



TOP QUALITY  
MARQUE



# British International School, Riyadh

## Inspection Report

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 – 11 February 2009
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
<hr/>	
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary and Secondary - English medium, open-entry
<b>School category</b>	Independent fee paying
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	1055
School	1017
6 <sup>th</sup> form	38
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Board of Governors
<b>Acting principal</b>	Alan Aitken
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	October 2000
<b>School address</b>	The British International School PO Box 85769 Riyadh 11612, Saudi Arabia
<b>Telephone number</b>	00966 248 2387
<b>Fax number</b>	00966 248 0351

This inspection is carried out under agreement with the school and in line with the standard procedures and criteria used by Ofsted in undertaking school inspections in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Due to reasons of jurisdiction, this inspection does not have any statutory status. The agreement with the school is that the inspection will be conducted and reported to include greater elements of guidance and recommendation than those normally provided in a section 5 inspection. This inspection is of the 3 to 16 provision within the school, although the character of the school as a recently extended 3 to 19 school is acknowledged throughout.

## Introduction

The Ofsted style inspection was carried out by four inspectors at the request of, and under agreement with, the school's Board of Governors. The inspection team was aware that this external review of the school's work is an original feature within the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning cycle designed by the school's senior leadership group. The inspection team approached this inspection in the declared statutory section 5 inspection spirit of 'working with the school to bring about improvement' rather than 'doing the inspection to the school'. The remit does not include the post-16 (sixth form) provision as this only opened in September 2008.

## Description of the school

The British International School is an academically orientated, mixed 3-19 independent (not-for-profit) day school situated on the outskirts of Riyadh. It has over 1000 pupils on roll following the English Early Years Foundation Stage, the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (adapted for Saudi Arabian law) and at Key Stage 4, a typical range of GCSE and IGCSE courses. At post-16, AS and A2 examination subjects are followed.

The age of transfer from primary to secondary is as in England, at 11, but as the school is essentially organised as a single institution with integrated resources, the BIS provides 'all-through' educational continuity. For historical reasons there are more pupils in the primary school than in the secondary school but, year-by-year, as pupils move through the school, numbers in the phases are evening-up. As a part of its primary school establishment, the BIS operates a one-form-entry primary section for about 140 pupils aged 3 to 10, at Salwa Garden Village (a residential village compound for BAE Systems and Ministry of Defence personnel) situated about 15 miles from the main school. This section opened in September 2007 and is staffed by teachers and assistants from both the main site and those who are resident at Salwa Garden Village; the pupils in this section live at Salwa. Judgements made in this report incorporate Salwa.

A new principal has recently been appointed, though he was not in post at the time of the inspection; the acting principal, the substantive vice principal, was leading the school. For many reasons, the school experiences considerable staff turbulence and this has been a barrier to raising achievement and ensuring continuity. Uncertainty about the availability of immigration visas has added to this. Nevertheless, the school has managed the challenges of the high mobility in the staffing situation effectively and this has not impacted on pupils' achievement.

The school is a full member of the regional consortium, the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME) and is an authorised centre for the International Award for Young People (Duke of Edinburgh Award) and the Cambridge International Examination (CIE).

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 2**

This is a good school. It has outstanding outcomes in its examination and test results which are comparable to the top flight of schools in England.

Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of the primary and secondary schools, and pupils' achievements are very good in these and other foundation subjects. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage children exceed the expectations of children of similar age in all areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress. In personal, social and emotional development, their progress is good. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the primary school due to good provision and targeted support. In Key Stage 3 this provision is only satisfactory as there are too few support staff and some teachers do not differentiate work enough to meet the needs of these pupils. Despite the high standards and very good achievement overall, pupils' rates of progress throughout the school are inconsistent. This is because:

- Assessment systems and the use of assessment data are only in the early stages of implementation;
- Teachers are not sufficiently engaged in moderating and levelling pupils' work accurately across different year groups and departments;
- Monitoring and evaluation skills of middle management are not developed enough to evaluate curriculum provision and the quality of teaching and learning rigorously;
- Staff are not sharing and making the best use of existing expertise and outstanding teaching;
- Teaching does not always take into account pupils' prior attainment and more capable pupils are not being stretched;
- Pupils are not fully on board with assessing their own work.

In spite of these shortcomings, pupils receive a good quality all round education. The school employs good teachers who successfully encourage pupils to learn with interest and enthusiasm. 'Our teachers are great' said one pupil interviewed; a comment that was typical of many.

