



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection Report Cairo English School Egypt

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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, 75 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Colin Dyson. Team members were John Cranfield, Bernie Babkirk, Hilary Rowark, Marcus Wilde and David Williams.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Cairo English School meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Cairo English School is effective in meeting its mission of preparing students for citizenship in the global community and demonstrates a good capacity to further raise levels of student achievement.

Parents fully support the vision and direction of the school. They recognise the important contribution the school makes towards the development of their children. The school is held in high regard by the wider community and parents. The students are proud to be members of the school community and value the opportunities it provides

The leadership team ensures the school runs well on a day to day basis. Routines and procedures are followed, and understood by all.

The school is well resourced. It provides a broad and balanced curriculum, with an appropriate focus on the 'Britishness' of the school.

Pastoral care is a strength. The development of individual student's personal skills and qualities is a priority. Students are thoughtful, well behaved, and treat others with respect. They have excellent social skills.

3.1 What the school does well

Cairo English School (CES) has many strengths. They include:

- The Board and Senior Leadership Team share a common goal of providing a high quality educational experience for all students.
- The school has demonstrated through undertaking self-evaluation and accreditation a desire to move the school forward.
- The school is highly successful in enabling all children to develop their personal skills and qualities: children are thoughtful, well behaved, treat others with respect and have well-developed social skills.
- The school is held in high regard by the wider community and parents. The students are proud to be members of their school.
- The safeguarding of students through the diligence of the ancillary staff is a strength of the school.
- The care and concern of all the staff, teaching and non-teaching, for the well-being of the students.
- The high quality of learning support ensures students are able to confidently access the curriculum.
- The high quality of the facilities provides students with an attractive and stimulating learning environment.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- i. Implement a clear and consistent approach throughout the school towards assessment that involves students, sets clear learning targets and provides accurate tracking data aligned to National Curriculum outcomes.
- ii. Ensure that all staff with posts of responsibility are clear in the role they play in making this a good school and are accountable for the quality of provision through effective monitoring and mentoring.
- iii. Audit curriculum provision across the school to ensure it is aligned with the school's aim of providing accelerated learning, ensuring good progression in core skills and stimulating content.

4. The context of the school

Cairo English School (CES) was established in 2005 and opened in 2006. The school is situated 35km from historic Cairo centre in an area of new development known as Mirage City. The school operates under regulations from Ministry Of Education that requires only text books approved by the Ministry may be used in classrooms. Arabic, Religion and Egyptian Social courses must be taught according to the Egyptian National Curriculum, with official examinations set by the Ministry in Years 6, 9 and 12.

The school is a member of the Educational Services Overseas Limited (Esol Education) group of schools and is directly accountable to the Esol Education Board of Directors. The school has its own appointed Board of Directors to manage the strategic direction of the school. All academic aspects of the school are delegated to the Headmaster and his Senior Management Group.

The school presently has 1,535 students enrolled, the majority (over 90%) are Egyptians or partly Egyptian.

The school's philosophy is to nurture a globally-minded community of learners who demonstrate high levels of achievement in the National Curriculum of England and other recognized international programmes of study.

The school operates three sections: Early Years (Foundation Stage FS1-FS2 and Year 1); Primary (Years 2-6) and Secondary (Years 7-12). Egyptian Ministry of Education requirements are that students must complete 12 years at school.

The educational programme is structured on the Early Years Foundation Stage and English National Curriculum. Some aspects and pedagogical philosophy of the International Primary curriculum have been incorporated. The Secondary school has a focus on preparing students to undertake IGCSE and A-levels. To comply with Ministry of Education requirements the IGCSE exams are taken in Year 10 and A-Levels and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) are completed in Year 12. As a result, exams are taken one year earlier than anticipated in the UK.

The school has been accredited by the Council of International School (CIS) and the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. A ten-year accreditation was awarded by both bodies until May 2023. The school is also a member of the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME) and Edexcel. The school was awarded IB 'World School' status in 2010.

