



British Schools Overseas School inspection report

Al Yasmina Academy

22 & 23 January 2018

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

Overseas schools describing themselves as “British” are subject to recognition by the British government under the voluntary inspection scheme. The Department for Education (DfE) has put in place arrangements for inspection against a common set of standards that British Schools Overseas (BSO) can choose to adopt.

The purpose is to inform parents of pupils in British schools overseas how those schools measure up against the standards that apply to independent schools in the United Kingdom. As an inspectorate authorised by the DfE, and quality assured by Ofsted, Cambridge Education can inspect British schools overseas using the agreed criteria. Following the inspection, the lead inspector will prepare an inspection report that is made available to parents and prospective parents, via the DfE’s website, so that they are informed about the quality of education in the inspected school and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom. An essential element 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. By achieving UK inspection based accreditation, participating schools demonstrate that they provide a British education that has similar characteristics to an education in an independent school in the UK. The inspection will also identify what the school does well and what needs to improve. Inspectors will report with integrity the extent to which the school achieves its aims and meets the requirements for registration.

Information about the school

Al Yasmina Academy is an all through school, from the beginning of foundation stage up to year 13. The academy has 1,683 students on roll aged 3 – 18 with 114 of these in the sixth form. The academy is one of the 7 academies in the Aldar Academies Group.

The school follows the English National Curriculum, A- levels at post 16 and the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum of the UAE.

The Academy was last inspected in November 2015 by ADEK (ADEC) when it was judged to be very good with outstanding features overall.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors; Luma Atallah, Ray Biglin, Chris Dowsett, Bill Houldsworth, Chris Merrick and led by Penny Holden

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 115 classes across all year groups and subjects, including the early years and the sixth form. Many of these were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Inspectors observed the flag ceremonies and assemblies for both secondary

and primary pupils

- Inspectors looked at arrangements at break-times, lunchtime, and the beginning and ends of the day and visited after school clubs.
- Pupils' work was looked at in and outside the classrooms.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, with subject leaders, staff, a representative of the group of Academy schools, governors, parents and pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies was scrutinised, including the school's self- evaluation, records of pupils' behavior and attendance, assessment information and school newsletters.
- Inspectors analysed records relating to the quality of teaching, and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities, trips and visits.

Inspectors reviewed records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.

Overall effectiveness

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

All of the BSO standards are met in full and relate to the whole school, in addition the requirements for the National Curriculum and the EYFS are met as these are the responsibility of the school overall.

The Principal leads a strong, experienced and effective leadership team which has proved itself highly successful in achieving the aims of the school and in promoting pupils' all round achievements. This leadership team works together extremely well by supporting one another through using their individual strengths and talents. Roles are taken extremely seriously with a tremendous professionalism. The roles of the leadership team cover the wide range of responsibilities necessary and offers a thorough overview so that a clear eye is kept on all areas of the school. For example, the Head of Primary and Head of Secondary are very skilled and experienced in their areas and also work very effectively together. Both have their own teams of assistant and associate assistant principals with matching responsibilities, such as 'pastoral, welfare and standards', to allow for cross phase understanding. This well-structured leadership team provides clear educational direction and ensures that there are positive relationships between all members of the school community.

Leadership and management at all levels, from senior leadership through to middle and emerging leaders in the school are outstanding. Class teachers are determined to do the best for their pupils and support the school's vision and aims. Everyone knows their role within the school and performs it well, to the benefit of the pupils and the pupils' achievements.

The school is successful in recruiting high quality staff, ensuring their suitability to work with children, and supporting and developing them. Staff are given great opportunities to take on new responsibilities and to experience leadership at the next level through strategies such as the shadow leadership team and being 'Principal for the Day'.

School development and improvement are seen as important priorities. Leaders know their school well through a thorough and well-judged cycle of monitoring activities. This information is used astutely to set clear priorities for improvement. There is a detailed, challenging and realistic self-evaluation document demonstrating clear thinking and decision-making. As a result, weaknesses are tackled most effectively ensuring that pupils make the best possible progress with their learning. Although the school had a positive inspection report in 2015, the school did not 'sit on its laurels' but tackled the key issues rigorously and made excellent progress with them. Attendance and punctuality, for example, have improved significantly and the Arabic department is now offering a well-balanced and effective curriculum achieving much improved results.

As part of the school's cycle of monitoring its effectiveness, teaching quality is checked regularly in order to confirm that pupils' achievements are being supported effectively. Professional development and support is offered to maintain the highest quality in teaching. There is a persistent focus on improving the quality of learning through the best possible teaching. Staff are reflective about how they teach and consistently think about how they might support their pupils' learning in the most effective way. The teachers have embraced the highly interesting 'Visible Learning Project', which requires their engagement in an action research project focussed on developing the best quality of learning possible.

There are effective arrangements for checking pupils' progress through age appropriate tracking systems. The school monitors pupils' achievements systematically to ensure no pupil falls behind and that everyone attains their very best.

Subjects leaders, phase leaders and others with responsibilities within the school focus on improvement and constantly challenge themselves to see they are doing as well as they should be.

