



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

British School Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman

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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, 49 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. After school activities were visited. School documentation and policies were reviewed and data analysed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised. Discussions were held with senior staff, a selection of middle managers, a range of teachers, representatives of the governors and with groups of students. Two and a half school days were monitored.

The lead inspector was Mark Evans. The team members were Helen Atkinson, Joanne Bell, Sheila Smith.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

British School Muscat (BSM) meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school provides a good quality of education. There are some features of the provision which are exemplary.

BSM seeks to be a leading British international school. This aim provides focus for school development and improvements. The stated vision is *to provide students with a world class British education for an international future in a safe, stimulating and multicultural environment, enabling them to realise their full potential and become well-rounded international citizens*. The school's Vision 2020 is a clear and inspiring plan, which maps out a route to being one of the best British international schools in the world.

BSM is held in high regard by the wider community and parents. More than 94% of parents throughout the school reported (April 2013) that they believed teaching was good and that their children were happy. The satisfaction ratings were even higher in the primary school. Students of all ages suggested that they are proud to be part of BSM, and value the education and opportunities it provides.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths, including:

- high academic attainment and excellent progress made by many pupils
- many examples of outstanding teaching seen throughout the school
- consistently excellent quality of education provided in the primary school
- the range of developments made in the senior school, which are having very good impact already
- target setting and tracking in the primary school are excellent, and they are developing well in the senior school
- the quality of pastoral care is consistently high, throughout the school
- pupils report feeling safe and very well cared for
- they are well behaved, polite and respectful, as well as being confident and articulate
- excellent leadership in both schools, and also overall through the principal and board
- very good availability of resources to support learning
- both the management of transitions and careers guidance are strengths of the school
- pupils enjoy their time at school.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Concentrate on moving the quality of teaching more consistently from good to outstanding, including focussing on
 - formative assessment
 - differentiation which encourages personalised learning, in particular to support the highest and lowest attainers in all classes
 - encourage innovative approaches to learning that will enhance pupils' progress even more
 - marking and feedback that more consistently supports excellent progress
 - enhance and develop the use of technology to enhance pupils' learning, in lessons beyond ICT
 - consider setting more challenging academic targets
- Seek ways to develop curricular links between the primary and senior schools
- Harness the eagerness, enthusiasm, excitement and drive of the middle leaders across the school

In the senior school

- Improve quality, impact and monitoring of SEN provision

In the primary school

- Further extend child-initiated planning and target setting.

4. The context of the school

British School Muscat was established by a Royal Charter granted by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in April 1973. The objects of the school were to provide education for English speaking children in Oman in accordance with best British practice, in order to enable pupils to qualify for subsequent education in the United Kingdom without disadvantage. English has to be the official language of the school and the medium of instruction.

This Royal Charter means that it has more autonomy than both Omani government schools and other international schools. It allows the school to set its own priorities and develop its own curriculum, in line with the best of UK practice.

The Ministry of Education regulations prohibit the teaching of Religious Education.

BSM is a not-for-profit, non-selective, co-educational, British international day school.

The school follows the Early Years Foundation Stage document and uses the National Curriculum of England and Wales (NC) at Key Stage (KS) 1, 2 and 3 leading to GCSE examinations in KS4 and A Level in Years 12 and 13. Time allocations and the allocation of subjects meet (sometimes exceed) NC requirements. Assessments are based on national standards from the UK.

The curriculum has been adapted to accommodate the weather, with more outdoor activities in the cooler months, as heat restricts outdoor sports and breaks in the summer months

Pupils are supported and encouraged to explore and discover the desert, wadi, mountain and coastal environments of Oman through field trips (from Nursery upwards) and residential visits (from Year 4 upwards).

The current roll is 1,061 English-speaking expatriate pupils aged 3 – 18 years. This includes 65 nationalities, 47% of whom are British. Some 17 pupils attend the Dutch School which is housed within BSM and managed by its own staff. These students were not included in the inspection.

The school was last fully inspected in 2009, under a different framework.

