



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

Dhahran British Grammar School

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Date 29th - 31st March 2015
Inspection number 20150329

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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, 31 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, school Board members, a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was John Cranfield. The other team member was Stuart Dobson.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Dhahran British Grammar School meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Dhahran British Grammar School (DBGS) is a good school with some excellent features.

It provides a good quality of education supported by a high level of student care. The quality of learning, teaching and leadership are good. The students, parents and staff are highly committed to the school and feel valued and appreciated.

Nearly all students make good progress across all key stages, becoming increasingly more confident and successful learners. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are high.

Students are well supported through high quality pastoral care throughout the school and the effective implementation of robust welfare, health and safety policies and procedures.

The curriculum is broad and balanced; enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The board are highly effective in providing strategic direction and support for the school. They hold the senior leadership to account effectively.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths:

- The ethos of the school has encouraged the development of a harmonious learning community that enables students to feel fully valued.
- The school is well managed on a day-to-day basis; the new leadership has quickly established a culture in which staff are given the confidence and support to pursue change and improvement.
- The school confidently shares its values and communicates these well to stakeholders.
- The quality of learning and teaching is consistently good across most of the school.
- Students make good and sometimes very good progress, and achieve well by age sixteen.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities enrich students' learning experiences.
- The Board provides effective strategic direction and support for the future direction of the school.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour, personal and social development are excellent: they are outstanding ambassadors for the school.
- The attention given to the health, safety and safekeeping of all students is of a high order.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Develop teachers' practice in matching teaching and learning to the needs of all students. This should include further development of student attainment tracking and target setting.
- Improve the IT provision across the school, and further develop students' independent learning skills, in order to meet fully the needs of citizens living and working in the 21st Century.
- Further develop the support for the students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL).

4. The context of the school

Dhahran British Grammar School (DBGS) is part of the International Schools Group (ISG), a not-for-profit organisation which operates seven schools kingdom wide. DBGS shares a campus with an American Elementary/Middle School, an American High School, the Dhahran Baccalaureate Centre (DBC) and ISG's district offices. The schools run independently apart from some teacher sharing between DBC, the high school and DBGS. Shared campus facilities include a cafeteria, the Learning Resource Centre, an auditorium, a theatre and some sports facilities.

The school is on a site leased from the King Fahad University for Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), expiring in the next five to ten years. The Early Years building was completed in December 2013 and houses EYFS and Key Stage 1. There is a substantial building programme.

The school follows the National Curriculum for England from EYFS to (i)GCSE, in addition to meeting local requirements for the teaching of Arabic Language, Islamic Culture and Kingdom History and Geography. The latter all make time demands on the curriculum, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4. An A level programme is planned for 2015-16.

The school has 650 pupils on roll; a number which fluctuates according to the political and economic climate prevailing at the time. There are presently forty-four nationalities represented at the school. 36% of students are UK passport holders and over 50% are English speaking first language students. Other major groups include Egyptians (13%), Australians (7%) and Pakistanis (6%). The relaxation of ministry regulations has led to an increase of local students, presently 7% across the school.

In 2009, the school received CIS accreditation with the five year review visit taking place in May 2014. As a result of the visit and ISG surveys, the leadership of the school has been restructured.

4.1 British nature of the school

The ethos, nature and appearance of the school are recognisably British, and mirror what is to be found in the independent sector in the UK. The school is organised according to the structures used in English schools. Classroom management, displays of work, a three term year and age-related year groups contribute to a British feel of the school. DBGS follows the National Curriculum for England. The majority of teaching staff are from the UK.

UK practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting and annual review meetings. DBGS uses data to track the progress of its students against those in the UK.

All communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips are in line with British best practice.

Texts, materials, educational equipment and software are UK sourced. Interviews with parents confirm their appreciation of a British style of education on offer.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at Dhahran British Grammar School is good. It meets fully the requirements of the BSO Framework.

5.1 Curriculum

There is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age, fully meeting local Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regulations. The principal language of instruction is English. The curriculum is well organised and supported effectively by appropriate policy documents and schemes of work which demonstrate how students of all ages are challenged and supported. There is clear evidence of planning for progression. Effective implementation enables students to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The broad and balanced curriculum gives students experience in a wide range of areas of learning, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative education.

The school is in the process of implementing the new English primary curriculum and planning cross-curricular links, for example using information and communication technology (ICT) lessons to further develop students' understanding of a healthy diet. The curriculum is enhanced with elements from the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of the learning, development and welfare requirements of the youngest students which promotes their learning, social, physical and economic well-being.

Support is available for students experiencing learning difficulties. The school is presently reviewing provision for gifted and talented students. In the upper school, tutors and subject teachers provide advice for students moving onto post-16 education. An external placement agency supports students wishing to continue their education in the UK. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.