The school has identified the following as barriers to learning:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- The large number of English as a second language speakers
- The impact of local requirements on the time available to deliver the English National Curriculum

4.1 British nature of the school

- The British nature of CES is clearly stated and supported by the community.
- The National Curriculum of England has been adopted throughout the school from Early Years to Year 12 with public examinations at IGCSE, AS and A2 levels.
- The system encourages participation and competition in a variety of events.
- The school is organised according to the structures used in English schools.
- The School Council, Head Boy and Girl, prefects and house captains contribute towards the feel of 'Britishness'.
- As well as fully implementing the curriculum for England from Early Years to Key Stage 5, assessments are based on national standards from the UK.
- British practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting, annual review meetings etc.
- All communications from the school to families and students are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports and letters and the website.
- The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips are in line with British best practice.
- Texts, materials, educational equipment and software are UK sourced.
- Classroom management, displays of work, three term year and age related year groups contribute to giving a British feel to the school.
- Parents are supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents, suggested they appreciated the British style of education.
- Students are able to enter / re-enter the UK education system.
- The school is an active member of the British Schools in the Middle East (BSME).

5. *Standard 1*

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by Cairo English School meets all the standards and there are significant aspects which are good. It meets the requirements of the BSO Framework fully.

5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum provided meets the standard required, with some good aspects.

The National Curriculum of England provides the framework for teaching and learning. The curriculum also provides for the academic, moral, physical, creative and social development of students. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum supported by a range of extra-curricular activities and ensures that all national requirements are met.

Children in Reception work towards the Early Years Goals as set out in the UK Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Provision is enhanced with the inclusion of specialist teaching in Physical Education, Music, Arabic, Drama and Library Skills. In Year 1, children have the opportunity to participate in after school activities. Limited evidence was seen further up the school, of the benefit in subsuming Year 1 into the Foundation Stage

Key Stages 1 and 2 follow the National Curriculum guidelines for all appropriate subjects, with a focus on cross-curricular themes. Students also follow courses in Arabic, Egyptian Social Studies and Islamic Studies and Christian Studies as appropriate.

Within Key Stage 3, the students experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Music is provided in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum of necessity has been condensed into two years. The school may wish to consider identifying and prioritising the essential key skills and core tasks relevant to those year groups, in order to better prepare students for the rigours of Key Stage 4.

At Key Stage 4 the school endeavours to meet the needs of all its students within the time and resources available. Students in Key Stage 4 follow courses of study leading to IGCSE examinations. During the present academic year the school has introduced PE IGCSE in response to student demand.

At Key Stage 5, the school endeavours to be flexible in meeting the needs of its students. They are able to follow courses at AS, A2 and International Baccalaureate Diploma standard. The school recently introduced 'A' Level Arabic in response to the demands of students and parents.

The Curriculum and Assessment Committee meets regularly to review curriculum provision.

Appropriate procedures and policies to support the learning of students with special needs are reviewed on a regular basis. Whilst specific provision for 'Gifted and Talented' students is not fully operational, a strategic development plan is in place to codify and enhance development of this area.

Whilst the school offers an established after-school activities programme, some students commented on the 'elitist' nature of the sporting extra-curricular activities on offer.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning meets the standard required.

There is a high level of student active participation in most lessons, throughout Early Years. Children were involved in both group and independent learning. Behaviour in nearly all lessons in the Early Years Department was good and any instances of children off task are dealt with through established reward and sanctions. Teachers, assistants and students enjoy good relationships in all classes. Students enjoy a positive and productive learning environment. The best lessons were characterised by clear learning objectives and support staff involvement, in these lessons, students were stimulated by active involvement in their learning and enthusiastic teachers.

Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage have detailed records of students' achievements against the Early Years Learning Goals, through Foundation Stage Profiles, learning journals and anecdotal records. These are used to inform parents of their child's progress regularly throughout the year.

Additional support is provided in the Early Years Foundation stage with support aids providing enrichment activities for gifted and talented students. Phonics has been identified by the school as a priority area for further development.

Displays in nearly all classrooms and around school help celebrate achievement and enhance the learning environment. Displays celebrated global mindedness and personal achievements.

Across Key Stage 1 and 2, all lessons were evaluated as meeting the standard or better. The best lessons were characterised by good levels of student engagement and positive interaction between students and teachers. The less successful lessons were characterised by being mainly teacher led or not providing opportunities for high ability students to be challenged. Planning was available in nearly all lessons, however this ranged from commercial plans that did not always meet the learning needs of CES students to thoughtful, specific and needs based planning. The most effective planning frequently resulted in well-paced learning that provided opportunities for a range of student needs.

The most effective teaching leading to good student progress were characterised by enthusiastic teaching in a dynamic learning environment with self-assessment opportunities evident. Effective formative marking linked to objectives was also seen in these lessons. Challenge was built in and effective questioning techniques were used.

