers at KS4 and KS5 levels have a secure knowledge of the curriculum and subjects they teach. There are effective assessment and tracking procedures in place that inform teachers' plans. Teachers effectively identify learners who are underachieving and use a good balance of lower and higher order questioning to

check on understanding. Digital technology is predominantly used for research purposes and engages learners. Teachers maintain purposeful dialogues with learners in marking books and verbal feedback. Learners demonstrate a highly positive attitude and pride in their work, with systematic reflection on their learning.

Summative assessment takes place six times throughout the year. Internally, teachers are given guidelines on how to structure internal assessments using varied question types and application of Bloom's taxonomy. External assessments take place using GL progress tests in maths, English and science, reading tests and cognitive ability tests. Internal assessments are linked to external assessments by converting standardised age scores into stanines. All information is displayed in graph form into year level grade books which are used by middle Leaders to identify trends and next steps.

4.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by learners are good.

Learners' behaviour at SIA is exemplary. Their attitude to learning and their in-class collaboration are positive. Learners demonstrate improving attendance at school, with occasional dips identified during specific times of the year. Learners arrive at school and lessons on time. Lateness often occurs during the first teaching period of the day, due to heavy traffic conditions in the area. The school remains proactive in promoting punctuality. Parents are contacted after three lates are recorded and invited into school if the situation does not improve.

Learners enter school with low levels of spoken English and low levels in communication language and personal social and emotional development. Learners make strong progress in these areas so that by the end of EYFS a large majority of learners have met the learning goals in these areas. By the end of EYFS 76% of learners in 2022 met the early learning goals across all areas. Learning journeys evidence, the progress learners make over time.

By the end of KS1 the percentage of learners meeting expectations is in line with UK standards in maths. Reading remains low, with almost a third of learners below expectations at the end of 2022. The school has implemented regular phonics teaching to enable learners to make sustained progress in reading. This is already beginning to show an impact.

The school's summative assessment data indicates strength in maths and sciences in KS2. Maths attainment in year 6 was strong with 75% meeting or exceeding standards. Progress in year 6 was excellent with 92% of learners achieving expected or higher than expected progress. Attainment in English is weaker. Reading results were low across year groups in KS2. Less than half of learners achieved stanine 5 to 9 in lower KS2. In upper KS2 just over half of all learners attained stanine 5 to 9 which is below UK standards. At the end of year 6 in 2022, 68% of learners met or exceeded expectations in reading. However expected and higher than expected progress was made in Year 3 at 83%, and Year 6 at 93%. Progress is high from low starting points at the end of KS1. In writing at the end of KS2 indicated that 73% of learners were meeting or exceeding expectations. At the end of year 4, less than half of learners attained expected or higher than expected results in English overall. This indicates that over KS2 learners improve their attainment in English, so that by the end of key stage 2 outcomes are higher.

By the end of secondary learners have made good progress and standards are high in external examinations. The school's IGCSE results represent a consistent improvement over time. In 2022 90% of learners achieved A* to C, exceeding the national average. Biology, computer science, French, history, maths and psychology

were among the most successful subjects. Art and design, geography, physics and English as a first language were among the least successful within the school, although still very commendable. Low learner numbers facilitate strong progress, for example there are 3 learners in year 10 French and only 5 learners in Y13 psychology. This facilitates strong teaching closely matched to learners' needs. In line with other schools, post pandemic A level results were lower than previous years, with 76% of learners achieving grades A* to C. The sciences and humanities were among the most successful subjects. In psychology, one learner recently gained the highest grade in the world. Teachers' predicted grades were highly accurate, indicating teachers know the learners' abilities very well.

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

The school meets the standard and is good with many outstanding features.

The school promotes British values across the school. There are many celebrations of learners' good effort and achievement. Events, assemblies, display boards and the curriculum make links with British values and promote exemplary behaviour and attitudes.

Learners' self-confidence and self-esteem are promoted through leadership opportunities throughout the school. Every class has positions of responsibility, such as book monitors and play leaders. The positions for head boy, head-girl, deputies and learner leaders are positions appointed by senior leaders. Learners make a written application and then undergo an interview process. Ambassadors and house captains are democratically elected by their peers. They submit a video to promote their suitability, which is viewed by learners and voted upon democratically. In the sixth form area learners regularly lead presentations at break times. A year 13 learner delivered a highly engaging presentation to sixth form learners about the use of AI software. Leadership opportunities extend to ECA's and the model UN. A learner was elected as the MUN chair across the group of schools.