The school is determined to improve on previous best performance and is on a quest to become outstanding. Staff have a thirst for knowledge and have a passion for developing their learning. From its own rigorous self-evaluation, senior staff are aware of what needs to improve and that some pupils may be able to do better than they are doing at present both in achievement and in personal development.

From the young children to the senior pupils in the school, the learners mature into thoughtful and considerate adults who appreciate the part they can play in society. They feel very safe and are happy at school. Pupils love their school and attendance is good. Pupils behave well and form good relationships with their teachers and among themselves. Pupils are confident that staff care for them well. Whilst pupils' personal development and well-being are good and many excellent extra-curricular activities are provided, some opportunities are missed to raise aspirations, guide careers, develop more opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and increase

their powers of initiative. At present, pupils do not have enough say in their learning and more could be done to involve parents in their children's education.

The school has effectively introduced the Every Child Matters agenda. Pupils know about healthy eating and what they should do to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. They are realistic and honest enough to admit that they do not always put such knowledge into practice, for example they confess to some unhealthy eating, but their excellent commitment to exercise and high participation in the varied sports programmes provided by the school compensate admirably.

The curriculum is good. The school has the English National Curriculum as its base for learning. It is broad and is enriched with outstanding extra-curricular activities which include sporting events, field trips and cultural activities. However, its balance should be reviewed as, at present, it is driven by timetabling arrangements rather than by the needs and interest levels of pupils. Lessons are sometimes too short and there are missed opportunities to develop links with other subjects. Opportunities for a creative approach to curriculum planning are not yet happening and the way skills are learned and progression ensured has not been rigorously monitored by subject leaders, many of whom are new to their jobs, resulting in pupils sometimes repeating things that they already know. Pupils feel confident about their learning from an early age in Early Years Foundation Stage and on through the school into their GCSE courses.

Parents receive information about how the curriculum works and the progress their children are making but the school recognises that it can do more to engage them. The school does not use its resources to develop community learning as much as it might. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are good as they grow and mature.

Teaching and learning are good with pupils' keen thinking reflected in the interesting questions they ask – there is, nevertheless, scope to encourage more of this. Lessons usually have elements of fun and some degree of excitement such as the Early Years Foundation Stage visit to the zoo where the children marvelled at seeing a snake shed its skin. Pupils appreciate being challenged and helped in how they should go about their studies. Teaching is well planned and teachers have good knowledge and capture the pupils' interests well. However, it does not consistently include enough challenge to ensure pupils apply those higher order skills appropriate at primary and secondary levels, and needed increasingly beyond GCSE. There are times when more capable pupils are not pushed enough to develop their skills of independent learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 much of the teaching is quite inspired, but at times it is overly structured and too sedentary, limiting that learning which comes through imaginative play and practical experience. At Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 the teaching and learning is similarly highly effective and pupils do well. In parts though, there is a lack of ambition as to what pupils of this age are capable of achieving. The school knows that in Key Stage 4 a small number of pupils could achieve even more GCSE A\*/A grades. Apart from in information and communication technology (ICT), pupils in Key Stage 4 do not readily transfer skills they have learned in one subject to another and the organisation of the teaching across the school does not facilitate this enough. There is scope for pupils to apply higher order skills in numeracy, literacy and investigational work more widely in other foundation

subjects. The school is successfully raising the percentage of these higher GCSE grades.

A few lessons, across the school as a whole, take insufficient account of pupils' prior learning. Not enough scope and encouragement is given to pupils to use their independence. This is as a direct result of weaknesses in ensuring that information from assessment is used to plan the next steps of learning. Pupils' preparation for their futures though is well considered and pupils are taught very good basic skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Pupils give generously to charities and respond well to initiatives which enable them to contribute to the local and overseas communities; they have a good sense of global community cohesion.

Leadership and management are good overall; weaknesses are being overcome. Difficult issues are faced and hard decisions taken. In this time of transition, the acting principal and senior leadership group are maintaining educational direction in the organisation, the curriculum and those areas where improvements are needed in line with the strategic priorities set by the Board of Governors. Performance management is generally operating well and the majority of middle leaders, of which there are many, are supportive and capable in their roles. However, performance management objectives need to be tightened to include more precision about improvement in pupils' progress. Due to the combined skills of the extended senior leadership groups, members of the Board and the wider staffing team over time, a good school has been created of which the British community in Riyadh is rightly proud. Nevertheless, decision making processes are slow. The senior leadership group has not yet analysed the wide range of competencies among middle managers. A clear and streamlined structure of responsibility is now needed to move the school forward. There is room to tighten the accountabilities of those staff with management allowances and improve the nature of support and challenge in levels of governance and senior leadership and management. Better communication based upon accurate and reliable information is also needed.