Across all key stages in the secondary school the curriculum is enhanced by a planned PSHE programme and the opportunity to participate in a range of after school activities.

DBGS takes into account the types of curriculum and external examinations commonly used in schools in the UK. This enables students to enter, or re-enter the UK educational system without disadvantage.

A range of trips and visits locally and internationally enhance the curriculum, for example a recent Model United Nations meeting held at the school and a visit to Mount Everest base camp.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the standard required.

Overall, teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability. They increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects that are taught. Most teachers effectively encourage students to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort, to show interest in their work, and to think and learn for themselves.

In the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS), classes are well resourced and equipped with age-appropriate furniture, arranged to make resources accessible to all pupils and facilitate independent learning. In the best lessons, students are challenged by quality questioning, problem solving and the opportunity to work independently. Throughout EYFS, good quality observational assessments take place on a regular basis and the results recorded. This enables the early identification of students making rapid or slow progress and the implementation of appropriate intervention strategies. Individual student records are passed on to the next teacher as students move through the school. There is less evidence in Key Stage 2 that the information available is used regularly or accurately to inform planning. Teachers generally show a good understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs (including the needs of EAL learners) and prior attainments of students. They mainly ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. Differentiation is predominantly by outcome. From the start of school through to Year 5, there is a full time teaching assistant attached to each classroom. Their contribution to supporting students with learning difficulties is under-developed.

Almost all children engage well with learning, demonstrating both energy and commitment. In almost every class there is a sense of fun and enjoyment that helps students to remain engaged. There are examples of self and peer assessment and in the better lessons, teachers create opportunities for students to feedback. This is where classroom management is good. On too many occasions however, opportunities for students to learn independently, creatively and to develop their critical thinking are missed. Throughout EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2, there is provision for regular assessment, recording and tracking in literacy and numeracy.

Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment across the secondary school is good or better; none is unsatisfactory. All lessons are planned using the school's proforma. Whilst lesson objectives clearly signpost future learning, the learning outcomes are rarely differentiated and often too wide to assess at the end of the lesson. There is little evidence of specific planning and resourcing to better meet the needs of the most able. On occasions, the absence of a planned plenary is a missed opportunity: students cannot reflect on the extent to which they have mastered the learning outcome(s), providing additional assessment evidence to underpin future planning and target students for additional support. Nearly all teachers show a good understanding

of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs and prior attainments of the students when planning lessons. Planning to effectively meet the needs of EAL learners is less well established. Nearly all teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. In nearly all lessons behaviour is exemplary.

Across the key stages, students are acquiring new knowledge, making progress, increasing their understanding and developing their skills, according to their ability. The quality of marking across the school is inconsistent. In the best practice, observed in English, attainment levels/grades were supported with clear next steps advice from which students set their personal target(s). These targets are revisited and 'signed off' by the teacher. Although a range of assessment for learning techniques were observed, for example peer and self-assessment, use of plenaries and targeted high order questioning, these have yet be fully embedded across all subjects. When questioned, nearly all pupils are aware of their current and target level / grade.

Throughout the school, teachers are developing the use of a range of tracking and monitoring systems to provide more accurate baseline data. The range of monitoring tools includes NGRT, ePIPSs, MIDYIS and YELLIS. Data from testing is compared to averages derived from externally accredited assessments. The use of assessment data to inform lesson planning and reliably evidence value added for individual and groups of students, is less well established.

The school has identified the implementation of a rigorous, consistently applied whole school tracking system as a priority. A new appointment has been made to support the process.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall standards achieved by students meet the standard for accreditation. Some aspects are above the standards.

All students are tested on entry to EYFS to ensure a minimum standard of functional English. Many students enter school with very little experience of social interaction beyond the home, and many have limited experience of language. This slows their progress to a greater degree than a lack of knowledge of English. Those with good language skills in other languages, pick up English relatively quickly. ePIPs information and teachers records indicate generally good or better progress in this phase.

In primary, writing develops well from the good foundations laid in the early years. Whilst a few students experience delay in the acquisition of spoken language skills, the vast majority quickly make progress. Students continue to make progress across Key Stage 1, working at UK standards with the exception of writing. By year three, most students have developed a sound phonic knowledge and most spelling is phonically correct. Students experiencing learning difficulties are able to access some support but this is not always well targeted to their needs. They therefore make less progress than they possibly could. CEM data shows that throughout the primary school nearly all students make progress in line with expectation. By the end of Key Stage 2, most students are working at UK expectations in English and mathematics. No attainment data is available for science.