4.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of the school is outstanding. From the start of the school, the aim of providing a UK-oriented education has been paramount: the commitment continues today:

- The British Ambassador serves as the school's President. Pupils and staff have benefitted from a number of Royal Visits including their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall in 2013. There are regular visits by guest speakers and authors from the UK.
- Only teachers with a minimum of two years' experience teaching the English National Curriculum are employed.
- Performance management, staff target-setting and annual review meetings are based on best UK practice and DfE model policies.
- Extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips, are very important to the life of the school, and in line with British best practice.
- The majority of the pupils go on to British curriculum schools either in the UK or internationally.
- Some students gain places at top UK universities including Cambridge, Imperial College and UCL. Last year 87% of students secured their first choice university place. 63% of students went to UK universities.
- BSM's appearance including uniform, classrooms and displays mirrors that found in schools in the UK.
- The school is organised according to the pastoral structures used in UK schools. The house system is implemented to encourage pupils to take a keen interest in assemblies, sporting activities and house competitions.
- The school aligns itself with British accreditation awards, for example the Primary Quality Mark and Eco-Schools Silver Award.
- Communications from the school to families and pupils are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website.
- British culture is recognised in many ways. There were British stalls and activities as part of international day and community events, visits to naval ships e.g. HMS Illustrious, and strong links to British Embassy events like the Remembrance Day poster competition, and visits by the Vice Consul.

5. *Standard 1*

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at BSM is good, with aspects that are outstanding. The quality of education provided in the Primary School is excellent and is good in the Senior School. The Senior School has developed new systems rapidly and effectively. These are having very good impact already, but not all are fully embedded.

5.1 Curriculum

Curriculum provision is excellent. BSM provides a very broad and well balanced curriculum, offering a wide range of learning opportunities tailored to meet the differing needs of nearly all the students. The academic curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum meets all local regulations, as well as international standards.

In the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS), the school provides the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. The curriculum provides an excellent range of opportunities for learning. The English NC is followed from Year 1 to 11. This is adapted where necessary for weather and cultural reasons. Arabic language has recently been added to the curriculum in Key Stages 2, 3 and the Sixth Form.

Field trips and residential visits are an important part of the curriculum helping to develop educational and social skills. Year 3 recently spent a day looking at the geography of a beach environment; Year 4 are participating in a one night residential at Oman Dive Centre.

Across the primary school pupils perform in productions, assemblies and music recitals. For example, over 350 children participated in the Carol Concert in December. Pupils are also offered extension activities such as science challenge clubs, Maths Quest, Spelligator and the opportunity to participate in BSME music and sports events.

In the senior school, there is a well-structured curriculum modelled on the English NC in Years 7, 8 and 9, preparing for GCSE in Years 10 and 11 which lead to a range of 20 A level examinations. Pupils receive a good, well-balanced programme of academic, aesthetic and sporting experiences. This is supported by a range of strategies to support students' learning. Included in this support are academic monitoring, a mentoring programme and Project 100.

In addition to the taught curriculum, the school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities including department events run through the house system. Pupils are encouraged to take part in at least one or two of the options. In the current year, there have been many opportunities to take part in school trips and visits, both locally and internationally. These include a geography field trip to the UK, an international United Nations school conference in Russia, the International Award programme, the Mount Kilimanjaro trip, a creative arts trip to London, a skiing trip, a GCSE trip to Berlin and a visit to the Dubai festival of Literature. Over 80

pupils were involved in the Wizard of Oz production. At the time of the inspection, pupils were rehearsing for a dance show including a wide range of dance styles.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good, with aspects that are outstanding. Teaching in the senior school is more variable than that in the primary school: in a few lessons, for example in science and PE, teaching required improvement. Excellent teaching was seen in all key stages. Pupils were positive about the relationships with staff and appreciative of the time given by them to support their studies. However, senior pupils suggested the quality of teaching was variable.

In all lessons, pupils were enthusiastic about learning and their behaviour was excellent. Teachers create a positive environment for learning, especially in the primary school, and develop a good rapport with pupils who felt cared for and safe. The pupils cooperate with each other and there is mutual respect between the pupils and staff. They enjoy opportunities to share their knowledge with others, for example in art in Year 3. The great majority of pupils speak with confidence and clarity.

