



## **Inspection report**

# **The Aquila School**

**Dubai  
United Arab Emirates**

Date  
Inspection number

21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019  
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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 UK. 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, 80 full or part lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, school governors and groups of pupils. The team were in the school for 3 days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans. The team member was Sue Croft.

## 2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The Aquila School, Dubai fully meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas accreditation.

### 3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The Aquila school is already an outstanding school which is delivering its mission, 'to ensure every child loves coming to school and makes as much progress as possible'. Parents are highly supportive of the school and value the opportunities it provides for their children.

Leadership is outstanding: quirky, sometimes eccentric but always highly effective. There is a real sense of community and an idiosyncratic approach to life: whilst focussing on real learning and what children need 'right now', there is frequent laughter that often fills the corridors, classrooms and playgrounds. There is high quality teaching which focusses on supporting 'amazing learning' for all pupils. The personal development of the pupils is excellent.

#### 3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths, including:

- i. the sense of community in the school – everyone feels part of the organisation, and is made to feel important
- ii. an outstanding curriculum, including extra-curricular activities after school
- iii. the support and provision for pupils with special educational needs, which are excellent: all pupils are treated equitably and the same high expectations apply to all
- iv. the high-quality teaching: much is excellent, appropriately focussed on supporting 'amazing learning' for all pupils, for example by challenging each to make excellent progress
- v. the emphasis on independent learning, especially in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- vi. the personal development of the pupils, which is excellent
- vii. relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff: warm, professional, harmonious and often humorous
- viii. school accommodation and facilities are outstanding: they support and enable excellent learning, at the same time as giving a family feeling
- ix. welfare, health and safety are very strong: the pupils are safe
- x. leadership is excellent: creative, innovative, quirky, empowering processes and procedures to support 'amazing learning' and boosting teachers' confidence to try new and exciting teaching techniques
- xi. the principal, who is outstanding, providing clear guidance and direction for the school, – he is well supported by a passionate, dedicated and knowledgeable head of primary.
- xii. governance is effective and highly appropriate: a strong grip on the mission and vision, a close understanding of the functions and processes of the school, but operational duties correctly delegated to the school's leaders
- xiii. the progress made by pupils, which is excellent, sometimes from a low baseline
- xiv. a strong focus on literacy, which successfully gives pupils a love of reading
- xv. attainment which in many aspects, for example writing, is excellent.

## 3.2 Points for improvement

Among the school's many strengths, the following are areas for possible development.

- a. Raise the quality of teaching further, so that all lessons match the standards of the best;
- b. Promote further the vision, purpose and practicalities of the Aquila vision with parents and other stakeholders, especially in terms of assessment, rates of progress and attainment levels;
- c. Plan to include other teaching staff in the ongoing monitoring of the quality of education.

## 4. The context of the school

|  |  |      |             |       |    |
|--|--|------|-------------|-------|----|
| Full name of school                    | The Aquila School  |      |             |       |    |
| Address                                | Wadi Al Safa 5, Dubailand<br>Dubai, UAE  |      |             |       |    |
| Telephone Number/s                     | 04 586 2700  |      |             |       |    |
| Fax Number                             | NA   |      |             |       |    |
| Website Address                        | <a href="http://www.theaquilaschool.com">www.theaquilaschool.com</a>             |      |             |       |    |
| Key Email Address/s                    | <a href="mailto:principal@theaquilaschool.com">principal@theaquilaschool.com</a> |      |             |       |    |
| Headteacher/Principal                  | Wayne Howsen   |      |             |       |    |
| Chair of Board of Governors/Proprietor | Bharat Mansukhani  |      |             |       |    |
| Age Range                              | 3-11 years   |      |             |       |    |
| Total number of students               | 154  | Boys | 68          | Girls | 76 |
| Numbers by age                         | 0-2 years  | 0    | 12-16 years | 2     |    |
|  | 3-5 years  | 62   | 17-18 years | 0     |    |
|  | 6-11 years   | 90   | 18+ years   | 0     |    |
| Total # of part-time children          | None   |      |             |       |    |

The Aquila school opened in September 2018, initially offering education from foundation stage (FS) 1 to year 6. It is growing one year group each a year, so year 7 is planned to open in September 2019.

