



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report
Gulf English School
Kuwait

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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, 76 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 member, a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was John Cranfield. The other team members were Tamra Bradbury, Anthony Cashin, Stuart Dobson and Deirdre Grimshaw.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Gulf English School, Kuwait meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas accreditation.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Gulf English School Kuwait is an improving school. Overall teaching is satisfactory. The school provides a good level of student care. The quality of many senior leaders is good. The students, parents and staff are committed to the school and feel valued and appreciated. Most students make progress at least in line with their ability, some better. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are comparable to UK national averages. Students are well supported through effective pastoral care and the implementation of robust welfare, health and safety policies and procedures. The curriculum is broad and balanced; enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities. The board are effective in providing strategic direction and support for the school. They hold the senior leadership to account.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths:

- The school is well managed on a day-to-day basis and staff work hard to make best use of the limited space available.
- The heads of school are effective in identifying areas for improvement and setting goals for improvement. They have the capacity to move the school forward.
- The Board provides effective strategic direction and support for the development of the school.
- Nearly all the staff have good, respectful relationships with the students, creating a supportive learning environment. Nearly all students enjoy being in the school.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with an appropriate focus on the 'Britishness' of the school.
- Secondary students are very positive about the opportunities provided for their personal development and growth.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure all middle leaders are equipped with the skills and competencies to promote and sustain high quality teaching and learning, and raising student attainment.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching with a focus on developing student centred learning, including a whole school approach to formative assessment and an increased focus on skills-based learning.
- Develop more robust monitoring procedures to ensure that key policies, such as lesson planning, assessment and marking, are consistently applied.

4. The context of the school

Gulf English School was established 34 years ago. The school was set up as a private profit-making enterprise serving the expatriate students in Kuwait. In April 2013, the school became one of Al Tafawok (TES) portfolio of schools in Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The CEO of the holding company is also a member of the steering committee that oversee all aspects of the school and ensure a strategic approach to the school's future. The committee delegates the running of the school to the head. An educational advisor acts as a conduit between the school and the steering committee.

The school follows the National Curriculum for England from EYFS to A level adapted to meet local requirements for the teaching of Arabic Language, Islamic Culture and Tajweed. All students in Years 5-8 follow a course on Kuwait Social Studies. The school is co-educational until Year 6, after which classes are segregated. The school is forbidden to offer religious education other than Islam. The Ministry imposes strict censorship.

The school has 2,203 pupils on role. There are presently forty-five nationalities represented at the school. 37% of students are Kuwaiti, 50% other Arab nationals and 13% from other parts of the world.

The majority of teachers are British trained, supported by teachers from Ireland, South Africa, New Zealand, Syria, Romania, Australia, USA, India and Arabic staff to teach Arabic and Islamic Studies. The school has recruited native to near native English speaking teaching assistants for the primary school to provide additional language support. Company policy has recently removed the restriction of only appointing locally qualified teachers for physical education, music and art.

The Ministry of Private Education requires all students to follow courses in Arabic language including AFL (Arab as a foreign language) for non-Arabic students. In addition all Muslim students are required to study Islamic Studies and Tajweed.

4.1 British nature of the school

The ethos, nature and appearance of the school are recognisably British, and mirror what would be found in the independent sector in the UK. The school is organized according to the structures used in English schools. Classroom management, displays of work, three term year and age-related year groups contribute to a British feel of the school. Gulf English School follows the National Curriculum for England. The majority of teaching staff are from the UK. Approaches to performance management, staff target setting and annual review meetings reflect UK practice. . Gulf English School uses a range of UK assessments, for example SATs, taken at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and IGCSE, AS and A2 in secondary.

All communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English and Arabic for parents of primary school students and English in the secondary school. All school publications, reports, letters and the web site are in English. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips are in line with British practice.

The school has links with the British Embassy and supports Remembrance Day events and the Christmas Carol Service. Langley School in the UK is a partner school. The school prepares students for LAMDA examinations.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities are offered including the International Award. The school has a House system and a student council. Interviews with parents, suggested they very much appreciated the British style of education on offer.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at Gulf English School is satisfactory. It fully meets the requirements of the BSO Framework.

5.1 Curriculum

There is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age, fully meeting local Kuwaiti regulations. The principal language of instruction is English. The curriculum is well organised and supported by appropriate policy documents and schemes of work which demonstrate how students of all ages are challenged and supported. There is 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 and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. It enables students to develop the skills and attributes to support their future lives as global citizens.

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. In the primary school students experience a mixture of subject specific lessons and topic based approaches. There is an emphasis across the curriculum on language acquisition. Scrutiny of work indicates that in writing tasks in particular, similar content is repeated in different year groups. Whilst students with a learning difficulty are getting targeted support, their identification is dependent upon individual teacher choices rather than a moderated system.