Classrooms are well ordered and displays informative and engaging. The school is well resourced, and the majority of rooms have interactive white boards and access to computers and printers. Good use of the Virtual Learning Environment was seen in ICT. Curriculum teaching is supported by the use of specialist rooms.

Within the Foundation Stage department, outdoor space is used to excellent advantage, providing different working stations and areas to develop speaking and listening skills. Pupils are given opportunities to develop independence and investigative skills. For example, when given the challenge to make a shelter for a teddy, they tested materials to see if they were waterproof then independently used this knowledge to make constructions. Thorough assessments made through observation and tracking are used to inform planning. 'Learning journeys' and 'Target Turtles' allow children to access their own targets. Good liaison with Key Stage 1 teachers, means that planning is adapted to continue Early Learning Goals if needed.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, many lessons include practical elements to meet a range of learning styles enabling all pupils to access the curriculum. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils prepared for a writing task by presenting their ideas and information to each other using mock microphones and television screens. Year 4 worked in groups exploring Ordnance Survey symbols on maps and presenting what they had discovered about the area to their class. In some lessons, independent challenge is provided through "hot spots" with set tasks to develop further learning. Pupils monitor their own learning by choosing a hot spot and marking their success. All have personal targets in literacy and numeracy, and are encouraged to refer to them. The majority of work is marked with comments on how to improve.

Pupils from Year 1 onwards, sit a CAT test on entry to the school, which forms their baseline assessment. In the Foundation Stage, observations are taken within the first 4 weeks after entry and marked against the *Development Matters* statements. Progress is marked against the CAT tests in Year 4, as well as through end of key stage SATs. A detailed tracking system is used in Key Stage 1 and 2 to monitor pupils' progress carefully, and to identify those who require further intervention.

In all lessons, the learning objective was made clear to pupils and therefore they were all aware of what they had to achieve. In the most successful lessons, self or peer assessment during the plenary gave pupils a good indication of what they had learned. There were clearly differentiated levels of work and pupils were allowed time to think and discuss. In the best lessons, pupils were given time to read and respond to these comments, before a new lesson began. In the less successful lessons, the slow pace of teaching led to over-revision of previous learned work and not enough progression.

In the senior school, learning and teaching is good in most lessons. A few lessons were excellent or containing excellent features, but some required improvement. Most were well planned and structured. Where teaching is less than good, the pace and challenge of the lesson is insufficient for pupils to make adequate progress. Few examples of differentiation were observed in lessons, but setting is used as an effective strategy to differentiate teaching broadly to better meet the needs of students. Few strategies targeted at meeting the specific needs of individual students were observed. Generally, creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning were only seen occasionally.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. The structure and planning of most of the lessons seen ensured that there was sufficient pace and challenge for the pupils to make adequate progress. There is some use of targeted questioning techniques to challenge learning and thinking, to encourage pupils to expand on their ideas and as a form of formative assessment. In a Year 13 mathematics lesson for example, the teacher gave the class progressively more complex questions to analyse and solve. The use of open questioning encouraged them to think for themselves and to share ideas to reach a solution. The follow-up work was differentiated to meet the needs of individuals.

In some of the lessons, pupils have the opportunity to work in pairs or groups for collaborative learning and problem solving. They engage with the lessons and take an active part in them. They are able to work independently. In a Key Stage 3 music lesson, some pupils were working individually while others worked in pairs to compose, record and assess a fanfare. Work from the previous lesson had been marked thoroughly, and pupils are expected to refine their work based on the comments made.

Many subjects are set, which allows for a degree of differentiation of task. The maximum class size observed was 22 at Key Stage 3: in Key Stage 4, class sizes were smaller, with some pupils being taught on a 1:1 basis. Senior school pupils in some subjects could recall their learning targets: the large majority had not entered these into their personal organisers. Some suggested that the organisers helped them to manage their time more effectively and to track house points.

Sixth form students have enjoyed their participation in cross phase initiatives e.g. taking the role of judge in the Key Stage 3 debating competition, and the Year 12 and 13 mentoring programme.