Lesson observations, teacher assessments and book scrutiny's indicate that throughout the secondary phase, students make good progress. Attainment data for Key Stage 4 indicates that the school outperforms UK national averages. This is in line with Yellis predictions which indicate that the vast majority of students are band A or B; therefore above or well above IGCSE results are to be expected. For example 93% of pupils gained 5 A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to the UK figure of 62%. The school may wish to enhance its expectation of student outcomes by using comparative data from a range of high performing international and independent schools.

The school is highly successful in helping students to develop their personal skills and qualities: they are thoughtful and well behaved. Nearly all students are motivated learners. By the time they leave school, they have acquired the personal and social skills needed to move successfully to the next stage of their lives.

Attendance throughout the school is good. The attendance for the Autumn Term was 93.16%. Punctuality to school and lessons is very good. Robust procedures are in place to monitor attendance and punctuality and ensure they remain high.

6. *Standard 2*

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. The school successfully promotes high moral standards, self-discipline and mutual respect for the cultures, opinions and values of all others.

All students are exposed to the values of the major religions through the taught curriculum as they move through the school. In addition, assemblies and a planned PSHE programme provides opportunities for reflection and for sharing moments of wonder.

Students are expected to listen attentively to the adults and each other. They are polite, cheerful and well mannered. Mostly they are able to take turns, share resources and work as part of a group. Most teachers plan opportunities for their students to work in pairs and/or in small groups in order to develop their social skills and gain from collaborative ways of working. The relationship between nearly all adults and students is excellent. Their views are valued; praise is used effectively to motivate and acknowledge achievements. Any rare instances of unacceptable behaviour are quickly addressed to safeguard the well-being of the other students.

The School Council gives students a voice effectively. Interviews with elected members indicate that they are listened to and have an impact on decision making. The school has recently implemented a student executive comprising four senior school students, providing further opportunities to exercise responsibility. The school council organise many fund raising events and support the Loreto School in Kenya.

Tolerance, democracy, respect for freedom of expression and other human rights are developed throughout the school. As students progress through the school, rich curriculum experiences ensure they broaden and deepen their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship not only in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia but also the UK and internationally.

A spirit of internationalism is firmly embedded in the curriculum. The school shares information about Britain to support their students and parents should they wish to relocate to live or study in the UK.

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

The care given to the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is a strength.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust and regularly reviewed; appropriate risk assessments are in place.

Administration and security guards fully comply with the school's policies and procedures. Students are well supervised at all times of the school day. There are regular fire safety and other evacuation exercises. Students are well briefed to cope with emergency situations. The site is safe with exemplary security arrangements. Buildings and equipment are clean and in good condition, providing appropriate spaces and resources for learning. The school has effective procedures for students arriving at and leaving the school.

IGS and the school have appropriate policies covering all aspects of Health and Safety. Provision for the storage of chemicals is robust. The school has recently appointed a new health and safety representative who is fully aware of the need to undertake regular risk assessments throughout the school. All ISG buses comply with local safety regulations. The school effectively addresses issues of e-safety and educates students on how to keep themselves safe on line.

Healthy lifestyle is promoted through the curriculum and students are asked to review their own diet. They are encouraged to make healthy choices from the range available in the cafeteria. There is access to drinking water throughout the school day. Students have access to a well-staffed and resourced medical centre. .

Procedures are in place to record sanctions imposed upon students for serious disciplinary offences. The school's admission and attendance register conform to local regulatory requirements.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff is of a high order. The board ensures the school fulfils the safety, care and guidance requirements for all students. In addition, they take responsibility for the checking of staff credentials.

Prior to the confirmation of staff appointments, appropriate checks, including police checks in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their previous employment activity. The Ministry of Education must approve the qualifications and status of teachers employed by the school before issuing work visas. This process requires the checking of original certification including the attestation of degree certificates and teaching qualifications held by teachers.

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

Staffing levels are more than adequate for the successful delivery of the curriculum. All teaching staff have qualifications appropriate to their role; some staff have further academic or teaching qualifications that enhance school development.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The accommodation, staffing levels and resources at DBGS are good.

School buildings are fit for purpose and well maintained. The new Foundation/Key Stage 1 building has good size classrooms and facilitates flexible organization of groups and classes when required. This enhances the social aspects of learning. Facilities for Key Stages 3 and 4 are similarly good. Key Stage 2 classrooms however do not easily lend themselves to cooperative working. A building programme is nearing completion to address this issue. The leadership team are proactive in ensuring the environment is both attractive and safe. Maintenance staff are highly effective in their work, ensuring high standards are met and maintained.

Furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for the age and needs of all pupils. Sound insulation and acoustics allow effective teaching and communication. Lighting, heating and ventilation are highly effective. Flooring throughout the site is well maintained and is in good condition. Washroom facilities are plentiful, hygienic and easily accessible. The water supply is shared with the adjacent American consulate and is of a good quality. The disposal of water, surface and waste is effectively dealt with.