Learners show initiative and understanding of how they can contribute positively to their community and beyond. The head boy and girl lead on charitable events such as the Turkey earthquake relief collection. The sustainability ambassador works with Year 6 learners to maintain a sustainability blog and a sustainability week takes annually. Community events such as the Fiesta days and school shows promote strong links with the parent community. Here the school community comes together at the weekend for learners to perform to their parents and peers. Learners self-choreographed a dance and performed at Expo 2020.

The respectful attitude of learners towards others within the school is high. The restorative behaviour policy is implemented across the school and develops learners' understanding of right and wrong. The policy allows learners who misbehave to meet the school counsellor, reflect on their behaviours, consequences, and ultimately be reintegrated.

Opportunities to develop learners' cultural awareness and tolerance of others is a strength. Assemblies and events are varied including Black History month, National Women's Day and International days, including UAE national day and flag day. Festivals such as Diwali are recognised and celebrated on a cultural level, promoting links within the community. Cultural activities are integrated within the curriculum. Learners' spiritual awareness is promoted through mindfulness and reflection activities which are integral to assemblies. A nurture room and prayer room provide a space for quiet contemplation. The school's teaching and learning philosophy uses a metacognitive approach which enables learners to be self-aware of their own learning and determine ways to improve.

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

The welfare, health and safety of the learners meet the standard and are good.

The school site is secure. Parents confirm that their children are happy and safe. The school is kept clean and maintenance staff are visible throughout the day. Entry and exit points are always monitored. Thorough checks are made at the main gates as well as other points of entry and exit. Every adult on site is expected to sign in at the school gate and wear an ID badge. Access to certain areas within school such as the EYFS area requires the use of the ID badge. The site is protected by an alarm system, maintained by an external company who complete regular checks. CCTV covers a wide range of areas and recordings are kept for up to six months.

Unannounced fire drills take place termly following the school's drill procedures. Learners are well briefed at the start of each year and evacuation routes showing the assembly points are visible in classrooms as well as corridors. The ministry visits and checks fire extinguishers regularly. Fire blankets are installed in higher risk areas such as science laboratories. A lockdown policy was drafted in February 2022, but the school has yet to carry out routine lockdown drills. Checks on the school's gas and electricity supplies are carried out routinely with more extensive checks undertaken during the holiday period.

Medical welfare is a priority, with two full-time qualified nurses and one full-time doctor on site. The clinic is spacious, well equipped and offers 3 beds for treatment or resting. Learners require a clinic pass issued by their class teacher to seek medical attention and those visiting the clinic are recorded in the medical log book. During the inspection it was observed that a high number of learners leave their lessons to access the clinic during lesson time. It was also noted that 29 adults out of 160 on site have been awarded certification in recognised first aid training. The school must address this shortfall going forward so that as many staff as possible are first aid trained. Particularly those managing high risk activity areas such as EYFS, PE and break times.

Members of the SLT team are all qualified in safeguarding learners to level 3. All staff receive child protection and safeguarding training at the start of every academic year and new staff on arrival. A central register of staff training is kept and updated each year. Posters on the walls around the school explain to learners who they should talk to if needed. Staff supervision during playtime is well-matched to the number of children and staff wear luminous bands for easy recognition.

The school promotes a growth mindset and resilience in learning. When interviewed, learners indicated that bullying was not an issue at their school but that they knew what to do or who to speak to if they ever had information or an issue to share. They praised their teachers for

supporting them and were very fond of the school counsellor who is always available. When a learner misbehaves a report card is issued to the learner. The card is signed each week by parents, meetings take place with them accordingly as a follow up. Sessions with the school counsellor are also set up as part of a pastoral restorative process. A centrally held behaviour log enables school leaders to get an overall picture of patterns of behaviour.