The school is owned by a London-based company, *International Schools Partnership*. The company owns 39 schools around the world. The Aquila School is their first new-build-from-scratch project. It is considered to be the flagship school of the company: it won 'Best Design Education Project of the Year' at the Design Middle East Awards 2018.

The school opened with 67 children on roll; there are now 155. The principal and head of primary have worked together for last 7 years at an Abu Dhabi school graded by the regulatory council there as outstanding.

The word 'Aquila' comes from a constellation on the celestial equator. Its name is Latin for 'eagle' and represents the bird that carried Zeus/Jupiter's thunderbolts in Greco-Roman mythology. The Aquila school's mission is to ensure every child loves coming to school and makes as much progress as possible.

The school actively tries to be as inclusive as possible, and hosts the Hemam Centre providing 1-1 therapy for children with very complex needs. These pupils then integrate into class as and when appropriate.

## 4.1 British nature of the school

The appearance, nature and ethos of the school are recognisably British. As well as implementing the curriculum for England, assessments are based on national standards from the UK. British practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting and annual review meetings.

All class teachers have UK experience and qualifications. Six staff have worked with the leadership of the school before

Communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website. Texts, materials, educational equipment and software are almost always sourced from the UK.

Displays in classrooms and around the school further promote a British identity. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips, are in line with UK best practice – even the principal's weekly aerobics sessions has a quintessentially British feel to it. The school celebrates special events in the UK.

Parents are highly supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents, suggested they appreciated the high quality of education and care provided by the school.

## 5. Standard 1

### The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at the Aquila school is outstanding.

#### 5.1 Curriculum

The curriculum is broad, balanced and innovative: it is excellent.

The school is committed to providing pupils with engaging and relevant learning activities that help them make as much progress as possible in all areas of the curriculum and prepare them for the next steps in their education – ‘real learning for a real future’. The curriculum followed in Years 1 to 6 is based on the National Curriculum for England, adapted to have a global dimension and relevance to children living here in the UAE.

The core of the curriculum is set but teachers are empowered to group areas of learning together to create topics which are of interest and of relevance to children in their class. The school emphasises and values cross-curricular learning, so that children make links between different subjects.

The curriculum followed in Foundation Stage (FS)1 and FS2 is based on the UK’s EYFS guidance, adapted to have a global dimension and more relevance to pupils living in the UAE. From FS1, the pupils have the opportunity to take part in weekly PE, swimming and music lessons with specialist teachers. Both native and non-native Arabic speakers take part in Arabic lessons throughout the week.

The school works hard to ensure that every lesson is directly relevant to pupils’ needs. Teachers are encouraged and empowered to teach the pupils what they need to learn ‘right now’: each class has a varied and engaging curriculum that is tailor-made to their current learning needs.

The curriculum ensures that children would be well placed to return to the UK education system, at the same time as being relevant to children living in the UAE. For example, money is taught using local currency and other subjects use the city of Dubai, the desert landscape and the culture and heritage of the UAE as a starting point for learning, meaning that the curriculum is relevant.

The curriculum encompasses a range of events and strategies such as mantle of the expert, enquiry-based learning, themed weeks such as enterprise week, global week, celebrating differences, safety, *Amazing Aquila* week and love of reading events. These themed weeks bring the whole school community together with a focus on the school’s key aim of providing ‘amazing learning’.

In addition to learning in classrooms, the school has a broad range of optional after-school activities which are selected by the pupils and led by the teaching staff. These activities coupled with an extensive range of external visits, including residential, and regular visitors, further enhance the broad and interesting curriculum.

There is an appropriate written policy on the curriculum, supported by suitable planning. As well as a focus on academic achievement and outstanding progress, the pupils are encouraged to be inquisitive and creative, and to make their own learning choices. Especially in EYFS, the latter is a significant part of the school day. Enquiry-based learning is at the forefront of teaching strategies used to implement the curriculum. The curriculum encourages pupils to direct their own learning through collaborative group problem solving.