Detailed planning of lessons was evident in many Secondary lessons using a standardised proforma and in the best lessons effective strategies were used related to differentiation. Teachers demonstrate that they have good subject knowledge.

Behaviour of students was generally exemplary. In the best lessons, entry and exit routines were well established, resulting in a calm, structured start and end. Students have a good relationship with their teachers and settled down to work quickly. Students in a Year 10 science lesson were obviously well used to rotation of activities.

Learning objectives although often apparent, were only specifically referred to in the 'better' lessons. Generally, students were keen to answer questions, with the teacher reviewing past learning as an introductory activity. Only in the better lessons however, were teachers able to elicit knowledge and ideas from the students themselves through the application of higher level questioning techniques. This was particularly evident in Key Stage 4 design and technology lessons and a Year 7 English lesson. Although the large majority of students were focused, teacher talk tended to dominate in many lessons. On occasions, the teacher asked questions and then supplied the answers before the students had time to consider their own responses.

Acknowledgment marking was the norm in many students' books. Only in a few classes and subjects was there any evidence of formative comments. There was no evidence of any summative assessment of performance. When questioned, students were usually unaware of how they were progressing or what their personal target grades were. Few books provided clear evidence of self-assessment. Students in a Year 5 French lesson could relate their performance to National Curriculum levels.

There was a wide variation in the effective use of ICT to support student learning. A particularly good use of ICT was seen in a lesson where students were able to access documents broadcast to individual screens. Interactive white boards were frequently just used as a screen to display a PowerPoint presentation.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall, students are meeting the standards expected.

Available Early Years Foundation Stage attainment data and classroom observation indicates that overall, standards achieved are broadly in line with UK expectations. Given their starting point, good progress is made by nearly all students during Early Years.

At the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of students achieving Level 2+ in reading, writing and mathematics is below the UK national average.

By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are moving towards the UK national average. The rate of progress follows an upward trend. The school has introduced baseline and INCAS testing from Years 2 to 6 to enable more rigorous target setting and better evidence value added.

The school has adopted a two year Key Stage 3 in preparation for sitting IGCSEs a year early, as required by ministry regulations. The most effective departments internally monitor and moderate student progress and attainment. School data indicates that overall standards are broadly in line with UK expectations.

It is noted that students sit external exams a year earlier than the UK.

Attainment data for Key Stage 4 indicates that in terms of the percentage of students attaining 5 A*-C grades (not including English and mathematics), the school is above the UK national average. With the inclusion of mathematics and English however the school dips below the UK national average. The figures are 46% and 60% respectively.

At AS level, 82.9% achieved A-E grades, whilst at A2 level 89.5% achieved grades A-C with 100% of students achieving A-E grades. 100% of students achieved the IB Diploma with an average mark of 31.8% compared to the world average of 29.1.

Lesson observations indicate that students use their literacy and mathematical skills effectively across the curriculum. A suitable range of assessment data is collected to provide progress data for reading, literacy, numeracy and personal development.

6. *Standard 2*

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of students is good and is a key strength of the school.

Overall, the students at the school are happy, motivated and enthusiastic learners. They are proud to be members of the school community. At the beginning of the school day, most students arrive promptly, subject to the vagaries of the Cairo traffic. Attendance for the first day of accreditation was 91.13%. The school has appropriate policies and procedures to ensure punctuality and good attendance. At break times students use the equipment and outside resources sensibly.

There is a behavioural policy, which is known as the 'conduct code'. Students are aware, also of the Honour Code that is referred to in instances of misbehaviour. Students commented that they generally feel confident in the fairness of the way that the school implements these codes. Older students commented on the difficulties some new staff have in adapting to the CES way of doing things and this has impacted negatively on the relationships between staff and some students.

Nearly all teachers set high expectations for behaviour, learning, personal and social skills. Nearly all students see learning as important and respond positively, with good behaviour in and outside the classroom. They are articulate, polite, and helpful with any adults that they meet and considerate with each other. Early Years children receive certificates in assembly for demonstrating acts of kindness and responsibility. The celebration of good behaviour and positive attitudes continues throughout the primary school. The results of a recent questionnaire indicated that the majority of students feel confident in school and are prepared to raise issues of concern with appropriate staff.

