



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

**International
Community School**

**Amman
Jordan**

Date 16th – 18th October 2016
Inspection number 20161016

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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 students; 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 and care for students and students' 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, 52 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management teams, a range of teachers, parents and groups of students. Three school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Colin Dyson. The team members were Katherine Clark and Nicola Walsh.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

International Community School meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The International Community School (ICS) Jordan is a good school with significant strengths.

ICS provides a good quality of education complemented by a high level of student care. The quality of learning, teaching and leadership are good. Parents fully support the vision and direction of the school. They recognise the important contribution the school makes towards the development of their children's lives. 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. Recent appointments to the senior leadership team are having a positive impact on moving the school forward.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths.

- Teaching is good across the school - the majority of lessons were good or very good and some were outstanding.
- The school provides a good range of facilities that are well matched to meeting students' needs.
- The principal is inspirational in his drive for continuous improvement; encouraging all students and staff to realise their full potential.
- Newly appointed senior leaders, under the guidance of the principal, are providing strong leadership and management that are having a positive impact on raising achievement further.
- Relationships are positive, between students, students and teachers and the school and its parent body.
- There is a strong drive to further improve the school that is evident at all levels.
- The school senior management committee are fully involved in the life of the school.
- The students are happy, feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Health and safety have an appropriate priority across the school. A full range of effective measures have been implemented and are monitored regularly.
- Parents overwhelmingly support the school in all its efforts to move forward.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure that effective use of assessment informs short term planning to monitor student progress and further raise standards.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all middle leaders to enable them to contribute more effectively to whole school development.
- Address the inconsistencies highlighted in areas such as marking, evaluation and learning outcomes, through rigorous monitoring.

4. The context of the school

International Community School (ICS) is a private co-educational non-profit day school for students from foundation Stage to Year 13. It provides the National Curriculum of England supported by an effective pastoral programme and a good range of extra-curricular activities.

ICS is one of the longest established schools in Jordan, authorised under the Ministry of Social Development and is highly regarded in the local community.

The primary school caters for students aged 3 to 11 years, starting in FS1 and FS2, where the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance is followed, progressing to year 6. From year 1 to year 6 the National Curriculum for England 2014 is followed. The secondary school follows the curriculum taught in line with the English National Curriculum, leading to GCEs in Year 10 and 11 through to AS and A Levels in Years 12 & 13. The school also offers BTEC courses; four at Level 2 and three at Level 3.

Learning a foreign language is emphasised throughout the school. Opportunities are provided for Arabic, French and Spanish as well as English as an additional language.

The school is fully inclusive and aims to support a wide range of students including those identified with 'barriers to learning'. Individual students' needs are monitored and supported by an Individual Needs Department that supports class teachers/tutors.

There are currently 700 students on roll, 20% of whom are Jordanian passport holders. Across the school students come from over 60 nationalities. The majority of administration and support staff, together with an increasing proportion of teaching staff, are Jordanian.

The school is a full member of the regional consortium, the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME) and is currently seeking accreditation through the Council of International Schools (CIS).

Part of the school's unique character is that students across a range of ages and backgrounds mix socially in a harmonious community. The school aims to ensure that senior students develop a sense of responsibility towards the younger ones, becoming community leaders and positive role models.

4.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of the school is evident.

- The National Curriculum of England has been adopted throughout the school from Early Years to year 13 with public examinations at GCE, AS and A2 levels.
- The school is organised 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.
- The school seeks to adopt UK practices and keeps up-to-date by monitoring developments from the Department for Education. Assessments are based on national standards from the UK.
- British practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting annual review meetings.
- 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. There is a school uniform that varies depending on the age and activity of the students.
- Parents are supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents, suggested they valued the British style of education.
- The school has an appointed part-time Careers Counsellor responsible for the articulation of careers-related learning. Students are supported well 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 ICS is good. It meets the requirements of the BSO Framework fully.

5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum provided by ICS is good. It is broad, balanced, innovative and offers students a good range of learning opportunities.

The Early Years curriculum delivered at ICS enables students to have a range of learning experiences. Activities planned are in line with the EYFS areas of learning and development and Early Learning goals however, evidence suggest that students are not yet consistently encouraged to lead in their learning and to engage in meaningful conversations with their peers to enhance their communication and language skills.

The school is developing the outdoor provision for students across the foundation stage and staff recognise that a strategic plan is required to further enhance this area of learning.

