



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL RIYADH

CURRICULUM

As an independent school, BISR has the opportunity to devise its own curriculum. This gives us a powerful opportunity to offer our students an academic experience which prepares them for the world in which they will live and holds fast to the true purposes of education – to encourage a love of learning for its own sake and to encourage students to think independently.

We are an English-medium school which eventually offers its students English qualifications at GCSE and Advanced Level. This means that we are in some ways tied to the overall English educational system. However, we have the enormous advantage of being able to select those parts of the English National Curriculum which are appropriate for our students in their particular context and pass over those which are not. As with the leading independent schools in the UK, we are confident that our students will gain everything the National Curriculum provides and much more.

In the early years of School, the Foundation Stage and Year 1 as the National Curriculum would have it, infant school as those of us of a different vintage would call it, we ensure that our children develop both their academic and their social skills. Children progress at very different rates and it is important, as much psychological and educational research has recently shown, to provide academic foundations and building blocks appropriate to individual children. We work hard therefore to put into effect a philosophy that recognises that each child is unique. Play has an important role in this stage of the school, but it is play with a serious purpose and it helps to build the attitudes and qualities that make for successful academic study.

Key Stage 2, or junior school, is a very exciting time in a child's life. With the foundations having been laid at home and in the first three years of school, children can begin to take off at this level. Their reading skills should develop rapidly. They should be given many opportunities to express themselves both orally and on paper. Their writing should increase in subtlety and range of expression. In Mathematics, our aim is to enable children to master the fundamental skills of arithmetical calculation and to explore some other areas of Mathematics which will charge their interest for more advanced aspects of the subject. They will also be introduced to the whole panoply of the possibilities of study. They will embark on their scientific education, begin to explore the geography of the world, start to build an understanding of the different cultures of the past, begin new languages (French and Arabic) and develop their skills of artistic expression in art, music and design technology. The rapid accumulation of ICT skills often outstrips their teachers' knowledge in this area, and, of course, we encourage all our students to appreciate the virtues of Juvenal, the Roman writer's maxim of *sit mens sana in corpore sano* (let there be a healthy mind in a healthy body).

Once students reach secondary school, the pace and complexity of work quickens. In the first three years of senior school (Years 7-9), we try to provide our students with as broad an education as possible. We are also trying to instil in them the work habits which will enable them to enjoy and be successful with more demanding academic work. Each year will

require more from our students in terms of intellectual commitment. In Year 9, students have to make some choices of subject as they move on to their GCSE courses. The English system of education sacrifices some breadth in exchange for depth, but again we try hard to ensure that a student's education is as broad and balanced as it can be for as long as possible. At GCSE level, all students must take a common core of subjects which includes English, Maths, Science (either a dual award co-ordinated science course which comprises study of Biology, Chemistry and Physics and counts as two GCSE subjects or a separate sciences course of the three sciences), and a modern foreign language. Students then choose four or five other subjects from option blocks that include English Literature, History, Geography, French, Spanish, Arabic, Music, Art, Design Technology and Physical Education.

In the Sixth Form we offer A Level courses. These courses were chosen because a majority of our students go on to university in the UK. A Levels also have international currency. We have an expanding range of subjects which will develop as our Sixth Form grows. Currently, students can choose from Maths, Further Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, English Language and Literature, History, Geography, Business Studies, Music, Design Technology, Art, French, Spanish and Arabic.

Students take four courses to AS Level, the examination taken at the end of the Lower Sixth and which counts as half an A Level. They are encouraged to continue with four subjects in the Upper Sixth to A2 Level, but most will take three subjects. We have provision for supporting applications to British universities and to institutions in many other countries. Students seeking admission to Oxford and Cambridge Universities are given specialist help and advice. In the next twelve months we will introduce assistance for those students who might want to take the American SATs for university entrance in the USA.

Throughout the School, all students study age appropriate courses in personal, health and social education. These cover a wide range of topics and help to prepare students for the realities of the social worlds they will face beyond Saudi Arabia. We also offer course in current affairs topics. So far, these have been somewhat anglocentric in nature, but we are in the process of internationalising them.

We hope that those students who spend only a part of their schooling with us will be well prepared for the next stage of their educational journey, wherever that might be, and that they will have caught some of our excitement about learning. We aspire through our curriculum policy to ensure that those students who spend all or the greater part of their school careers with us – an increasing proportion of the School - will emerge well-educated in the true sense of that word. We trust that they will have been taken out of their ordinary range of experience to appreciate that, in Matthew Arnold's words, "Culture is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world". Equally, along with WB Yeats, we hope they will have come to realise that "education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire".

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