The senior school pupils commented upon enjoying being part of the planning process in relation to the style of teaching employed. They felt that teaching is good, but varied, though extra help

could always be made available to them. Paired and group work was observed and in some cases, these groups had been differentiated. Peer assessment and feedback was used by some staff. The majority of teachers used questioning effectively to support learning and/or to confirm learning. Students enjoyed being given the opportunity for discussion and debate. This was seen in Key Stage 3 English classes during the house debating competition and in Key Stage 4 history.

Teachers throughout the school have a good awareness of NC levels, and these have been used to record pupil progress. Level descriptors are clearly visible in classrooms with student-friendly examples of how their work could be 'up levelled'. New systems have been introduced based on best UK practice. This has provided an opportunity for greater consistency between classes and subject departments for planning, monitoring and evaluation. However, liaison between the two parts of the school is limited.

The tracking of pupils' progress and effort in Key Stage 4 and 5 is having a positive effect on attainment: the new academic monitoring of Key Stage 3 has also had a positive impact on pupils' efforts and attainment. Marking in the senior school often lacked detailed enough feedback to facilitate improvement. Only a limited range of assessment for learning strategies was observed amongst senior school teachers.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall, the standards achieved by primary and senior students at BSM are good. In the primary school, they are excellent: standards achieved by pupils in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) and at the end of Key Stage 2 are particularly strong.

The school does not have access to detailed UK government attainment averaging software, in common with other overseas schools. Thus staff have chosen to benchmark attainment and progress results against the top 5% of English state schools and against a group of BSO accredited British international schools.

In primary, attainment on entry is slightly above the national UK average. At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, average points scores are significantly higher than the UK national average, for all groups. Achievement is particularly high in Key Stage 2. Progress at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is at least good for all groups in reading, writing and mathematics. Of particular note, because this is uncommon, progress is high for boys, for pupils with SEN and for those with EAL, in reading and mathematics. At the end of the Foundation Stage the number of children who achieved a good level of development was 64%, well above the UK national average of 52%. There was no gender difference in attainment at this level compared to a significant gender difference in the UK (60% of girls compared to 44% of boys).

The primary school reacts well to changes, and thus maintains excellent standards. In 2011-12, data suggested a gender difference in the Foundation Stage, with boys' attaining less well than girls. This was immediately addressed by making changes to the curriculum. Averages are well above the national standards. For example, in Key Stage 1 reading, 95% of pupils attained Level 2C+, 90% attained Level 2B+, 80% got Level 2A+ and 58% attained Level 3+. Results were nearly as high in writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, reading attainment scores were even higher, with 80% attaining Level 5 in reading.

In the senior school, pupils attain well. They make good, sometimes excellent, progress. Some 93% of pupils achieved 3 levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and 4 in English with 100% also achieving 3 levels of progress in mathematics. Examination results are often excellent. In 2012-13, 98% of students achieved 5 or more A*-C at GCSE level, 94% of students achieved 5A*-C including mathematics and English, including all of the EAL pupils entered. At A level 38.8% achieved A*-A grades, 67.1% A*-B grades and 99.2% achieving A*-E. These results are all above the UK national average. The recent introduction of pupil tracking, academic mentoring and initiatives such as Project 100 are having a positive effect on achievement in the senior school.

There is a significant 'churn' of pupils at BSM, often as much as 25% of the roll changes in a single year. Attainment data for those pupils who have been at school for 3 years or more, compares very favourably with those who have not. The impact of this is not sufficiently well planned for at present: similarly, more focus is given to supporting the middle attainers, than to extending the most able. In some senior school lessons, differentiation was insufficient to challenge the most able. Similarly, some senior pupils with SEN are not as well supported as they should be, given

the resources available. The system guiding their support is too vague and subjective, and observations of the pupils are not adequately objective. Many teachers do not understand the way that support is targeted, and thus these pupils do not make suitable progress or attain appropriately. The targets for their learning are not as sharp as they should be, and the drive to improve their attainment is not strong enough.