Recent baseline assessments have established focussed phonics groups enabling staff to tailor the literacy provision to meet the needs of the students. The continued development of early reading skills is a priority for further curriculum development.

The transition from foundation stage to year 1 is not yet fully consistent in enabling all students to blossom easily into a year 1 curriculum.

The curriculum content is matched to suit the needs of the students. Carefully chosen subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of students. Cross curricular lessons were observed where links between subjects were evident and students were applying skills taught in other lessons. Topic work was popular with students. The use of ICT was innovative and students enjoyed this approach to research information and source reading books. The use of QR readers to provide subject material for students was effective.

Specialist teaching extends the primary curriculum and enriches students' knowledge and experiences in music, modern foreign languages and physical education. Primary students, for whom English is an additional language, are well supported; much work has been done to extend effective strategies in all classrooms.

Across Key Stage 3, students follow a three year common curriculum based on the National Curriculum for England. They have an opportunity to build their skills and

knowledge through a broad curriculum that includes computer science, food and nutrition and global citizenship, as well as more traditional subjects. There is a strong focus on languages and all students chose to follow two languages, one language is continued into to GCSE level. In addition to a comprehensive pastoral programme, all students undertake a number of Leadership, Enterprise, Global Citizenship and Service (LEGS) projects each year. Students interviewed felt the broad curriculum was a strength of the school.

In Key Stage 4, all students are prepared for GCSE examinations. They study a common core of subjects and have the opportunity to opt for three subjects that are also followed to GCSE. Examinations are undertaken through Edexcel or Cambridge International Examinations.

At Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form) students have the opportunity to follow their studies to A-level. The school provides a good range of subject choices. The subjects available include: mathematics, English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, ICT, business studies, economics, psychology, Arabic, French, drama, art and design, history geography, BTEC IT, BTEC travel and tourism, and BTEC business studies.

To help develop the whole student, the curriculum provides a range of leadership opportunities. Recent developments have included the implementation of a personalised learning approach; 'themonalisaeffect' to ensure the curriculum, learning and teaching are focused on the skills and interests of each individual student.

Across the school there is an effective learning support team that provides teachers with support and guidance through both assessment and evaluation of specific students' learning needs.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the standard required.

Throughout Foundation Stage (FS) and Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching in the best lessons was characterised by high expectations of participation, strong behaviour management strategies, good pace and energy. In these lessons, students were stimulated by active involvement in their learning and enthusiastic teachers.

In both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the majority of lessons observed saw students eager to learn and the use of effective questioning techniques facilitated some higher order thinking skills. The lessons observed in Foundation provided students with a selection of activities, but opportunities to enhance their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning were somewhat limited.

The collection of evidence in Foundation is through the use of an online assessment tool. Staff spoke confidently about the process. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the process by adding photographs of experiences the students have had at home. Evidence of monitoring and evaluating systems for assessment within Key Stage 1 was noted against success criteria and target sheets in the front of the English books. The effectiveness of these systems is at an early stage of monitoring. Students' understanding of the marks against the success criteria was 'yellow is good, green is bad' but they did not always have a clear understanding of the purpose of the target sheet.

The quality of teaching in lessons observed across the primary school was good overall. Teachers work hard to set clear learning intentions and success criteria. This was evident in all lessons: students were able to talk knowledgeably about what they were learning to do.

Behaviour was managed well and students requiring extra support were identified and the use of other adults to support students was well focussed. In a year 3 lesson, careful questioning by the teacher developed students thinking and students made progress solving problems and working at a level above expected.

In upper Key Stage 2, teachers set high expectations for the students but these were not always attainable as some tasks were not differentiated sufficiently to support all students. In the least effective lessons, there was insufficient challenge for some students: they found the tasks easy and little progress was evident in their learning.

Students talked about learning and were given opportunities to talk about the lesson content. This was a strong feature throughout Key Stage 2.

Books were well marked and the quality of presentation was consistent. All shared common features such as learning intentions and success criteria. Books evidenced a

variety of approaches in learning. In maths particularly, work was well matched to the abilities of the students so that progress in learning was clearly evident. In English, content was heavily biased towards the technical competencies on writing which hindered the ability of students to develop creativity and imagination. There was also little evidence of students writing at length. Feedback to students was helping them to make progress particularly in maths.

Plenary sessions were observed but sometimes these were not used effectively to measure the learning outcomes of the lesson.