In nearly all lessons students showed a positive attitude to their studies. They listened attentively to the teacher and to each other in whole class, group and partner work. Students understood what to do from the clear instructions and explanations given to them. In Year 1, children attend either Islamic or Christian Studies as part of Egyptian Ministry requirements. An integral part of the Early Years and Foundation Stage curriculum is the acknowledgement and of value given to local culture and beliefs, respect and fairness with a concern for other children's feelings. This is reinforced through the delivery of a planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme throughout the Primary School and Years 7 and 8. In the upper end of the school, assemblies and tutor time provide opportunities for personal development. The absence of a planned PSHE programme in the upper school is a missed opportunity to support students' personal and emotional needs as they mature into young adults. All students following the IB Diploma course are required to fulfil community service as part of their accreditation.

The provision of PSHE is informally monitored during the year by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and then evaluated at the end of the year. No evidence was seen of a formal evaluation of the programme, or student views on its effectiveness or appropriateness.

Students are given opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example school council, charity groups, house captains, prefects and ambassadors. Younger students requested more opportunities for them to exercise leadership. Contributions of the students are recognised and valued through the school's reward system.

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

The standard of welfare, health and safety for students is good.

Students at the school are well cared for, carefully guided and sensitively supported. They feel safe in their environment, enjoy their learning and know that any issue causing concern will be dealt with carefully and sensitively. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare of all students and staff. There are high levels of staff supervision throughout the day.

Fire drills are held each half term. Evacuation routes are displayed in all meeting areas, classrooms, common areas and around the school. There is a health and safety committee that meets weekly to review and implement and support the school health and safety policies and procedures. There are six monthly inspections of the premises by the fire brigade and Ministry of Education to ensure the premises meets the standards, records of these visits are kept with rare suggestions implemented immediately. The school also keeps electronic records of all health, safety, attendance and maintenance.

Shaded areas, rest areas, play areas are available for students during breaks. These periods are well supervised by teaching staff, ancillary staff and security guards. The school canteens offer an abundance of choices for healthy eating. They are supervised by a member of staff. Drinking water is available throughout the school and the school completes water safety checks at regular intervals. Feedback from focus groups, lesson observations, formal and informal conversations with students, parents and staff, clearly indicated students care for each other and their school. The students have stated that they do not believe bullying is a problem in their school but they are aware of procedures if they face it. The students frequently referred to their classmates as “like family”. The school promotes safe Internet usage and appropriate policies are in place.

The school doctor, supported by two full-time nurses, is a long-standing member of the school community, who provides in-class support for health related aspects of the curriculum when appropriate, as well as a broad range of medical and health services to students and staff. The school medical centre ensures the health of the children is a priority by providing emergency contact information and individual medical information to staff.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles through the taught curriculum and other events within the school calendar. The school provides advice to students on what constitutes a healthy diet and offers a range of sporting activities.

Records are kept of contact with parents.

8. *Standard 4*

The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietary body (Esol Education) ensures that the school meets all local requirements and is held in high esteem within the local community. The management of the school is well delegated to the Headmaster I and Senior Leadership Team. Policies and procedures are monitored by the School Board and further support is provided through a consultant, through mutual support and respect these does not interfere negatively with the day to day management.

Staffing levels are appropriate to effectively deliver the curriculum. The majority of teachers are from the UK and their qualifications are confirmed by the local education authorities before appointment. All staff are experienced and there is a collegiality of respect and trust. Teaching assistants support and contribute to the quality of education provided. The classroom resources provided by the school are adequate to meet the students' needs

Excellent financial and administrative management has enabled on-going improvements in accommodation and investment in resources. The effectiveness of the partnership between the senior leadership team, the Esol Education Board and administrative staff makes a major contribution to the smooth and effective management of the school.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are good.

The site is well maintained and secure. Entrances are manned by security guards. Classrooms are equipped with resources independently accessed by the students. Displays reflect current curriculum topics and key words are generally displayed.

Outdoor areas are well maintained and attractive with age appropriate and adequate play equipment for the students. The school provides a good range of specialist learning areas, including six science laboratories, a 600 seat auditorium, sports hall and fitness suite. The school seeks to continually enhance the facilities and the provision of high quality design and technology workshops are an example of this extended provision including a pool, gymnasium theatre and a performing arts centre. Outdoor areas facilitate a wide range of play opportunities, support physical development and enhance the PE provision. Access to the swimming pool is only possible under supervision. A focus group of interviewed children stated that they found their environment inspiring and conducive to learning. Washroom facilities are plentiful, hygienic and easily accessible.