The counsellor's room is a warm, welcoming space for learners to drop in whenever they need. Regular well-being podcasts are broadcast on social media. During the inspection visit, 2 learners interviewed the counsellor effectively and eloquently about Mental Health week. This was an opportunity to remind learners they should make their wellbeing a priority and that they were never alone. Daily morning assemblies and lunchtime presentations are used to promote the importance of wellbeing, cyber safety awareness and anti-bullying campaigns. A mobile phone ban was enforced in December 2022 and was well received by learners and parents alike. Learners commented that they were very happy with this rule. They felt less distracted in lessons and safer with regards to social media exposure.

A clear and rigorous procedure for transportation to and from school is in place. The bus system is efficient and safe. Arrivals and departures of learners take place in a very orderly manner. Parents like the use of an app that allows them to track the location of the bus.

Health and nutrition education is promoted through the curriculum, class and corridor displays. It is reinforced within the PE curriculum and throughout the school. The school nurses and junior school teachers promote healthy lifestyles. However, the current catering size facilities are very small. Food choices available on site are for light snacks only and access is not easy for younger children. Learners bring food prepared at home and brought to school in snack packs. The school has already put in place some plans to improve this area and is hoping to offer a pre-ordering of meals delivered to designated areas. The school lacks a designated eating area for learners so that learners eat in their classrooms. This impacts on provision particularly with younger learners and is an area that the school could consider improving in the future.

The school uses PASS survey data to identify fragile learners and applies interventions accordingly. Where learners are identified with issues many varied approaches are put in place. These may include meeting with parents. In a recent case a learner who was supported by the school made exceptional progress. Such that he became a success story nationally, entering and winning a national competition.

Mental health and wellbeing are promoted through school assemblies and participation in events such as mental health week. Training on wellbeing, growth mindset and mental health are undertaken by staff using an online professional development platform. Growth mindset is also promoted through the schools teaching and learning philosophy which promotes a no glass ceiling approach to learning.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meet the standard required for BSO.

All members of staff undergo appropriate checks to ensure their suitability for the role when they are appointed to the school. This includes staff hired locally and those recruited from overseas. Identity, medical, qualifications and police check, or DBS checks and references were in place for all staff appointed to the school and recorded on a single central register (SCR). This includes teachers, administration staff, teaching assistants, and shadow teachers. Details of contractors such as bus nannies, cleaners and security guards who work at the school are also stored on the school's central record but the responsibility for checking details is with the contractor. The details of staff who have left the school are maintained on the SCR. A safeguarding governor supports the schools HR leader to oversee the school's provision in this area and ensures the SCR is regularly updated.

Staff details are held in individual files and on the single central record held by the HR manager in the school. All information is stored securely and confidentially. Staff who are recruited locally must undergo the same checks as expatriate staff regarding identification checks, police checks, medical, qualifications and references.

Qualifications are checked by the ministry and attested for overseas staff. Two references, one from the most recent place of work, are sought from an organisational email, which are followed up by the school by telephone if required. VISA details are stored centrally on the single central record for all staff. The school may also complete social media searches to ensure that all staff are suited to work with children. If there are any concerns, then these are thoroughly investigated before appointment to ensure that the person appointed is suitable.

Advertisements of job vacancies promote safer recruitment practices. The school places adverts on social media sites and corporate websites. All leaders are safer recruitment trained. Interview procedures include a question to check on a person's suitability for the role.

Induction processes take new staff through the policies and procedures related to keeping children safe. A 'wise owl' programme pairs new staff up with an existing member of staff. This buddy scheme enables staff to settle quickly and have an easy point of contact to respond to queries. A staff handbook and a period of induction ensures staff are fully understanding of the school's child protection policy. Staff new to the UAE receive guidance on living in the UAE during the onboarding process.

8. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation meet the standard for BSO and are good.

The school site is well maintained and secure. A perimeter fence and wall mark the boundary with a central gate and rear access for buses to park and collect learners. The school's accommodation is on two floors with a central administration block that joins the separate wings of the school. Each wing hosts separate sections of the school; the youngest learners are accommodated on the ground floor and older secondary learners on the second floor.