At GCSE in 2012-2013, 98% of students achieved 5 or more A*-C grades, significantly above the UK national average (69.5%). Some 94% of students achieve 5 or more A*-C at GCSE including mathematics and English which is also significantly higher than the UK national average (53.5%). more than 46% of pupils gained grades A* or A, compared to the UK at 22.6%. Standards are also rising: 75% of students achieve at least one A*-C at GCSE in a modern foreign language, representing a marked improvement compared to 2012 (62%), and being significantly above the UK national average (28%).

6. Standard 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout the school are of an excellent standard. Staff have high expectations: they consistently reinforce good manners and proper conduct. Pupils are well behaved, polite, confident and articulate. In all lessons, pupils remained focused and on task, eager to learn. In discussion, pupils were very positive about their school and their learning. They confirm that relationships with staff and with their peers are strengths of the school. Moral, social and cultural development are excellent: spiritual development is good, but not planned for as effectively.

Primary pupils work very well together in pairs or small groups, taking time to listen to each other and showing respect for their peers. In an observed drama lesson, pupils displayed positive support and encouragement for each other and showed obvious enjoyment during performances. Children with low self-esteem are identified through surveys and offered pastoral support.

The primary PSHE scheme is being reviewed to cover more effectively a range of issues related to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. This is encouraging pupils to develop their self-awareness and empathy. The programme of trips and residential visits has been developed to build pupils' self-confidence. The school arranges regular opportunities for all pupils' achievements and talents to be celebrated. The after-school extra-curricular activities programme supports pupils broadening their interests and developing their skills into a wider range of areas. The school is actively planning to extend its programme to include those in Reception to Year 2.

Year 6 pupils are given extra responsibilities to help develop their leadership and organisational skills. House captains, sports leaders, dance leaders and language ambassadors are appointed twice a year and help to organise events such as the Remembrance Day service, sports day, swimming galas and discos. Playground monitors help to support Year 1 'buddies'.

The attitudes and relationships in the senior school are excellent. Students interviewed highlighted this as a major strength of the school. There is mutual respect between staff and students. The school endeavours to promote a quality relationship between staff and pupils through the activities organised in school, as well as through extra-curricular activities. These enable staff and students to build stronger relationships, to know each other better and to develop their empathetic skills.

The student voice is encouraged throughout the secondary section, with an active student council, house leaders and captains. The school gives students responsibility and involvement through the roles such as prefects. There is evident pride in these roles and the process of recruitment is rigorous. These opportunities offer students the chance to develop further

leadership skills. Involvement in the school council extends further the number of students with responsible roles within the school. All pupils interviewed were appreciative of the school's approach to the development of the whole person. They feel secure and cared for. The school believes that all students should be encouraged to explore their talents and to try new experiences.

It was not possible to observe some aspects of PSHE in the senior school. The programme is currently under review: a new management structure will be introduced in September 2014. A draft policy has been produced. The school aims to see progression from Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 5. PSHE in the senior school is currently a 30 minute lesson per week, which is followed by an assembly. During registration time, some tutors used the time effectively to enhance students' wider knowledge for example in Year 9 "What happened on this day in history", with powerful images to initiate conversation. However, there is inconsistency.

The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary, both in classrooms and as they move round the school. Pupils have strong moral values and a sense of fairness. A spirit of internationalism is firmly embedded in the curriculum. BSM shares relevant information about the UK to support their pupils and parents, should they wish to relocate to live or study in the UK.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

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

The school understandably prides itself on the excellent care and support provided for all pupils, including those with special needs in the primary school. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure a safe and caring environment. For example, there is a thorough health and safety policy, which is rigorously implemented. The policy covers all aspects of safety on and off site. Good behaviour and conduct are reinforced well through assemblies, PSHE lessons and reward tokens. The pastoral support systems in place include provision for pupils who need encouragement to interact socially, through the 'picnic club' scheme. The school nurse is involved in promoting personal health and welfare, and monitoring the school 'worry box'.

The school is maintained to a high standard. It is clean and tidy, and provides a very pleasant learning environment. Displays around the school are well maintained, updated and informative. Pupil punctuality is impressive.