Teachers set tasks that are differentiated based on ongoing assessment. In some classes tasks are well matched to the abilities of students but this is not yet consistent throughout the key stage. Students are identified for extra support through the use of CAT tests and targeted intervention is provided by extra adults in the classroom to support these students.

Writing is assessed monthly and this informs teachers planning. Reading is assessed through on going assessment but no formal records were seen of attainment or progress.

The quality of teaching in the secondary section is good with some outstanding aspects.

The use of discussion groups and well-structured question-and-answer sessions supports the students' acquisition of language skills and develops personal confidence and self esteem.

In the best lessons, students were able to work in pairs or groups, activities are engaging and well planned and students and teachers share an enthusiasm for the subject. An example of this was seen in a year 8 science lesson where students modelled the effect of vaccinations on preventing the spread of infections. The use of discussion groups and well structured question and answer sessions supports the students' acquisition of language skills and develops personal confidence and self esteem. Effective discussion and questioning was evident across most subject areas. High quality dialogue supported students in evaluating whether Cromwell was a hero or villain in year 8 history lesson.

Teachers are working hard to create stimulating and effective learning environments. Classrooms are well equipped with high quality resources. Some of the digital whiteboards are used in a highly effective manner to enhance learning. In at least one room, the impact of digital material was restricted by the poor quality of sound and picture.

Good use is made of practical lessons to simulate and embed knowledge. Practical science was evident in a number of lessons and positively impacted on learning. High quality questioning is used effectively to check students' understanding throughout

lessons. Other forms of formative assessment were observed such as the use of mini whiteboards and peer assessment.

High quality marking and constructive feedback from teachers was seen in some students' books but the quality and functionality of marking is often inconsistent.

Student behaviour is outstanding and students are enthusiastic about their learning. They are keen to take part in the lesson and often ask searching questions.

Assessment and tracking systems are now being embedded and the school is aiming to develop the effectiveness and impact of this further. The use of assessment data to inform lesson planning and to evidence progress for individual and groups of students is less well established.

5.3 Standards achieved by students

Across the school students achieve broadly in line with UK expectations. Students in the Foundation Stage have a low starting point in communication and language with a large number arriving with English as a second language.

Assessment procedures within the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are in their infancy and therefore data to evaluate students' progress over time is limited.

The school is implementing a range of formative assessment strategies that will be analysed and used to inform teaching strategies. The data on student progress has been lacking in the past and it is therefore difficult to evaluate trends. This issue is now being addressed to ensure a range of assessment strategies are implemented to enable students to be more effectively tracked.

Evidence in books, through talking to students and hearing students read, suggested that students were working at or below levels expected in UK in writing, and at expected levels in reading and maths. In some cases in maths, students were working at levels above expected for their age.

Student data on progress is monitored across the secondary school through a mixture of grades and levels. Often the monitoring and tracking of student progress was inconsistent. The best practice observed was where clear targets were shared with students to ensure they were fully aware of their attainment, progress and next steps in learning. The use of diagnostic marking is not fully implemented across all departments in the secondary school. The school recognises the need to monitor and track this as part of their cycle of 'learning walks'.

Standards achieved at GCSE are at least in line with UK expectations and this is a positive achievement based on the diverse cohorts of students. The school recognises the need to ensure expected A-level results more closely match actual results. In order to address this challenge, the school is rapidly implementing changes to the monitoring and tracking of individual students as well as ensuring its admission practices reflect its aim of achieving high levels of student success.

The school has identified the need to ensure all teachers are setting and monitoring accurate target grades to encourage students to take a greater level of responsibility for outcomes achieved.

Scrutiny of students' learning, including outcomes in their books, highlighted inconsistencies in marking and feedback. In the most effective, students were given clear guidance on how they could improve and how successful they had been in achieving learning objectives.

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

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

The school's values are embedded in all aspects of school life. These are shared in assemblies and referred to routinely in class. There is a shared ethos across the school: another strength.

Parents reported that British values have a high profile; they are discussed in assemblies and seen throughout school. One parent who had moved her child to the school reported he had said 'I'm free and I feel my difference is accepted.'

'Polio Points' are used effectively to raise the profile and firmly embed the school's seven core values and reward students for displaying these values.

Students enjoy school as evidenced by their positive attitudes, good behaviour and the courtesy they show for others, including their teachers and visitors. The school is successful in enabling students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Students are given opportunities to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence through the wide range of extracurricular clubs, off site residential clubs and community work. The use of the SEAL program in primary and LEGS in secondary ensure students are introduced to moral issues.