The attention of leaders and managers at all levels to ensure the care and success of pupils is unstinting. However, many changes at Board and senior leadership group levels have caused delay in taking and implementing decisions because of turbulence and shifts in direction. The timing for appointing new and replacement staff is late in the cycle and so securing the best staff is made more difficult. Succession planning and capacity building have rightly been identified as areas that need to be addressed.

In a high performing school such as this, there is room for more sophisticated use of assessment to inform the next steps of learning across the curriculum as a whole and to drive out pockets of underachievement. As a mark of its leading-edge position, the school has introduced an on-line program to track the details of pupils' progress over time and across subjects; this should deliver the information needed as its use embeds. Communication systems between school leadership and management and the Board, whilst improving, are not as effective as they might be. Governors are not receiving sufficient information to enable them to evaluate the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions and are sometimes drawn towards micro-managing aspects of school life. Governance is good; governors execute their roles as critical friends but better systems which focus their attention and actions on the quality of pupils'

learning are needed in order to bring this school into the realm of outstanding. Financial management of the school is good as reflected in the latest comprehensive audit report. This is a school which has the potential to be outstanding and the recommendations below are made with that in mind.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage** **Grade: 3**

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some good and outstanding features. Children are well cared for by a hard working staff who give of their best in ensuring that children develop positive attitudes to learning. At present, the accommodation is better at Salwa than at the main site because it lends itself more to providing continuous provision of all areas of learning. However, in both settings, the new principles of Early Years Foundation Stage around evaluating children's progress in light of development stages and developing provision, are not well established. From slightly above average attainment on entry, children make satisfactory progress overall in all areas of learning, with good and aspects of outstanding progress made in personal, social and emotional development. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but observations of children's interest levels do not consistently identify the next steps of learning. Children settle in very well to classroom routines and quickly develop skills of independence. Leadership and management are satisfactory but, the school's decision in having a leader for Foundation Stage 1, another for Foundation Stage 2 and a third at Salwa, needs reviewing as there are inconsistencies in practice.

### **What the school should do to improve further in order to attain outstanding status**

1. Improve the quality of teaching and learning and staff's knowledge of assessment for learning to ensure lessons meet the needs of all learners, especially the more capable pupils and those who find learning difficult.
2. Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage with specific reference to teaching and learning, curriculum planning, assessment, use of outdoors and staff's knowledge of 2008 provision, so that children make better progress in each of the areas of learning.
3. Ensure a curriculum that is excellent, exciting and meets the needs and interest levels of all pupils and is regularly monitored across subjects to improve progression in core skills.
4. Improve pupils' personal development and well-being by giving pupils more opportunities to take initiative and be independent learners.
5. Involve parents in their children's learning process.
6. Improve the leadership and management at all levels ensuring that the school's high ambition is consistently translated into routine practices which are effectively monitored and evaluated, and that improved communication unites the whole school community in moving the school to outstanding status.

Reasons for these recommendations are expanded in detail within the body of the inspection report and further guidance is provided in the report appendices.

## Achievement and standards

**Grade: 2**

Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 and examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average and outstanding by any measure.

Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is slightly above average and this is still reflected in the profile as children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 and the subsequent primary years. Standards are well above average from Year 1 onwards. Collectively, pupils certainly make good progress in each key stage, but the school is unsure as to whether this progress is actually good enough for each pupil in the primary school. Personalised learning is not developed and, as yet, there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment for learning.

Predictions, based on pupils' high standards on entry to the secondary school, reveal the potential for even higher performances in some areas of learning and subjects. The school is alert to the range of factors contributing to pockets of slight underperformance and is taking the right actions to improve outcomes. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic groups.

The school has recently implemented excellent systems for tracking achievement but it has not ensured that key staff have contributed baseline assessment data and on-going assessment judgements to this whole-school system at appropriate times. Consequently, the progress some pupils make, at different points in their journey through the school, does not necessarily represent the progress of which they are capable. The academic overview by senior staff is therefore incomplete and this leads to some uncertainty about how well pupils are actually doing. The school has introduced the means to rectify this situation and refine the progress profile for pupils. More needs to be done by teachers, their assistants, and leadership and management at all levels, to bring about effective review of progress and so establish consistently outstanding achievement for all, as well as top-flight test and examination results for many.