Across Key Stage 3 students follow courses of study in English Language, mathematics, sciences, French, music, drama, social studies of Kuwait, computer studies, history, geography, physical education, PSE and BEAD (an introductory course to Business, Drama Studies, Accounting and Economics). More able students are fast tracked to sit their IGCSEs at the end of Year 10, progressing to AS level at the start of Year 11. At Key Stage 4 there is a compulsory core of English, Mathematics, Arabic and Religion. Options mirror subjects on offer at Key Stage 3.

Students who require help with English Language take extra English instead of French. Gifted and talented students receive curriculum enhancement in addition to a range of extra-curricular activities. Students identified as having learning difficulties either language or SEN have their needs met through a combination of curriculum modification and additional support.

Across all key stages in the secondary school, the curriculum is enhanced by a planned PSHE programme with the opportunity to participate in a range of after school activities. These include a visit to the Science Museum and Kuwait Flour Mills, and events such as the Maths Challenge. The school was the recent winner of the Environmental Eco-Challenge competition. GES 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.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment meet the standard required for accreditation.

Throughout the pre-KG phase, a positive learning environment has been created and there are ample opportunities for the staff to observe the students working and to assess their progress. Based on this, they are able to devise learning activities, which meet the students' needs. In the KG and reception classes, there are examples of good and occasionally very good learning and teaching. In a particularly good example, the teacher created a team game to review the students' existing knowledge of vocabulary surrounding mini beasts. This engaged their enthusiasm but also all required them to take turns, to listen carefully and speak clearly. The teacher constantly built on previous learning of letter sounds. Where teaching is less secure, the same work given to the entire class was only clearly understood by some of the students. An overemphasis on rhymes and responses, chanted very loudly, did little to develop the students' listening or speaking skills. This occurs mostly when the teacher's own English intonation pattern is not a good model for learning. In early years learning time is frequently not maximized. Too much time is spent on snack time with a limited learning focus.

Across Key Stage 1 teachers work collaboratively in their respective year groups to develop the required schemes of work. All teachers follow this on a daily and weekly basis; all classes cover the same work at relatively the same time. Teachers follow this planning as a matter of priority but some do not apply it flexibly enough. Where teachers adapt the planning through modification, the lessons are better suited to the students' needs and this has a positive impact on learning. Most students in Key Stage 1, enjoy their lessons, are engaged in their learning and have a sound rapport with their classroom teacher. The students are generally well behaved, however with the large number of students in each class; the high volume of noise sometimes interrupts student learning and leads to further disruptions.

In Key Stage 2, large class sizes are accommodated by arranging desk in rows, thus limiting opportunities for interactive, independent and inquiry based practical activities. In the majority of the lessons, learning was predominantly teacher led. A large number of these lessons lacked pace and sometimes challenge. In lessons where the teaching and learning was above the standard, a number of different teaching styles were employed. There was evidence of group work, peer sharing, talk partners and independent learning. Use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies was evident in some lessons but was not consistent throughout. Students with English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported by teacher assistants either working with small groups or 1:1.

Differentiation in lessons is for the most part by outcome or worksheets with more of the same questions rather than a more challenging task or extension activity. Marking and feedback in books is evident but not consistent. In writing books, evidence of target setting was seen but there is insufficient evidence of pupil engagement with the targets.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning across the secondary school meets the standard. However, a significant minority did not reach the standard. Whilst lesson objectives often signpost future learning, the learning outcomes are rarely differentiated and often too wide to assess at the end of the lesson. Differentiation is almost entirely by outcome. There is little evidence of specific planning and resourcing to better meet the needs of the most able. The absence of a plenary is a missed opportunity for students to reflect on the extent to which they have mastered the learning outcomes, provide the teacher with additional assessment evidence to underpin future planning, and target students for additional support. Nearly all teachers show a sound understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs and prior attainments of students when planning lessons. Most teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. On a few occasions the behaviour of the boys has a negative impact on learning. In an effective Year 8 mathematics lesson, students who had successfully completed the set tasks were able to demonstrate higher order thinking skills by working on questions from the 'challenge wall'. In the best lessons, teaching is well-planned and encourages students to apply intellectual, physical or creative efforts and take on increased responsibility for their learning. In less effective lessons, planning is limited and learning is essentially passive with an over-reliance on a small number of resources and teaching styles.

Across the key stages, most students are acquiring new knowledge, making progress, increasing their understanding and developing their skills, according to their ability. There is a framework in place by which pupils' performance can be evaluated by reference to the school's aims, as provided to parents on the website.

In the primary school, assessments are carried out termly, with baseline writing assessments carried out in September and June assessments being used as the baseline in other subjects. Data is tracked with the expected rate of progress annually being 2 sub levels. Mid-year and end of year levels are reported to parents. Cohort data from 2013 – 2014 shows that most students reach the expected standard in reading and mathematics, writing remains an area of concern.