This enables them to apply skills and knowledge in a meaningful context. It also facilitates the development of critical thinking and communication skills.

There is an impressive range of extra-curriculum after-school activities. They are suggested by the pupils, and are neither compulsory nor paid for. Many of activities are for all year groups, and cover from speed cups to debating, dodgeball to well-being.

There are many opportunities to understand and celebrate the culture and heritage of the UAE and the diversity of the local community.

## 5.2 Teaching and assessment

Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment are outstanding.

Nearly all lessons throughout the school were good or better, with many outstanding. Focus of the leadership is on the impact of teaching on learning, with a range of continuous professional development (CPD), training, coaching, modelling and regular monitoring used to facilitate this. Monitoring includes termly phase reviews and individual lesson observations as well as a systematic monitoring plan. That is focused on using evidence found from monitoring, to secure rapid improvement.

Lesson observations and informal pupil interviews suggest that teachers instil enthusiasm for and a love of learning, in line with the mission of the school – ‘amazing learning’. This enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.

The Aquila way is very successful in fostering in pupils a sense of self-motivation, the ability to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort, and a real interest in their work. In an FS2 lesson about (real) hen’s eggs, the pupils had many different ideas about what they could do, including making a special bed to look after them on. It also involves having fun. For example, in a year 4 science lesson about sound, pupils and adults showed great excitement, laughed a lot and at the same time, learnt important concepts.

Teachers are trained and empowered to use a wide range of teaching strategies to ensure that ‘children learn what they need to learn right now’- therefore promoting creativity, independent learning and resilience. For example, pupils in year 3 were very clear and honest when critiquing each other’s creative writing. Lessons are well planned, using effective teaching methods such as the year 5/6 guided reading session which utilised excellent questioning techniques. These were also seen in an high quality FS2 lesson about Little Red Riding Hood: ‘Is he?’; ‘Is she?’; ‘Should she?’; ‘Where?’. All elicited long and thoughtful answers from the pupils. There is a good range of activities used, and in most instances, outstanding management of class time. The teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) demonstrate very good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the Aquila pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account when planning lessons.

Almost all teachers are utilising effective strategies for managing behaviour and also encourage pupils to act responsibly. For example in a year 2 Arabic language lesson, pupils sensibly shared what they had learnt during the lesson, with one another. In the less successful lessons, slow pace and lack of awareness of the whole class, allows a few pupils to become bored and then mildly disruptive.

Teachers, especially the specialist teachers, demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. All staff utilised classroom resources effectively: the resources themselves are of an excellent quality, quantity and range.

There is an appropriate framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. This information is then used to plan teaching so that pupils can make maximum progress – 'amazing learning'. Detailed assessment for learning processes are used throughout the year on an ongoing basis, to track progress and to use immediately the assessment information to inform future planning.

The methodology used to assess attainment and progress is in line with best practise in the UK so that children would be well equipped to re-enter the UK education system at the appropriate level.

Nothing the teachers or TAs do undermines the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law or individual liberty. There is clearly strong mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The school does everything in its power to promote and encourage respect of individual differences in children and adults.

The golden rules approach to behaviour management is already very well embedded and as a result behaviour across the school is excellent. Almost all teachers are utilising effective strategies for managing behaviour and also encouraging pupils to act responsibly. In the few less successful lessons, slow pace and lack of awareness of the whole class, allows a handful of pupils to become bored and then mildly disruptive.

Baseline data suggests a low academic starting point for many of the pupils: progress data already suggests they are learning fast. Midyear data analysis shows that in EYFS progress is outstanding overall and in years 1 to 6 progress overall is very good, by reference to the local government regulator's framework. The standard of attainment in reading and writing is already high, despite the pupils only be in the school so far, for a short period.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the Aquila pupils is outstanding.

The school focusses very effectively on one part of the Aquila promise, to make children love coming to school: they are successful in this. Levels of attendance are high, at around 96.2%. The pupils are courteous, considerate, use common sense and often demonstrate their ability to be being co-operative.