Outdoor areas are well maintained and clean. Exterior lighting and floodlighting to the Astro turf sports field ensures there is adequate lighting for night time use. An outdoor playground and EYFS area are fenced and secure. Ground floor classrooms have access to veranda areas where learning takes place as an extension of the classroom. A large central outdoor area is surrounded by the school's classrooms, assemblies and break times make effective use of this enclosed space. Shading is appropriate. The site offers well-maintained toilet facilities, clearly marked for the sole use of adults and learners. Clean drinking water is available at locations throughout the school.

Classrooms are well lit. AC is available in all rooms. Specialist facilities such as the performing arts rooms, secondary ICT suites and science laboratories are spacious and well equipped. A large central library is located within the secondary section and timetabled for use by the whole school. The library offers books for all levels in both Arabic and English languages. One book in each of these languages can be borrowed per week. Learners commented on their wish to access more recently published books. They found that the school library was a pleasant place to spend time in but expressed disappointment that it was not accessible after school hours. The school has plans to redevelop and extend the library provision, so that the primary books can be in an area closer to primary classrooms.

PE facilities include one full size football pitch, basketball courts as well as an indoor gymnasium. A 30-metre pool and a smaller shallow pool for younger children is secure and located on site adjacent to the school's buildings. This was not in use during the inspection. One lifeguard person is always on duty and assists PE teachers in coaching learners. Daily checks are made for the cleanliness of the water.

The EYFS and KS1 area makes creative use of the central space and classrooms with free flow onto outdoor areas. These outdoor and central corridor areas are well equipped with imaginative equipment to ensure learners develop across the seven areas of learning. However, in some classrooms this involves steep steps and the EYFS area is not immediately adjacent to the classroom, so that free flow between the two areas is restricted. Classrooms

in this area do not have immediate access to sinks so that water play, and painting are restricted to specific areas.

The school continually adapts the use of its accommodation to ensure it meets the needs of learners. Recently the staff room was relocated to the school's canteen and the area has now become a sixth form common room. This now means that learners eat lunch outdoors on picnic benches but when the weather becomes too hot classrooms are used, which is not ideal. Currently access to the second floors is by stairways. There are plans to add a lift to ensure there is access to all areas for people with reduced mobility.

Classrooms and specialist areas are well equipped. Technology was used in lessons using interactive white boards and learners' own devices. Displays throughout the school were of a good quality and included informative displays and celebrations of learner work. Sustainability displays are present in each of the classrooms. In EYFS learning journeys are clearly displayed in each classroom.

The learning environment was organised and neat. However, in specific areas of the school classrooms appeared cramped for the number of learners present, particularly in upper KS2. Teachers should carefully consider the location of learners' bags in these areas, so that trip hazards are reduced.

9. *Standard 6* The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided for parents, carers and others meet the standard required for BSO.

The school is situated on the outskirts of Sharjah adjacent to main road routes to other Emirates. Consequently, the school states that most parents are working and drop their children off as they travel to work. The provision of information for parents, carer and others considers the wide catchment area that the school serves. The school is restricted in what can be offered after school as many families do not live locally and learners are picked up by parents who are travelling to and from work places. Therefore, the provision of extra-curricular activities after school is limited and events may be organised at weekends to cater for this.

The school ensures that communication with home is regular and clear. Curriculum newsletters are frequent and supply parents with information about what is taught in school. Parents like the home learning provision provided by the school and how it effectively links the learning in school with home. The school uses online apps to maintain daily contact with parents of the youngest learners in EYFS and a rewards app that ensures parents are regularly updated when their child performs well in primary school. A school portal also ensures that parents have the information they need regarding the school's business and events. Regular parents' evenings, learner-led conferences and termly reports provide parents with information about their child's progress, attainment and attendance at school. The school website contains relevant information about the school, including the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. A prospectus is available for new parents.

Parents are happy with communication provided by the school. Parents spoke highly of the quick response time by the school to issues raised by parents, even after school hours and at weekends. Parents explained how they felt listened to by the school, and that the school acted on their feedback whenever possible, for example with a request for more information about examination and revision techniques. One parent expressed that 'the school listens with logic.' The parents agreed that the school makes it easy for them to know how their child is performing. The school contacts home frequently, both when their children are struggling and congratulatory messages when they have performed well. The school nurse regularly calls home when learners are absent from school.

10. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

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

A policy is in place which has recently been revised to meet the standards required for BSO. Parents are informed and given a copy of the complaints policy as part of the school admissions process. The policy details the school's vision and mission and sets clear dates for the policy's next review to ensure it meets the school's requirements. The policy sets out the aims of the policy and how it links with the requirements of Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA). Such that the policy considers guidance from the UK independent schools' standards and the local host country requirements.

Clear definitions ensure that the roles and responsibilities of actions to be taken are understood at the outset and follow the procedure. A parent liaison officer is well established in school and known to parents. This role ensures that most complaints are dealt with informally at stage 1, the informal stage.

The policy details the clear steps to be followed by a complainant and the school in dealing fairly and openly regarding complaints raised. Time scales are detailed clearly. Confidentiality will be respected. As a final action complainants can refer their complaint to the local authority, Sharjah Private Education Authority who will make further checks to ensure the matter has been dealt with fairly.

A log of complaints is maintained by the parent liaison officer and reviewed by senior leaders. Almost all complaints were resolved and those unresolved the school were aware of and taking appropriate action. Currently the log does not organise the records so that any patterns are easy to identify and entries into the log could be misleading. However, the newly appointed pastoral lead will take over the recording of complaints and oversee the analysis of parents' complaints. This will ensure that in the future the information parents raise as complaints and concerns can influence school improvement planning.

11. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school meet the standard and are good.

The school's proprietors manage the strategic direction and leadership through the appointment of a board of governors. The school operates within a group of 3 schools overseen by the chief operating officer (COO) and chief executive officer (CEO) of the Scholars International Group (SIG). They meet quarterly to ensure the school's finances are managed strategically.

The school's board of governors constitutes an active chair of governors and members with a breadth of skills. They demonstrate a strong capacity to support the school's leaders and hold them to account. This includes a director of school improvement who meets weekly with the principal and is fully aware of the strengths of the school and areas to be developed. The board meets half termly to review the school's planning documents and actions that need to be taken. As a result, the proprietors, the COO and CEO and board are knowledgeable about the school's business and its performance. They support the school's leaders effectively.

The principal and senior leaders set high expectations of learners and staff. They lead on new initiatives across the school. Currently a consistent philosophy around teaching and learning is being embedded. This philosophy enables learners to develop advanced cognitive performance characteristics. The aim is to ensure learners are enterprising learners with advanced performances in cognitive thinking and can function as global citizens. The school's teaching approaches are at the beginning of a journey to embed this throughout the school.

Recent actions are beginning to have an impact on learners' progress. New staff have been appointed to senior leadership positions, and selective allocation of resources has ensured staff have the tools they need to secure improvement and improve teachers' skills. Many teachers recruited to the school are in the early years of their career and the school recognises the need to support these early career teachers (ECT) and ensure they have the skills to teach effectively. The school's senior leaders are quick to recognise strengths in ECTs. Where strengths are identified the SLT entrusts ECTs to positions of responsibility, take the lead and make a difference. However, the principal, SLT and board are aware of the high turnover of teaching staff due to the possibility of higher salaried positions at other schools within the Emirates. They are working hard to address this to retain experienced and loyal staff, to overcome this issue.

Staff at the school feel very well supported by their line managers. They explained that the recently appointed senior leadership team is developing a culture of sharing ideas and solutions to problems. As a result, the school community is more purposeful in seeking solutions to problems and less critical.

Performance management targets are linked to the school's philosophy on teaching and learning. Teaching staff stated that this was impacting on their teaching behaviours. Recent CPD on safeguarding, fire safety training and a recently approved English phonics scheme has improved teachers' skills. Staff talked about the 4-day week which puts pressure on them to ensure all the work is completed in a timely and efficient manner. They also raised that in a few instances due to the recent changeover of the school's information management system, communication from senior leaders was not always prompt and could be improved. There are many new systems that have not yet had time to be embedded and staff recognised this.

The school runs smoothly day to day. The head of operations ensures that day to day events and changes are managed well. Learners moved courteously around the school and showed respect for the school environment, their peers and staff. There was a happy relaxed tone across the school. Teachers and learners talk about how they enjoy school and are proud of the work of the learners.