Across Key Stage 3, there is an absence of levelled or graded work in students' exercise books and no formalised system to track and monitor student progress. In Year 9 history and Year 10 geography, assessment for learning techniques are well established and contribute to student progress. Effective target setting is developing in some subjects. A new Marking Policy has been piloted in Year 7. This is currently being monitored by the senior leadership team to identify good practice and embed the process throughout the secondary school.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall standards achieved by students meet requirements.

Although some students start school with little or no English language, they make good progress in language acquisition. Many learn early social language relatively quickly and can follow instructions connected to school routines. By the time they reach the reception class, many of the students will initiate conversation with each other or with the staff in a safe context where they have learned the vocabulary required. However, others continue to need visual and auditory reinforcement for all but the most basic language. They have nevertheless made progress. Given their starting points it is understandable that up to half of the students have not reached age appropriate levels by the time they reach the end of reception class.

Whilst some students take considerable time to develop literacy skills, most make good progress, increasing their confidence and competence with spoken English and their ability to communicate with each other. At the end of Key Stage 1, most students are working towards UK expectations.

In Key Stage 2 standards are broadly in line with UK expectations. 91% of students are expected to achieve a level 4 in reading, 70% in grammar, 88% in writing and mathematics and 96% in science. The school is aware of the need to ensure students understand what they are reading. This is one of the school's targets for development.

Whilst there is limited reliable data on standards and progress throughout Key Stage 3, lesson observations, teacher assessments and book scrutiny indicate that most students are working broadly at standards comparable to the UK. The school has recently reviewed provision for Key Stage 3. Attainment data for Key Stage 4 indicates that the school performs broadly in line with UK national averages. For example 65% of pupils gained 5 A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to the UK figure of 62%. A data tracking system has been introduced in secondary departments to monitor the performance of IGCSE students against targets.

A 'traffic light' system identifies students at risk of underachievement. Most IG2 students know their target grades and some know what they need to do to further improve. Students use their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, in an iGCSE physics lesson students were using trigonometry to solve science problems.

Throughout the school there is a high turnover of students. As new students join classes, with different previous learning experiences, there is inevitably some disruption to learning as the teachers try to establish what the student already knows, understands and can do.

The school has identified the need for a greater range of reliable and valid baseline data in order to track individual student progress, particularly across Key Stage 3 and to more reliably evidence the value added by the school to pupils' learning.

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

6. *Standard 2*

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness meets the standard.

All students are exposed to aspects of spirituality through the taught curriculum as they move through the school. Arabic assemblies, Tajweed, Quranic recitals and a planned PSHE programme provide additional opportunities for reflection and sharing moments of wonder.

Students are expected to listen carefully to adults and to each other. They are mostly polite, cheerful and well mannered. 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. Student councils, trips and visits, charity fundraising and work experience provide opportunities for social interaction.

Students quickly learn to distinguish right from wrong, through the effective application of rewards and sanctions, and from staff expectations in lessons and around the school. Most students respond appropriately and respectfully to the views of others and understand the consequences of their actions. Most students are able to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes.

Tolerance, democracy, respect for freedom of expression and other human rights are developed throughout the school. As students progress through the school, planned curriculum experiences ensure they broaden and deepen their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship not only in Kuwait but also the UK and internationally. A spirit of internationalism is firmly embedded in the curriculum.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The care given to the welfare, health and safety of the students meets the standard for accreditation.

The school has a Health and Safety Policy which outlines systems and procedures as well as roles and responsibilities. The school has implemented an effective anti-bullying policy.

Students from Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 2 who display good behaviour and model academic excellence are chosen to represent their respective classes as a Student Mentor. If a student is selected to be a mentor, they wear a 'mentor scarf' or 'armband'. This scarf /armband visually distinguishes them from other students and is prized among the student body. Students from Key Stage 2 are involved in the Primary school Student Council (PSC). Students meet once a month to discuss important issues such as bullying and healthy eating.

A Pastoral Policy (primary) and the Discipline Policy (secondary) are in place and outline the expected 'code of conduct' for all student behaviour throughout the school. The academic staff monitor both the 'code of conduct' (primary) and the disciplinary referral system (secondary). The policy is not implemented consistently, however. The school adopts a zero tolerance policy towards bullying and ensures that students understand the consequences of their actions. This has resulted in a reduced number of incidences of bullying in the primary section.

Safety procedures are in place to support fire drills and school evacuation. There are security procedures for staff and visitors; coloured lanyards identify primary and secondary teachers and visitors. Security guards are on duty during the school day.

Safeguarding procedures are well established and staff training is delivered annually. There is a designated teacher for child protection. Supervision of students is good and teachers are highly visible before school, after school, breaks times and during lesson changeover.