Staff are very focussed on developing the whole child. Before a child starts at the school, a meeting is held with parents to explain how the child's personal development to be promoted and encouraged, so parents can focussing on any areas before the child starts school. Once at the school, all are encouraged to be independent, and this helps there personal and social development.

Pupils' spirituality is developed in a number of subtle ways in the school. As well as having a dedicated prayer room, separately for both girls and boys, pupils are encouraged to listen to others' opinions, to accept others' differences and to work as a family. The school promotes group decision making and proportional representation.

Moral education lessons and assemblies focus on tolerance, freedom of expression and other human rights. Explicit school events such as *celebrating differences* day support this. The pupils are well aware of right and wrong. The golden rules are well embedded: pupils are well mannered and polite. They have very positive attitudes to school, and enjoy the inclusiveness of it. The Hemam centre, which is based at the school, whose pupils attend selective lessons in school, and at break time are often part of friendship groups. Bullying is not acceptable. Parents have understood the need to return the appropriate form when asked for or their child is unable to attend the activity, as a duty to other children.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and make decisions, both in class with the emphasis on making their own choices about their learning and in the wider curriculum. For example the regular democratic Tuesday morning meetings and entrepreneurial projects such as table-top sales, a souq and the 'mantle of the expert' develop moral and social skills. The Tuesday meeting is where all members of the school meet to discuss different subjects that are important to the individual. For example, the pupils asked for their snack time to be outside not inside, and know have a 5 minute longer break time. They also decided that the weather was cold this year, and wanted an option of a fleece as an item of uniform. This has been arranged, and the school will see a selection for them to vote on. The year 6 pupils have decided what they would like as their new senior uniform, a blazer and shirt.

There is a real sense of community: there is an unwritten rule that everyone 'mucks in' when necessary: this goes for the electrician, the cleaners, the pupils, the teachers and the office

staff. Pupils are proud of their school and of the progress they make. Behaviour around school is excellent, as are relationships at all levels

Cultural development is excellent. Various cultures and festivals are celebrated in the UAE context, in addition to book mufti days, bake-offs and class assemblies, all of which are used to celebrate and learn about other cultures. There are other excellent opportunities for cultural development such as global day, competitions and opportunities to develop dramatic, musical and creative talents to the full. There are active sports teams for football, basketball and swimming. There are a number of musical performances each term, an *Amazing Aquila* day, the Aquila *learn-a-thon* and the end-of-term talent show: the whole school was also involved in all aspects of putting on a play in a recent drama workshop. Weekly assemblies highlight a specific theme or value in line with British values and these are explored and revisited during the week in classes

The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is delivered within the laws of the UAE. The school also precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject. Where applicable, pupils are offered a balanced perspective. As they progress through the school, the rich curriculum and co-curricular experiences ensure that they broaden and deepen their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship, not only in the UAE but in the UK and globally.

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

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding.

The staff know that the most important part of their role is to ensure that all pupils are safe, well supervised and well cared for at all times. They are aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding, and ensure that the safety of children is always the prime concern. There are appropriate written policies to safeguard pupils, and although the school has been open less than a year, these are updated regularly. Punctuality and attendance is closely followed, and tardiness is an issue that is highlighted in the home-school contract.

The school actively promotes healthy lifestyles and ensures pupils are aware of how to keep safe: for example, this was highlighted in a whole school 'keeping safe' day in February.

Informal discussions with pupils and observations around the school confirm that children feel safe and valued: they know that any adult member of staff (anyone wearing a green lanyard) will help them if they have a problem.

The taught curriculum ensures children understand how to keep safe online. Detailed risk assessments and processes for all school activities (including trips and visits) are effective. The brand-new school building is safe, secure, clean and well maintained: the health and safety committee are vigilant in maintaining these high standards.

Security is good. To enter the school, one must pass a security guard who hands out coloured security tag, which differs in colour depending on the sort of visitor one is. There have been 4 evacuation drills in the last 8 months. Sprinkler and hose units are tested every weekend. The maintenance of the site is impeccable: it is walked daily, and any issues are attended to, underlining the fact that safety of pupils and staff is paramount. There is fencing around the school and a separate parking area for cars at the front of the building.