### Early Years Foundation Stage

The trend across the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage shows that children enter slightly above the levels normally expected for children of this age. Increasingly, learning English as an additional language is assessed as a need for many pupils and the area of communication, language and literacy, especially matching letters and sounds, is a high priority for learners. This, coupled with several weaknesses in the implementation of phonics linked to the rigorous teaching of handwriting and letter formation, has a limiting factor on attainment on entry into Year 1. Although the children learn English rapidly and their progress and achievements are satisfactory, the demands in an English-medium school for high performance across the six areas of learning means that attainment overall maintains that slightly above average standard. Changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the tightening expectations for assessment associated with these have taken time to implement and are not yet as tight as they could be. Assessments on children leaving to join Year 1 have been unreliable, but those for the present

cohort of children in Foundation 2 have been moderated more accurately and are therefore providing a more secure baseline from which to measure future progress.

## Key Stage 1

Results over time from the Year 2 end-of-key-stage tests indicate that the school improves upon the slightly above average starting position the pupils have attained when they enter Year 1, and so indicates good progress. The rigorous teaching of basic skills is having an impact. The school now uses the Primary Information Performance System (PIPS) to replace the Key Stage 1 national tests. Indications from looking at pupils' work and talking with pupils are that achievement, in comparative terms, is good by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils speak well and listen with patience and good understanding. They have a good command of basic numeracy and particularly good skills in ICT. They achieve well because they are given many experiences which require them to apply the early skills they have learned, something that many are naturally good at doing.

## Key Stage 2

Attainment in the optional end of year tests in English, mathematics and science in years 3, 4 and 5 indicate impressive progress. By the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), trends in test results over the last two years show that standards are well above average. Sharp and convincing attainment data show that average attainers, and above average attainers are in the top flight of results in English, mathematics and science. The expected attainment at level 4+ is consistently well into the top 90% range at this school, which compares well with similar schools in England which are at around 80%. At the higher level 5, attainment ranges from 40% to 78% compared to 25% to 30% for similar schools in England. Well above average attainment by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 is therefore clearly apparent. Given the attainment at the starting position indicated at Year 3 and evidence in other subjects seen during the inspection, good achievement and progress are made by pupils over their primary school journey through Key Stage 2. This is because pupils use newly acquired basic skills in language, numeracy and ICT to build on their Key Stage 1 experiences successfully. They generally enjoy their learning because of good quality teaching and learning. In spite of the high standards obtained, more capable pupils could be doing even better. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve well due to well targeted support.

## Key Stage 3

Attainment at Key Stage 3 is consistently well above average and the progress measures taken from Year 7 to Year 9 place the school in the top 5<sup>th</sup> percentile ranking with similar schools in England. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007 and 2008 are well above average against the nationally expected Levels 5 and 6 for average attainers in England, and well above Level 7 for the high attainers. Again, as with Key Stage 2, evidence in other subjects seen during the inspection indicates that achievement and progress for many pupils is good but the school has not closed the possibility of pockets of underachievement existing within this very positive picture. The school is

correct in evaluating its achievement at Key Stage 3 as good because present systems do not confirm outstanding achievement as being highly reliable. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is patchy. This is because there are too few support staff to help identified pupils learn. Furthermore, teachers are not yet utilising differentiated tasks to meet the needs of these pupils. The expertise of the special educational needs co-ordinator is not used to best capacity in this key stage.

## Key Stage 4

GCSE results are very high compared to all schools nationally and would place the school in the top 5<sup>th</sup> percentile ranking with similar schools in England for GCSE results A\*-C including English and mathematics. Sharp data from results in 2007 and 2008 show 100% and 93.4% of pupils attaining 5 A\*-C grade respectively, compared to around 64% of schools in England, and 87% and 83% respectively when English and mathematics are included, compared to less than 50% of schools in England. Such performance compares favourable with many selective English grammar schools. Pupils have well developed skills in ICT and apply them effectively across the curriculum and in many extra-curricular opportunities. However, the school has not built on this solid foundation sufficiently to promote a well developed culture of 'personalised learning' where good writing and numeracy skills could be exploited by the pupils through more independent endeavour. There is room for improvement; almost 10 students in 2007 and 2008 attained some subject grades below C, all but two of these did achieved 5 A\*-C however. Students generally perform well against their targets and in line with the school's predictions. The school knows the relative performance when subjects are compared one with another. These differences are judged to be less than significant in the overall performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. This view is taken because the school operates an options programme where the performance of pupils in different subjects cannot be aggregated reliably against the large sample used in shaping national trends for those subjects.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