The primary school is currently focussing successfully on the promotion of excellent behaviour after its expansion to 4 form entry in September 2013, bringing a large new intake. Rules and guidelines for behaviour were agreed in consultation with the student council and parents. Primary pupils' individual achievements are celebrated through assemblies and *good work* boards. They are also encouraged to contribute by adding notes to the 'What have you done to make you feel proud' board.

Pupils in the senior school report feeling cared for, settled and happy: they are clearly proud to say they attend BSM. They commented upon their enjoyment of school and a sense of belonging to a 'big family'. Primary and senior pupils report that bullying was not an issue within the school. When a pastoral problem does occur, they have a clear understanding of the personnel to contact and of the school policy. Sixth formers are used to help guide and mentor other students in some pastoral issues. Opportunities are welcomed by Sixth formers to help with events such as Year 4 Dance Club, and the primary school disco. Sixth formers reported that they had received good advice and guidance on their routes to post-16 provision.

There is good rapport between staff and pupils built upon mutual respect. Senior pupils are fully aware of the rewards and sanction systems.

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils have access to healthy food choices and that they have opportunities to develop an appreciation for the value of proper nutrition as an integral part of their present and future lives. Healthy food is available from the tuck shop during breaks. There are two qualified full time nurses on site, who offers excellent support including during lessons.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff is excellent. BSM was set up in 1971 as the Muscat English Speaking School to meet the needs of the British community and the very few British children resident in Oman for whom there was no education available. In 1973, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Sultan of Oman granted a Royal Charter to the School. This directs that the school be governed by representatives of the subscriber companies who were involved in creating the school. These founding companies cover a range of economic activity within Oman. The companies currently represented on the Board are Enhance, HSBC, PDO, Shell, Carillion Alawi, BAE Systems, and Trowers and Hamblins. There are also two parent governors who are elected by the parent body and two staff representatives elected by the teaching staff. The British Ambassador acts as the school's president.

Recruitment procedures ensure that only teachers with the skills and experience to deliver British education are recruited. An operations manager ensures that procedures are followed. At present, 95% of teachers are UK qualified and all hold experience of teaching in the UK and/or the British Curriculum in the UK or abroad. All recently recruited teachers are all UK trained and qualified, and/or have qualifications recognised by the DfE, with a minimum of 2 years' experience of teaching in the UK.

In addition, 77% of inclusion assistants are educated to degree level. The majority have experience of working within a classroom setting in the UK and/or abroad.

Safeguarding checks are undertaken on all persons working at the school, including staff members, board members, service providers, supply staff and volunteers.

Prior to the confirmation of any appointment and the issuance of an employment contract, the school requests copies of the relevant passport, screens qualifications and experience to ensure eligibility for a work visa in Oman. They receive at least two professional references. For teachers, one of the references has to be from their current headteacher. As part of the visa application process, the school requests police clearance and ISA check, a filled-in health assessment form followed by a medical check done at a local hospital, original qualifications are submitted. A 'Children's Barred' list check for any future staff member that has a connection with the UK. Recent CRB checks are copied for personnel files.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a good quality. There are some excellent features.

The school is maintained to a high standard, making it a pleasant if quirky learning environment for pupils and staff alike. Being built on a hill, there are many steps and stairs, but these add to the village feel of the school community. The recent opening of the two new buildings has been understandably welcomed by staff, parents and pupils. Floorings are appropriate to the use of each classroom. Decoration is sound. There is adequate natural lighting or when required, good artificial lighting. Temperature is controlled with the use of air-conditioners in all rooms. These AC units are noisy in some classes, which can restrict the type of teaching that can happen. Furniture in classrooms is suitable for the age and needs of the pupils. Toilets are more than adequate for the number of adults and children on the site. Good landscaping ensures a pleasant environment outside. Architects are being recruited to develop a master plan for the site.

Throughout the school, subject-specific noticeboards are well maintained. Pupils' successes and adventures are documented through high quality photographs and display cabinets. Photographs of recent trips and visits are displayed well, and pupils reported these are motivating and exciting.

The school is very well resourced. The new building is an important and effective addition to the quality of provision for Key Stage 1. The Foundation Stage pupils have a large outdoor area which the department are developing well. Key Stages 1 and 2 have an outdoor play area with a range of climbing and play equipment to develop gross motor skills and physical play.