The behaviour of pupils within the school is impressive. Partly because they are expected to tidy up after themselves in lessons, there is a real spirit of camaraderie amongst the pupils. Break are well supervised, and children from the Hemam centre and the school, and from different year groups, were seen playing together in a very supportive and appropriate way.

The school has a full-time nurse in the first-aid room, as well as a fully equipped clinic which will be used when the secondary school opens. She has a medical file on each child including their vaccination history and allergies. She also gives health education talks to the pupils, encompassing topics like tooth-brushing. There are also at least 12 first aiders. If parents are not contactable in an emergency, the pupil is taken directly to the Rashid hospital for emergency medical attention.

The experienced and knowledgeable site manager was in post a full year before the school opened: this also contributed to the excellent safety and security of the school.

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

The school is owned by The International Schools Partnership (ISP), a London-based company with schools in the UAE and around the world. The school principal is line-managed by the regional director of ISP.

The governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding and welfare of the pupils. They discharge these duties effectively.

All staff and volunteers have the necessary checks including safeguarding training before starting at Aquila. All staff have international police checks, as possible. All teachers, apart from those teaching Arabic and Islamic Studies, hold a British teaching qualification and have recent UK teaching experience.

Prior to the confirmation of appointments, checks including police checks in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm identity, medical fitness, right to work in UAE and previous employment activity. Acceptance is subject to the receipt of 3 satisfactory references including most recent employer and headteacher for teaching positions.

A single central register is in place containing all essential information. This includes permanent and volunteer staff, and the board of governors. This shows when they started and stopped working in the school. There are no unsupervised volunteers.

The staffing level is generous at the moment, and 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. The school has effective recruitment policies and procedures, designed to attract and retain highly qualified and committed staff.

## 9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are outstanding.

The schools was awarded the 'Best Design Education Project of the Year' at the Design Middle East Awards 2018, a testament to the quality and design of its campus and facilities.

The school is less than a year old, but it has an air of continuity and history about it already. There are few straight lines in the building , which adds to the homely and idiosyncratic feeling. The learning environments are large and airy, with the classrooms having huge windows and many having unobstructed views of the surroundings. The library area is large and inviting. The sports field is accessible directly from many of the classrooms.

There are excellent specialist facilities such as the food technology room, hydroponics farm, music rooms, swimming pools, dance studio, sports halls, continuous provision rooms and outdoor areas: all are of a very high standard. Operational facilities such as washrooms, first aid rooms, toilets, heating, lighting, ventilation and furniture are also excellent.

The school has very high-quality resources to support learning in all areas of the curriculum. All areas are well maintained and clean, with a school inhouse maintenance team on stand-by, as well as contract cleaners.

There is a rolling plan for more facilities in the school such as moving seating in the auditorium, the use of the computer room and the building of another canteen for the older pupils with a catering company brought in.

Security staff are stationed at a number of key access areas to the school, who hand out coloured lanyards to visitors, depending on the reason for being there. There are regular evacuation practises: a rescue chair is available if needed.

## 10. Standard 6 The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information to Aquila parents, carers, prospective parents and its wider community is outstanding.

The school's ethos around 'real learning for a real future' and 'amazing learning' is echoed not just in the literature but in lessons and after-school activities which are chosen by the students, and are well resourced – parents and pupils alike appreciate this.

The school has already established highly successful strategies for engaging parents and carers. They are actively welcomed into the school on a daily basis. Learning is clearly seen as a partnership. There is a real sense of community that permeates the school. There is a welcoming atmosphere everywhere, from the busy and exciting foyer, into the heart of the school. Administrative staff are always available to assist visitors and ensure that they have access to the appropriate member of staff.

The school keeps in good contact with families before they start at Aquila, with information meetings, information booklets and even home visits for the youngest children. The school app is a one stop shop for everything that families need to know about what is happening. The app is well maintained, up-to-date, detailed and informative. It supplements weekly newsletters, family workshops, parent information meetings, and year group handbooks, all of which combine to ensure that families are aware of what their children are learning and how they can support at home. Four family conferencing meetings per year plus twice-yearly reports ensure that families are clear and involved in their child's learning. However, some parents felt that they were not sure where their children were in comparison to others in the class or in the UK.