Students with social or emotional needs are able to meet the counsellor. In addition, the school has access to psychologists and therapists through the Soor Centre. The school encourages healthy eating and has a cafeteria that provides drinks and snacks. The clinic is staffed by three qualified nurses. There are medical records for all students and these are updated annually. Systems are in place to ensure that records and medicines are kept securely.

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 records in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm identity. Medical fitness, the right to work in Kuwait and previous employment activity are also verified. 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 in the school.

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 meet the requirements for accreditation.

Overall the accommodation is adequate and the school has a plan to address weaknesses in provision. The school is housed in a 3-story building and makes good use of the limited space available for the large number of students on site. The accommodation for KG and reception classes is barely adequate to fully deliver the EYFS curriculum. Whilst the school has the resources and equipment for effective delivery, suitable space is at a premium. Class sizes are large; there is little room for break out spaces, learning corners or to facilitate group work. In Key Stage 2, many of the classrooms are of necessity set up in rows to accommodate the high number of students in each class.

Recent investment in ICT has increased the use of technology to support teaching and learning. Secondary classrooms are equipped with computers and projectors or interactive whiteboards and in some lessons the technology was being used effectively. The secondary library provides a range of resources to support learning and provides a place for private study. There are a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and a selection of Arabic books. It is spacious with areas for reading and studying. There are four computers for student use. Students have timetabled reading lessons to support literacy development. The Library hosts visiting children's authors, for example Alan Gibbons visited in 2015.

The school has acknowledged the need to upgrade acoustics in the gymnasium area to minimize disruption to learning in the nearby classrooms. Lighting, heating and ventilation are generally effective. Flooring throughout most the site is well maintained and is generally in good condition. Washroom facilities are plentiful although not always hygienic. The lack of cleaners after 12.30 has a negative impact on the cleanliness of the toilets. The water supply is of a good quality. The disposal of water, surface and waste is effectively dealt with. Stairwells are narrow for the number of students, posing a potential hazard for them in the event of an emergency. Due to the volume of children on site, staggered break times across both schools result in a constant background noise for much of the school day. During break times, primary students must use the secondary toilets as there are no toilets anywhere near the playground within the primary building. The school is aware of the need to upgrade the primary library and gym. Maintenance is generally effective, although some areas appear tired and in need of repainting. There are sufficient areas for shade during non-contact time. Appropriate provision is made for religious observations.

All teachers are qualified to deliver the English National Curriculum. Stringent checks in line with Kuwaiti law ensure all staff must have the relevant qualifications and police checks to be employed by the school. Documents must be attested and notarized by qualified personnel. There are a large number of support staff including teaching assistants deployed across the school to enhance curriculum provision.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

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

Contact details of the school and the board are readily available. Contact details of the Head Office and Gulf English School are printed on back of students' exercise books. Gulf English School's mission, vision and ethos are featured in relevant documents and publications. It is the driving force for school improvement.

The school operates an open-door policy. Parents are frequently able to speak to a senior manager on request and class teachers at the earliest opportunity. Parents of students from KG to Year1 are collected from classrooms providing opportunities for discussion with the class teacher. The school acknowledges that most parents have experienced very different forms of education. In 2014, the school introduced workshops to explain the English National Curriculum and how they could best support their child.

A focus group of parents stated that home-school communication is effective. In addition to letters, the school uses email and text to keep parents informed. The school continually updates the web-site in order to keep parents fully informed. Policies for admissions, discipline and exclusions are readily available for parents and others. 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.

The school actively seeks engagement with the local community. Examples include students acting as mentors to children at Khalifa School, sports competitions with local schools, British Embassy events and a desert clean-up activity.

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

11. *Standard 7*

The school's procedure for handling complaints

Complaints are very rare. The school nevertheless has a clear policy and procedures in place which reflect good practice from the UK. Parents are informed of the process. The formal complaints procedure 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 meet the standard for accreditation.

The board of trustees oversee the strategic direction of the portfolio of schools comprising the Al'Tafawoq Educational Services Company TES. Gulf English School works with the education adviser who reports to the board. The education adviser 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 school runs well on a day to day basis. The head teacher is well supported by her senior leadership team. Collectively they have a clear vision for the development of the school. Through its effective self-evaluation, which takes into account the views of all major stakeholders, the senior leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The primary school has undergone significant changes in recent months with a large turnover of teachers and a new head. He has made a number of changes including students moving up with their age group, the further development of a learning support department and the implementation of smart boards throughout.

There is an inconsistency in the skills and competencies of middle leaders across both schools in promoting and sustaining high quality teaching and learning and raising individual student attainment. After a period of turbulence, the school is implementing the recommendations from the last inspection. There is clear evidence of an increase in student collaborative and independent learning. The school is beginning to implement a more rigorous approach to performance management with a more specific focus on student attainment. A programme for professional development of staff is in place.

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.