Pupils really enjoy their education and value the things the school has to offer. They learn and study diligently. They relish being involved in the varied activities in and outside lessons. A good start has been made on seeking pupils' views but more could be done to seek their views on learning. Their views are responded to through the democratic channels of the two school councils and more informally in the positive dialogue that exists between pupils and many teachers, teaching assistants, members of the support staff and visitors to the school

Pupils feel there is always someone they can talk to if they have an occasional problem, and they do. They praise the support given to them. They understand how to lead healthy lifestyles because they study relevant topics in several subjects, receive advice from the expertly run school clinic, and many of them participate in extra-curricular clubs involving stringent physical activity. They are developing a love of learning and relish the excellent extra-curricular activities provided for them.

Most pupils make additional contributions to school life. The school councils have an active voice and have been instrumental in bringing about changes to the school environment and some of the school's procedures. Pupils eagerly talk about their roles in school plays and musicals, participation in a wide range of sporting and musical events, raising money for charities, running mini-enterprise activities and debating in the Model United Nations. These activities contribute to their good skills of achieving economic well-being and to community cohesion. There is considerable scope to develop the roles of pupils much more in taking on responsibility and showing more initiative in the routine life of the school. Teachers and senior staff are keen to organise special events but do not always see opportunities to raise ambition routinely for pupils. On occasions, for example in parts of the primary school, pupils are too closely supervised whilst undertaking the most simple of functions; and the well developed talents and communication skills of maturing secondary pupils are often underused. In lessons, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills of independent learning, choosing resources and finding innovative ways of presenting their ideas. A typical example of this is the lack of flair in pupils when setting up experiments in science and problem solving in mathematics, which are too controlled by teachers.

High expectations of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values are evident in the respect that pupils show for others, their understanding of differences in belief and values, and their concern for those less fortunate than themselves. This is a real strength of the school. Nevertheless, the school does not capitalise on pupils' skills enough, so opportunities to be true ambassadors of the British International School, Riyadh, are missed. Cultural development is strong within the arts and through the opportunities provided for musical performances and educational visits abroad. The exceptionally high quality displays of art work in classrooms and shared areas lift everyone's spirits as people move around the school, but there is room for more reflective and celebratory occasions in the weekly routine.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

Pupils are exceptionally fond of their teachers and comment on how helpful they find them. They say they get support whenever they need it. Teachers prepare carefully and most lessons contain a good mix of activities and discussion. Pupils come to lessons ready to learn and to work hard; they answer questions willingly with only a few happy to sit back passively. Pupils often ask interesting and probing questions, reflecting that they think about what they are learning. Occasionally too little time is left at the end of lessons to review the work covered, though many teachers are very skilled in reinforcing and checking understanding as the lessons progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is therefore good, as presented in the range of the school's own monitoring and evaluation records. These records include the performance management of teachers and assistants, scrutiny of pupils' work, and checks on marking and lesson planning. With these records and other informal activities designed to assist in professional feedback and development, there is a wealth of information available that has the potential to improve further the quality of teaching across the school. However, there are pockets of only satisfactory

practice which slow down pupils' rates of progress. In these lessons, tasks set are not linked to learning objectives, different groups of pupils undertake the same activities and teaching assistants and support assistants are not effectively deployed.

Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and many of them deliver lessons with an enthusiasm which stimulates pupils' deep interest. Where they challenge pupils and highlight the relevance of topics to pupils' lives, such lessons and learning are outstanding. In only a few lessons is the teaching merely procedural, none observed was inadequate; the school takes prompt action to rectify any such situations. What prevents teaching from being outstanding is that teachers are not using data from assessment to move pupils on in their learning. They predominantly teach to the middle ability and do not consistently challenge more capable pupils enough. Marking is variable. It is satisfactory and, whilst it is regular, it does not always tell pupils how to improve the quality of their work, and many corrections are not acted upon. Teaching and assessment should take more account of 'pupil voice' and, as a part of raising ambition, pupils should be led beyond the comfort zones of scoring well in predictable tests.

There is room for improvement in the use of information about pupils' prior learning when planning the schemes of lessons, the extent of differentiation needed in them, and the rate of acceleration possible because of cross-curricular opportunities presented across different subjects and lessons. Teachers are skilled in the use of technology and excellent facilities are in use, for example data projectors and interactive whiteboards. They also have access to on-line curriculum materials and data collection and evaluation systems. The school is very well placed to move the quality of its teaching and learning up a notch by making expectations clear about the use of these facilities and ensuring that practice is consistent.