Students are able to distinguish clearly right from wrong through a consistent approach in the behaviour policy. Students work independently, collaboratively and were observed effectively supporting one another. Collaborative learning was evident throughout.

Cultural development is a strength of the school. It is a highly inclusive school which encourages students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

Community work is a significant feature of school life, through a variety of innovative programmes that involve all students and provide students with valuable experiences regarding life outside school. This year in the secondary school, there was a much greater uptake of students seeking work experience in humanitarian roles.

The annual world food fair celebrates different cultures and is significant event for the school involving students at all levels. Within the curriculum, cultural differences are explored and celebrated.

Students in year 6 demonstrated a fascination and a sense of awe and wonder regarding the topic work on bees. In some lessons, teachers carefully crafted a sense of awe and wonder through the introduction of an inspiring topic that engaged students' curiosity and fascination with the world.

The school is developing the opportunities for student leadership and this was seen as a highly positive initiative by many of the older students.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the students

ICS has a strong ethos of care, guidance and support, which ensures the needs of students are met. Class teachers, tutors and pastoral leaders work hard to ensure their wellbeing.

The appointment of a security and safety manager has resulted in the implementation and review of existing health and safety procedures. The school conducts audits to monitor, minimise and respond to health and safety concerns.

The school site is kept clean throughout the day. An extensive refurbishment and building programme has been undertaken to improve facilities.

Fire drills are conducted appropriately and evacuation procedures are evident. Lock down systems are being reviewed with new proposed systems being trialled. However, documentation to monitor the outcomes of evacuation drills and lock downs was not immediately available.

The school nurse maintains medical records and provides on-site care and support and liaises closely with the school doctor, parents and staff on any medical issues. It is recognised by the school that additional staff with first aid experience would be of benefit.

Safeguarding systems and key policies are shared with all staff and communicated to parents, the school is aware that staff need to have up-to-date health and safety training. It was however, observed that staff identification badges were not worn consistently across the school and that personal mobile devices were used to photograph students for evidence of learning.

Both the school and parents recognise the need for a school counsellor as a matter of priority to support students' needs highlighted across the school.

The risk assessments for trips are pre-populated, with staff leading the trips reviewing and amending as necessary before submitting to the senior leaders for authorisation.

Students and parents reported that behaviour is good in school. Targeted intervention for students with behavioural issues in Key Stages 3 and 4 is having an impact in improving outcomes for these students. Rewards and a 'no sanctions' approach to behaviour are making a difference to the lives of students. The 'no sanctions' approach and use of positive reinforcement was observed in use in both the primary and secondary sections and students responded well to it.

Student voice, a new system in place, will ensure students have the opportunity to contribute to the development of all areas of the school through use of innovative teams; well-being, learning and community.

Anti-bullying work in lessons and internet safety day, citizenship programme SEAL work in primary all ensures work in PSHE is targeted appropriately and progressive.

Extra-curricular clubs, off site visits, compulsory residential trips from year 3 onwards, develop the whole student and are well received by students and parents.

The inclusion policies detail provision. However, the definitions regarding each area of need are yet to be clarified. Provision maps are in place which detail support for all students across the school. Individual education plans detail support for students and are shared with parents and teachers. Parents and students are given an opportunity to contribute to the Individual education plan. Fortnightly meetings of leaders in inclusion ensure that provision is monitored and impact reviewed. The inclusion manager supports staff in class and through specific staff training matched to identify areas of need.

A separate policy for gifted and talented students is to be created and actions implemented from January 2017. The school has identified the need for subject coordinators to have a greater subject and resource knowledge and has already introduced strategies where staff are working collaboratively across key stages to improve subject knowledge in this area. EAL support is well embedded in the school. Students are identified and targeted intervention, using the wave approach, is having a positive impact on outcomes.

The school complies fully with the regulatory authority's requirements on health and safety.

Attendance throughout the school is good. Procedures are in place to monitor attendance and punctuality.

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

The school's senior management committee (SMC) are effective in their role as 'critical friends' and have made a valuable contribution to ensuring ICS is an effective school.

Under the guidance of the principal, the SMC has strengthened its oversight of the school's strategic development. Regular briefings by the school's leadership team aim to ensure all committee members have a clear insight into the working of the school throughout all key stages. By creating working parties, members are encouraged to focus on key aspects of the school's work: this has enabled a good level of expertise from committee members.

Responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding and welfare of students are clearly understood and effectively discharged. Clear procedures have been implemented to ensure staff appointed meet best practices regarding safe recruitment procedures.

Committee members have a clear understanding of their individual and collective responsibilities. The effective collective contribution of the SMC adds significantly to the continual process of improvement at the school.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

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

The school site fully meets the expectations and staff have worked hard to ensure the site provides a wide range of good quality facilities.

The teaching areas are well-resourced with interactive whiteboards in most classrooms. The furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for the age and needs of all students. Good use is made of the classrooms and other areas. Outdoor facilities for the younger students are underdeveloped, meaning opportunities are missed to integrate the overall learning environment and students' learning experience.

There is adequate natural and, when required, artificial lighting. Water and drainage systems meet local requirements. There are sufficient teaching rooms and specialist areas to accommodate all the learning programmes and curricular needs of the students. Common areas are well used throughout the school day and are often creatively utilised for a wide range of relevant and attractive displays.

It is also noted that the anticipated new developments will further enhance the curriculum and learning opportunities for the students.

Staffing provision is generous across the school. ICS takes great care to recruit and retain well qualified and committed staff. Teachers are well supported by an extensive range of ancillary and administration staff.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is good.

Parents felt that work with the local community was a strength of the school. The school was described as being a 'bedrock of the community' and supportive of parents.

Parents received formal written reports which detail attainment. They have regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress and the school's open-door policy is much appreciated. Parents felt informed regarding their child's progress in school.

The parents expressed that they were satisfied with the curriculum provided by the school and felt that the school provided well for all students. The community work was valued particularly in secondary school.

Parents felt very involved in the life of the school.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

There are clear policies in place and these are shared with parents.

Complaints are rare.

The school provides clear information about what should happen in the event of a complaint and these are detailed in stage descriptors. All parents knew where to go to raise a complaint and the procedures to follow in the event of the issue not being resolved.

The handling of complaints mirrors the management structures of the school. All parents have easy access to class teachers and senior leaders. The SMC has established systems to support the complaints procedure if required, by providing guidance and resolution. In discussion with inspectors, parents stated that they felt confident about raising concerns, and any issues were effectively and efficiently dealt with.

12. Standard 8

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

13. Standard 9

Leadership and management of the school

The effectiveness of leadership and management by the SMC, principal, senior leaders and others with delegated responsibilities is good.

The SMC as an elected body of parent representatives has worked closely with the principal to ensure a shared vision of school development is established and are developing their effectiveness to appropriately hold others to account for high quality outcomes. This effectiveness is reflected in the quality of education, the care taken of all students and the fulfilment of the school's planned ethos. There is a very positive relationship between the SMC and principal.

The principal provides high quality expert leadership. He has ensured recent appointments at senior leadership level has equipped the school with a senior leadership team that can successfully address their responsibility for the implementation and effective monitoring of comprehensive policies particularly regarding the safeguarding of students, welfare, health and safety.

Despite the senior leadership team only having been in place a short time, a number of key initiatives have been implemented to facilitate the provision of a clear educational direction, which contributes greatly to the quality of students' academic and other achievements. It is also instrumental in optimising the personal development of students. Collectively the senior leadership team has a strong commitment to raising standards achieved across the whole school.

Appropriate delegation to middle leaders has been undertaken. However, some felt there was not enough clarity regarding their individual responsibilities and there were differences between the involvement of key middle leaders across individual departments. There is less of a sense of cohesion and understanding of effective curriculum implementation in the Early Years team.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, supported by the high quality of the administrative and support staff who work in partnership.

The principal has ensured that the school has been successful in recruiting well-qualified staff that are able to support effectively the needs of this growing school. Induction is successful in gaining staff commitment to the high expectations for students' academic progress and personal development.

There has been significant development and implementation of policies and procedures and a professional appraisal and development programme introduced for all staff. Recent initiatives to monitor and track student progress are fully aligned to the schools aim of supporting each student's individual needs. Effective monitoring of wide scale changes being implemented is not always rigorous and nor well enough aligned to support the raising of students' achievements and attainment.

The quality of self-evaluation followed by school improvement has developed considerably. This has led to senior leaders being successful in identifying and prioritising strategies for further development. The school development plan is carefully aligned to meeting students' needs and provides effective opportunities for evaluating outcomes.