Parents suggested that they are very happy with the focus, drive and inclusivity of the school. They commended the feedback process and impressed by the openness and honesty the students showed to the principal – and vice versa. They did also suggest that a bigger carpark would be necessary when the secondary school opens, and also more trees and greenery. But they emphasised that everything they were told about the school, had materialised.

Most parent activities are during the day, but the school is looking at the demand for after-school hours meetings for working parents. Pupils lead their own parent meetings: both parents and pupils are happy about this. Individual education plans (IEPs) for children of determination are reviewed every six to eight weeks with families, working closely with the class teachers to help the child make as much progress as possible.

Every Thursday, parents are welcome to stay for tea and coffees in the school café. There is a *Friends of Aquilla* group that has arranged activities for parents and students informally.

Information about key policies needed for the day-to-day running of the school are available on the website, along with further information about the school.

## 11. *Standard 7*

### The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy on the website, which is followed if necessary. However, complaints are rare: teaching staff are available to talk to families before or after school, and replies to emails are sent within one working day, on the vast majority of occasions.

The policy makes a clear distinction between a concern and a complaint. A 'concern' is seen as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

The school considers the vast majority of issues raised in school are concerns which can nearly always be dealt with informally, between the relevant staff, family and pupils. The class teachers take responsibility for the children in their care, and all issues are raised initially with the class teacher or the specific subject teacher.

If more time is needed, a meeting is arranged by mutual agreement. As learning and teaching are the core of the teachers' work, they do not discuss any issue during lesson times. If after talking to the class teacher, there is still a concern, families can raise this with the leadership of the school.

The school leader/s meet the concerned parent if necessary, within three working days, to investigate any concerns. The aim is to respond within five working days of the meeting. If there are still concerns, the local regulatory body has a complaints procedure that is followed.

## 12. *Standard 8* Leadership and management of the school

The effectiveness of the leadership and management throughout the school, and the governance role fulfilled by the board, are excellent.

The principal provides outstanding leadership. He is experienced, popular, innovative and sometimes quirky: though always with the school mission as the focus. He also ensures that the school is committed to inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, by ensuring staff are sufficiently trained to support pupils. There is a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation to track progress and inform strategic planning.

The Aquila leadership team are relentless in their focus on improving the quality of outcomes for the pupils. They work hard to avoid being distracted from this core purpose: as a direct result of this passion, the school is already demonstrating the ability to ensure that children make outstanding progress.

The owners of the school and the governing body act as critical friends to the leadership of the school and have a clear role in establishing the strategic vision of the school. Whilst having very high expectations, the leadership of the school also empower staff to be innovative and make decisions. This is particularly related to learning and teaching, as well as the day today running of the school, maximise outcomes for the pupils. The principal encourages teachers to be innovative in finding solutions that best meet learning needs.

There is a comprehensive programme of staff training, coaching, modelling, support and monitoring to ensure that the focus is always on improving outcomes, and on delivering the promises of the Aquila school vision. This includes weekly training for teachers and learning assistants, as well as phase training to look at ways of implementing the vision.

Induction is well organised with new staff being assigned a buddy and a mentor. There is also formal support through 'one month in' meetings and end of probation reviews which leads to the introduction of performance management.

The governing board ensures that the school implements a fully inclusive education for the children in its care. A lead governor monitors the effectiveness of the provision and supports the school in implementing a strategic direction, through a clearly stated inclusive vision and ethos. The inclusion staff (the inclusion teacher and learning assistants) work alongside the class teachers to provide support in line with IEPs. Sometimes this includes work inside the classroom, or where appropriate withdrawing pupils for specialist intervention programs and therapies.

The school improvement plan is appropriate, accurate, well-judged and focused on setting challenging but achievable goals for the school's first year of operation. Safeguarding is integral to all aspects of school life and every adult understands that this is their number one priority.

The ethos of the school, already well-embedded, ensures that the whole Aquila community demonstrates respect for fundamental human values. The leadership ensure that families are fully aware of what is happening in school and their child's learning and progress.