The proximity of the American consulate ensures security is of the highest order. The main access point is well manned and the school is surrounded by secure boundary walls. Security staff monitor the main entrance ensuring all visitors are checked, bags scanned and security badges issued.

Students have access to a well-resourced library in the Learning Resources Centre which is shared across the campus. There are three designated ICT resource areas in the school, with a range of specialist rooms as appropriate. Indoor PE facilities are very good. The school also has access to a large meeting hall, performing arts centre and well-equipped medical centre.

Outdoor areas are undergoing a series of improvements. Whilst shade is adequate, more shaded areas are planned. The outdoor area for the EYFS is extensive, but underdeveloped. The school is currently addressing this through ordering more resources and materials. The sports halls are almost always available for activities at break times. Dining facilities are appropriate. Supervision of students during break periods is very good.

The school, despite the somewhat fragmented buildings, has a calm, cohesive atmosphere and is a pleasant workplace for both students and staff. This will improve further when the new Key Stage 2 building is completed. Displays are well presented. Many celebrate the work of the students, whilst others give good prompts and information to support learning. This is seen in almost all classrooms and shared areas. In line with current improvement targets, displays in many of the rooms support writing. The school is well staffed; the average class size in primary is 20 and in secondary 18.

The school board and senior leadership team are strongly committed to providing the resources that support 21st Century learning, including a substantial upgrading of ICT facilities.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is above the standard required for accreditation.

Contact details of the school and the board are readily available. DBGS mission, vision and core values are prominently featured in relevant documents and publications, and referenced as key drivers of school improvement.

In the primary school, a home/school agreement is sent out to parents at the beginning of the school year outlining student, teacher and parent expectations. A review of the term's activities is available on the school's web-site. Parents whose children are presently in EYFS were complimentary about the information they received prior to their child starting at the school.

Parents stated that home-school communication was effective. There had been a substantial improvement since the previous year. In addition to letters, the school uses email, text and the web-site to keep parents informed. The head teacher runs coffee mornings for parents and the school provides workshops for parents on how they can support their child's writing at home.

The web site provides parents with essential curriculum information, including details of educational provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Academic results, including historical data is posted on the web site. There is also access to key policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and the sanctions the school adopts in the event of pupils misbehaving. The complaints procedure is outlined along with details of the staff employed by the school. The blog facility on the website was identified by parents as a strength.

Regular informative written reports and consultation meetings with teachers keep parents well informed about their child's progress, level of attainment and attitudes to learning.

A recent parent questionnaire revealed that 83% of parents found it easy to approach the school with any concerns and 95% felt welcome when they entered the school.

There is an active parent volunteer group which meet regularly and co-ordinate the school's International Day and annual Spring Fayre. The latter took place during one of the inspection days and was well attended not only by parents but also local tradesmen. The day is a social occasion for the whole community.

Reports accompanying formal inspections or accreditations are posted on the school's web site.

11. *Standard 7*

The school's procedure for handling complaints

There is a formal complaints procedure that is transparent, open and effective, taking into account local laws and regulations. The complaints procedures are rigorously adhered to and highly effective in ensuring that a complaint is dealt with at the appropriate level. Written records clearly detail the process regarding individual complaints and a high level of confidentiality is observed. Parental feedback indicates a high degree of satisfaction with both the speed of response and the outcome of any complaint.

12. *Standard 8*

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

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

Leadership and management of the school are above the standard for accreditation.

The board of trustees oversee the strategic direction of the seven schools comprising the International Schools Group (ISG). Dhahran British Grammar School works closely with the ISG Superintendent who reports to the board. The present three focus areas are 21st Century education, collaboration and improving students' writing skills. The superintendent holds the head accountable for the work of the school. The board of trustees ensure policies and procedures are reviewed for effectiveness. They ensure sufficiency of resources through robust financial management.

The newly appointed headteacher provides expert leadership. He has a well-articulated vision and provides clear direction, as reflected in the quality of education, the care of pupils, and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos.

He is well supported by his senior leadership team; collectively they have a strong commitment to raising standards across the school. They are appropriately delegating some areas of responsibilities to middle managers, enabling all staff to make a strong contribution to the future direction of the school. The school is introducing a more collaborative system of staff appraisal, reflecting the core values of the school and whole school priorities.

The school leadership team values highly the contribution made by all staff in ensuring each and every student succeeds. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are recognized as valued members of the school team. This has created a strong community of professionals who work collaboratively and effectively.

The school actively seeks to recruit staff of the highest calibre and ensures all safeguarding procedures are in place. The school is increasingly successful in developing strategies for engaging with parents and carers, to the obvious benefit of students.