There is, at times, an overuse of work sheets and over-reliance on undertaking exercises in text books; this restricts pupils' flair and imagination. In this school, when teaching is outstanding, a kind of magic envelops the classroom. Pupils sit at the end of their seat, hanging onto every word the teacher says and sharing their own ideas with similar attention. Very good links are made with other subjects and teachers put their 'soul' into presenting knowledge to pupils. Their passion is apparent in their delivery which fires up pupils in wanting to find out more. In an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 2, the teacher set tasks to match pupils' prior attainment and assessed their learning thoroughly, with expert use of ICT she ensured that they all understood the mathematical concept taught. Pupils were secure in their learning and made up their own sums. In an outstanding Year 11 English lesson, the teacher moved pupils' learning on at speed by using higher order questioning techniques which challenged pupils' imagination.

Pupils like tests. They have mixed feelings about evaluating themselves, but the processes promoted by the school and used in many classes are good. However, this is not a consistent picture throughout the school. Most pupils say it is helpful and they enjoy being involved; a few feel that it is marginal because they think teachers and tests do the evaluations that matter! Nevertheless, the process of self-evaluation enables pupils to become reflective learners and contributes to their developing skills of preparing for the world of work.

Raising the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in a large school such as this requires more sophisticated management action and staff discipline. The senior leadership group have the potential to analyse strengths and weaknesses across the teaching team and to shape a high-level feedback and coaching programme to spread the very best traits of teaching and learning consistently through the school.

## Curriculum and other activities

## Grade: 2

The principles of breadth, flexibility and choice underpin the curriculum, successfully reflecting pupils' aspirations and interests. The primary school curriculum is embracing the latest Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the revised Primary Strategies. The range of National Curriculum subjects in Key Stage 3 is as it should be and the range of GCSE subjects taken by pupils in Key Stage 4 exceeds the average in England (9.9 compared to 8.0). The five principles of Every Child Matters are visible in the curriculum and learning outcomes across the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning and development are threaded into the curriculum adequately. However, more explicit provision and outcomes are possible in the way the curriculum and organisation of school life could be designed for those dimensions which call for reflective considerations, the synthesis of moral positions and the celebration of what it is to be human. Staff are familiar with the curriculum and could undertake more in-depth cross-curricular topics to develop more relevant learning. Personal, social and health education is included in the curriculum but only with a limited amount of time. A more innovative look at time-tabling and rearranging of tutor/registration periods could help to utilise time more profitably. Most aspects are covered but sex education and teaching about the dangers of substance abuse are not included, in response to local views. The provision for careers and developing work-related skills is very limited and does not inform pupils about careers and life choices.

The Salwa Section is a relatively new provision for about 140 primary pupils. It is a lavishly spacious and very well equipped facility. Given the quality of the indoor and outdoor facilities, the generous adult to pupil ratio, and the range and high quality specification of the resources, the Section should be particularly ambitious in what it attempts routinely, especially in undertaking cross-curricular projects and promoting independent learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage facility is satisfactory in the main school and good in Salwa. The curriculum for outdoor learning is not sufficiently well-planned to ensure smooth transition from indoor to outdoor.

The premises and resources overall are good. The main school classrooms are set around a beautiful shaded quad and the open balcony corridors and internal areas give openness and light – the design is fit-for-purpose and the school generally uses the facilities well. Where classrooms are small, the adjacent related-study areas are not always used as efficiently as they might; better integration of these spaces with the main classrooms is possible. The sports hall, multipurpose hall, small gymnasium, swimming pool, the arena with an astro-turf games pitch and running track, and the specialist teaching rooms for science, ICT, art and design, design and technology and music, collectively make an outstanding school facility.