Class sizes are small with a maximum of 22 across the school. In Key Stage 3 class sizes are typically less than 20, with even smaller classes in Key Stages 4 and 5. All the classrooms are well resourced in terms of ICT and suitable subject-specific equipment for senior school subjects.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

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

The school communicates well via letters, the school website texts, email and pupil planners. The school publishes and reviews its parent handbooks annually. They are also available on the school's website. This provides a number of useful educational links for parents to support their child's learning.

Parents are welcomed into school for guided reading support, fun days, sports events, assemblies and productions. Foundation stage pupils spend time sharing their personal learning journeys with their parents. New personal organisers have been developed to promote parent/teacher communication and to inform parents of personal targets set.

Curriculum information is available for parents to download from the school website for all years and teaching and learning evenings are presented annually. Pupils receive a report and comments about their attainment and effort. Pupils and parents alike suggested that parents' evenings are well organised and useful.

Evidence was seen that some personal organisers were used as an effective form of communication between staff and parents. However, this is not consistent throughout the school, especially in the senior school.

The school encourages the active involvement of parents and the wider community. The gymnastics, basketball and Marlins swimming clubs cater for over 400 pupils from BSM and the surrounding community.

Class contacts welcome new families and help parents and class teachers to communicate with each other. The school has a Parent and Friends Association which provides additional funding for school improvement projects through social activities. Teachers reported that parents were highly supportive of staff.

The school is working to develop stronger links with the local community, and in particular with local feeder primary schools with regard to the transition of pupils..

11. *Standard 7*

The school's procedure for handling complaints

Complaints are rare, but the school has excellent procedures in place that meet local requirements and reflect the best practice from the UK. Parents and carers are kept well informed about the complaints process, through school documents and the website. This information is regularly updated, as required.

Parents have a variety of channels to get in touch with their children's form tutor or other subjects teachers, or with anyone on the administrative staff. The parent handbook and curriculum handbook for each year group are very comprehensive. The complaints procedure is clearly laid out in the parent handbook.

12. *Standard 8*

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

13. Standard 9 Leadership and management of the school

BSM is very well led: leadership and management are good, with some excellent features.

The governance role fulfilled by the Board, the leadership of the principal and the leadership/management of the primary and senior heads are outstanding.

The school's leaders are held to account effectively by the Board. The Chair and other governors are passionate about the quality of education provided: they work very hard to support and improve it. There is strong involvement in the strategic direction of the school, and excellent understanding of the line between governance and day-to-day management. They ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and that they are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Robust financial management ensure sufficiency of resources. There is exemplary vision in terms of long-term strategy for development, and very effective working relationships with the school's leadership team. The Board do well representing the views of the wider community, but balance that with their duties under the Royal Charter.

The principal has achieved a great deal in a short period of time: he is determined, focussed and provides excellent leadership. He is very well supported by his heads of school and the bursar. With the help of the leadership team, he produces detailed reports for the Board. The aims and vision for BSM are articulated in the 2012-2015 school development plan (SDP) and in the Vision 2020 paper. The SDP objectives were created in consultation with school stakeholders, and are used to focus progress towards achieving Vision 2020. An effective programme of self-evaluation, externally validated by a school improvement partner, is integral to maintaining this good progress.

The senior leadership team are well known to pupils. The primary head is well established, innovative and has a real eye for detail: the primary provision is excellent, but she continues to seek ways and means to improve it further. The senior head has implemented important new systems very effectively: senior school middle managers report that the new systems have already had a positive impact on the senior school and their departments' performance. They have been given clear direction and most welcome this, despite the initially greater workload and the increased accountability. Internal professional development is viewed as valuable by the staff. Most middle managers in the Senior School report positively about the opportunities to be innovative and creative within the systems.

Staff recruitment and development is delegated to the principal for all positions, apart from senior leaders. The latter is done through an extensive multi-stakeholder process that lasts two days. There is a thorough induction process for new teaching staff which is evaluated every year to identify areas for improvement. BSM appraisal processes and ongoing one-to-one meetings with staff are used to identify professional development needs. There is an appropriate budget to support this.