The playground areas are timetabled to maximise space and breaks are arranged to avoid congestion. Classrooms are of an adequate size and well maintained. Students are respectful of their environment. The Foundation Stage has a secure area for inside and outside activities.

Medical facilities on site are appropriate with designated facilities for children with health issues.

The site has sufficient access to ensure emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely and speedily. All children are able to enter and leave the school in safety and comfort. Policy and procedures provide clear detail and guidance for relevant staff.

Water and drainage systems meet local requirements and are tested regularly. Site security is good. Visitors sign in and are given ID badges on entry into the building. Security teams are on duty 24 hours a day.

There are sufficient areas for shade during non-contact time.

10. Standard 6

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school works highly effectively in partnership with parents, other schools and the community.

CES has a large body of supportive parents who feel valued and respected. Clear channels of communication are open and parents are happy with their interaction with teachers and managers. The Parent-Teacher-Staff Association (PTSA) is a vibrant, open and collaborative body. The school clearly values parents. The Parents' Advisory Panel consists of a representative sample of interested parties and is active in promoting what is good about the school. They have been together as a panel for two years and have the best interests of both parents and the school at heart. They organise charity events and spread understanding to the wider community. Parents feel positive about the parental surveys and believe that these help shape future decisions.

The headmaster's coffee mornings were praised and parents spoken to felt confident in the direction the school was taking. According to parents bullying issues were dealt with swiftly and successfully. Regular reports are issued and the language of English National Curriculum levels were understood by parents.

Active liaison with other schools is planned in appropriate areas of the curriculum. The school often leads on community initiatives, for example the PTSA Picnic and Carnival and the Animal Walk. The school takes part in a range of local sporting events.

BSME membership and other regional school associations provide access to continuing professional development opportunities. In addition, teachers attend professional development workshops and conferences organised by the holding company. Early Years teacher representatives attend a collegiate sharing forum as part of the Early Years Cairo Network.

11. *Standard 7*

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school provides clear information about what should happen in the event of a complaint. A policy is in place to detail complaints procedures and parents are also made aware through details on the school web site. These procedures are in line with local requirements and best practice.

The leadership team operate an 'Open Door' policy to ensure all parents have easy access to senior staff: every morning, heads of school are seen standing in the playground every day talking to the children and their families. Parents reported feeling very confident regarding dealing with any issues they had.

12. *Standard 8*

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

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

The quality of leadership and management meets the standard. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis supported by high quality administrative and support staff. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and exceed statutory requirements.

The ownership board is regarded as being supportive of the senior leaders and all meet regularly to provide direction and guidance to the headmaster and encourage feedback and discussion of key strategies and priorities.

The school's mission statement and school philosophy are prominently displayed in both teachers' and students' handbooks, informing policy and practice. There is a copy of the mission statement on the school website.

Whilst there is evidence of effective communication between team members, the lack of a consistent approach to practices such as marking and planning is a missed opportunity to ensure a greater cohesiveness in whole school planning. Recent management appointments reinforce the school's desire to find and share best practice. Good practice already in place should be identified and used to model school expectations in its desire to achieve the best for all its students.

Regular meetings with middle leaders, coordinators and heads of department has been implemented to provide more effective communication, as well as an opportunity for dialogue. Senior and middle leaders are responsible for ensuring that teaching staff develop a consistent school agreed set of practices. Middle leaders are not yet supported in this role well enough to ensure they have the professional capacity to hold others to account. A range of whole school policies are in place: the leadership team has implemented a structure that anticipates middle leaders will monitor standards and outcomes, in their areas of responsibility. The development of a whole school approach to monitoring that has a clear focus on learning outcomes and a consistency of best practice would provide a greater level of clarity.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to collect data to enable the leadership teams to understand overall trends and identify students who need additional support. The school has identified a need to use the large amount of data it has more strategically, to set challenging individual student targets and monitor teacher effectiveness. Greater clarity on key assessment data would provide staff with the necessary information to plan effectively to meet the needs of all the students in their classes. This practice is not yet consistent across the whole school. For example, it has more impact supporting students who are underachieving rather than supporting more able students.

Whilst the senior leadership team and the ownership board as a whole are becoming increasingly effective in identifying priorities for improvement, there is an inconsistency in planning to meet those priorities, in implementing decisions and in monitoring their impact.