Pupils' motivation is usually high because of the exciting and imaginative activities that are very well organised across the curriculum, including the impressive range of

enrichment clubs and the many trips, visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities that happen each year. Access is provided to dynamic curriculum content through the use of ICT and particularly the Internet. The Internet is slow and the service needs review. Excellent provision has been made for pupils in the upper primary years to have immediate, hands-on, access to wireless laptop computers at or near their normal workstations, and almost all teaching rooms have data projectors, most with interactive whiteboards. A range of networked computer suites are also available and conveniently located around the school. There are issues about unreliable connectivity in Salwa Section but, in the grand scheme of things, there are alternatives to overcoming this technical frustration – temporarily by increasing band width and the use of on-line digital learning platforms across the school as a whole. The curriculum has been monitored for coverage but a more precise review need to now be undertaken in ensuring the progressive development of subject specific skills, cross-curricular links, time allocation and opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT, and life skills.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

Good care, guidance and support leads to pupils feeling confident and secure. Many of them speak positively of the support they receive for their academic work and for any personal difficulties they experience. Staff know the pupils well and take good care to ensure their welfare. Good attention is paid to health and safety with robust child protection and modern anti-bullying procedures in place. The environment requires that health and safety standards and procedures are maintained at very high levels. Security is a top priority and arrangements at arrival, during the school day and departure times are very closely and effectively managed.

Care, guidance and support are not yet outstanding because the quality of the personal and academic guidance is inconsistent and opportunities for personalised learning are undeveloped. Particularly able and talented pupils are generally provided with stimulating and challenging activities, but more precision is needed in the way their achievement and progress is tracked across subjects and over time in order for them to build on the potential of using and applying their transferable skills more readily. Some of these pupils are capable of producing far more than they are doing at present.

Information is shared well with parents through regular, detailed and informative reports and discussions. This feedback has the potential to become even more meaningful with teachers' improved knowledge of assessment information. Nevertheless, more can be done to improve communication with parents. Whilst the majority of them are very supportive of the school, a small minority would like to have more information about their children's progress, their next steps of learning and the learning opportunities offered. The development and implementation of a school portal would rectify this issue.

Many pupils appreciate the importance of sustainable economies and eco-friendly lifestyles, but some do not. Through voluntary work, staff and pupils foster effective community cohesion within the school, locally and across the wider regional and international networks in which they are engaged. Some very exciting team-building

and debating events have been held in recent terms which have helped develop strands of care and guidance most meaningfully.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

The acting principal gives genuine and caring leadership and management. He is clear about what needs to be done in order for the school to develop. Since 2007, the senior leadership group has set out clear and well conceived priorities in the school's strategic 3 year planning cycle. Much has been achieved. With the composition of the senior leadership group currently below strength, support by senior leaders, department heads and subject leaders who provide good guidance and direction has been important. The biggest impact has been in Key Stages 1 and 2 where staff are ensuring that pupils have equality of opportunity and that consistency in planning and subsequent delivery is monitored. The school is supported well by a very competent administrative and finance team which handles complex infrastructure, immigration, personnel, finance, admissions, health, security, communication and transport issues with efficiency and panache. This enables the school to run smoothly and effectively. Changes at the Board level and the resignation of the principal eight months prior to the inspection coupled with other staff movement have caused some uncertainty about direction and priorities, but the leadership and management team together with the Board have done well in steering developments forward.

The quality and coherence of the school's development planning is exemplary and the systems for self-evaluation and driving improvements show many signs of shaping outstandingly well. The school has been prudent in commissioning the services of an experienced education consultant who has pointed the right direction, brought rigour and helped to establish the school's cycle of evaluation, planning and improvement. A good start has been made at taking on board stakeholders' views.

Maintaining competitive pay levels has been a priority of the senior leadership group so as to attract the best teachers, but the mechanism to do this has lacked clarity with the result that too many staff are now in posts of responsibility. This obscures lines of accountability and clouds the bias for action. Some rationalisation is needed even if only for staff to undertake short term projects to move the school into the sphere of excellence. Performance management is effective and opportunities for more informal continuous professional opportunities are encouraged. Training and development are made available whenever possible and have proved to be effective, but valuable opportunities are lost because staff do not disseminate what they have learnt effectively enough in order to improve the practice of others. The professional development co-ordinator has now got this in hand. However, senior staff and the Board are not evaluating the impact of the staff's continuous professional development and the cost effectiveness of spending on pupils' outcomes. This is because middle leaders are not providing sufficient intelligence on standards and progress, impact of provision on outcomes, strengths and weaknesses in subjects and year group teaching and learning. Systems for developing effective communication and accountability are still not where they should be. This creates an element of distrust because the lack of transparency in communication encourages false speculation and brings anxiety.

The links between performance management, professional development and school improvement priorities have been very well made. Leadership has had the vision to keep the school abreast of the latest developments and research in education, and has ensured the school has the capacity to implement the best and most relevant initiatives. Action has been taken to rectify any performance that has been deemed to be short of expectations.

Overall, leadership and management are good. They miss the higher mark for three reasons. Firstly, some pockets of slight under-ambition for pupils have not been spotted. Given the pupils' capabilities, their often excellent behaviour and the superb school facilities available, leaders in the different tiers have not been proactive enough in shaping a vision for greater aspiration and ambition. A sharp edge to accountability is lacking due to the plethora of posts of responsibility. Secondly, and perhaps understandably, there has been hesitancy about making some decisions; the bias for prompt action at senior level could be much stronger. Thirdly, securing a firm overview of pupils' progress and achievements has lacked managerial prominence in the priorities and actions the senior leadership group has set itself. Improving these three things is in hand.

The measurement of the school's performance is a visible theme across the school's current improvement and development cycle and includes tightening the evaluation of learning, teaching and management by the using graduated criteria. These criteria serve to assess and then set new and ambitious aspirations and targets - they provide a firm basis for tangible action. The school's own self-evaluation indicates that it is less sure of the achievement measure across year groups for pupils than it should be because overall analyses from baseline starting positions were not carried out from the time when the school population began to grow rapidly. As the school's electronic tracking and evaluation systems embed, these shortfalls should rectify as a matter of course. The senior leadership group must now ensure that staff in all tiers of leadership and management are accountable for pupils' outcomes and share their skills of evaluation in order to ensure sustainability of self-evaluation. It is of prime importance that this information is sent to the Board.

Members of the Board have much experience which they bring to their meetings and record in their minutes. The chairman has a perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Members are supportive and ask searching questions. However, there needs to be a much clearer delineation of rules pertaining to management and governance. There is scope for the Board to take confidence from the successes of the school, hear more frequent advice from the educational professionals across the school faculty, and so be in a better position to aim for the very best in world class schooling.

The school runs smoothly and is financially viable, has secure levels of contingency and provides good value for money based on a typical and competitive ratio of fee-level to educational outcome.

The effectiveness of the school's realistic and thorough self-evaluation has generated improvements, rising standards and a good capacity to improve further. Senior staff are aware of those aspects of the school's performance which could make learning

even better and so take the school to the very highest level. The community values the school's cultural and ethnic mix, which contributes to the harmonious and globally inclusive atmosphere. Equality of opportunity underpins all aspects of the school's work. The climate is certainly ripe to welcome a new principal who can take the school forward and through this threshold of opportunity and for senior staff to look at their departments through a creative paradigm and make the school buzz with endless excitement and love of lifelong learning.

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
--	----------------

## Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

## Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the	2

community	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

#### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

#### Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current expectations for schools in England?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

February 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of British International School, Riyadh

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We wish we could have talked to more of you as we so enjoyed hearing your views on so many aspects of school life. You appreciate the good opportunities the school gives you and so you will not be surprised to hear that we have evaluated your school as a good school with many strengths. These include your performances in test and examinations, the wonderful visits and extra-curricular activities you are offered and your responses to all these. You are growing up well and maturing into thoughtful and considerate young adults, becoming true ambassadors for your school.

Your teachers are good at what they do and it was evident that you think carefully about what you are learning. We heard you ask intelligent and interesting questions. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and some of the time they deliver lessons with an enthusiasm which stimulates you to think deeply about your work. They often highlight the relevance and significance of the work you are doing to the world outside school, and this is good. In such lessons your learning is at the highest levels and then you attain the best possible grades in tests and examinations.

The standards you achieve in tests and examinations are really high but, in parts of the schools and in a few areas of learning and subjects, some of you could achieve more and gain even higher grades. So we have asked the school to work on improving this. There is room to raise standards by tracking the progress each of you make more precisely, term by term, and then shaping what you should do next from this record. You could help make your learning better by improving your own preparation, increasing the responsibility and initiatives you take on, and ensuring the contributions you make are the best you can do. We have asked your Principal, Board of Governors and Senior Leadership Group to make your school even better by improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have also asked the Senior Leadership Group to ensure that the curriculum is monitored carefully so that you do not repeat work you already know. You can help by telling teachers that you have already covered some aspects of this work in previous years. We have also asked your Principal and Senior Leadership Group to continue to develop effective systems which are regularly monitored to ensure that the school's vision is translated into practice. You can help by discussing with your school council as to what the most effective way would be to implement this among the pupils.

For those of you facing external tests or examinations this year, I hope they go very well and that all of you have happy and successful futures at school and beyond. Please thank your parents for returning the many questionnaires, from which the issues they identified we followed. We think that they could be more involved in your learning.

Best wishes  
Bogusia Matusiak Varley  
(Lead Inspector)