The curriculum is rich, well thought through and planned. It offers pupils an exceptional quality of experience that introduces them to the English early years foundation stage, the full English National Curriculum, and the MoE curriculum where relevant. The range of subjects and courses offered helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in the humanities, linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully. Fundamental British values such as the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs are included. Pupils discuss issues of difference, tolerance and harmony with respect and sensitivity. Lessons draw well on planned sequences of activities and offer both challenge and support. There are visits and visitors who add interest to the pupils' studies. After school activities add to the opportunities for pupils to take part which they do with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Pupils recognise their love of learning is in part due to the interesting opportunities and experiences they are given in and out of class.

Governance is strong; the directors of the academy group, governors and senior staff have a clear vision for the direction of the school and they challenge one another to ensure the direction of travel is appropriate. They have ensured that the accommodation and resources available are excellent in quality and quantity. The school aims to be at the forefront of development and improvement within the family of Aldar Academies.

The school maintains excellent relationships with parents and parents are extremely happy with the school's provision for their children. Communication with and information for parents, including that on the website, is well written and useful. Parents value the access they have to their children's teachers and the quality of information they receive about their child's progress through reports and meetings. Parents' concerns are given prompt attention and are sympathetically resolved.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and meet requirements in full. There is a culture of vigilance to keep children safe. Those with responsibilities for safeguarding, inclusion and additional support carry them out with skill and rigour. Day to day child protection practices are strong and valued by parents. Staff are well trained in child protection and their knowledge is updated annually. Pupils feel they are listened to and know whom they could turn to if they had concerns. High quality training develops the staff's confidence and competence in challenging views of extremism and in supporting debate. Recruiting systems for all staff ensure that the appropriate checks are made. There are relevant and up-to-date policies that provide helpful guidance for staff to ensure that safeguarding is a strength across the school.

Quality of teaching learning and assessment is outstanding

From the EYFS through to the sixth form learning is excellent; supported by the great relationships between adults and pupils and the quality of teaching. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and they use this to enthuse the pupils, which results in determined engagement and excellent learning. An excellent range of teaching methods and resources are used to involve the pupils in lessons so that they think and learn independently. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the demands of public and externally moderated examinations and pupils are prepared well for these.

Teaching across the school and in all subjects is strong. Planning is good and based on a good knowledge of pupils' achievements and strengths and weaknesses. Teachers and teaching assistants are given time to plan together so that the pupils' individual needs can be taken in to account to challenge the most able and support those that need it. A few teachers are 'capping' pupils' achievements in classrooms by setting goals that they state are only for some.

Effective working routines are established throughout the school so that teachers can spend time teaching rather than organising pupils or managing their behaviour. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour when learning which are completely justified. There is a consistency of approach by all staff which reinforces expectations.

Teachers' feedback to pupils is thorough, offering good advice about how a pupil can improve their work, although there are a few occasions where pupils do not appear to take notice of these suggestions. The presentation of work in exercise books is excellent, showing that pupils take pride in their work and are keen to show their best efforts to their teachers. Pupils work very supportively in groups showing good collaborative skills and empathy towards one another.

Assessment records and reports are well focussed, detailed and clearly indicate the amount of progress made. All subjects and phases have secure tracking systems to ensure teachers pay close attention to the progress pupils are making in order to stop

any falling behind. In Arabic for example, the diagnostic test set at the beginning of the year is proving to be a good indicator of prior learning. In the EYFS there are multiple ways of assessing progress which all contribute to a dialogue about an individual's learning.

Literacy is a strong element in all subjects, 'Talk for writing' has had an excellent impact on writing and in Arabic the 'Introduction to the guided reading programme' supports students to improve their reading skill. Young children are encouraged, and able to answer in whole sentences and clear voices, whereas some older pupils were not projecting their voices well and too often answering questions with one word or short answers.

Assessment in lessons is generally strong, helping teachers identify where misconceptions have occurred or where there is a misunderstanding. There were some excellent examples of teachers selecting to work with a group who were stuck on a concept and then quickly moving them back to work with the whole class after a simple oral assessment activity.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Pupils demonstrate a thirst for learning through their excellent attitudes. The atmosphere in classrooms is consistently very positive. Whether in early years, in Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 or in sixth form, classrooms attitudes are constructive and enthusiastic with motivated learners keen to participate and contribute. Pupils are extremely respectful to one another and to adults. They engage maturely with visitors and are happy to discuss their education. They learn to self-govern their behaviour from an early age. Positive peer pressure plays a strong part in ensuring there is no low level disruption and that excellent behaviour is the norm.

Pupils are able to work independently and also be very supportive of one another. When working together pupils can combine their knowledge and understanding very effectively to learn, which impacts positively on achievement. The quality of their debate in lessons is thoughtful and attentive and they show great respect for each other's views and the sensitivities necessary to discuss difficult topics.

The 90 different nationalities represented in the school are recognised as a value to all. The school facilitates a harmonious student body with common values of tolerance, understanding and respect, and as the pupils said themselves "we are all in the same boat so let's make the best of it"

Movement between lessons is ordered and purposeful, even the youngest pupils delight in pleasing adults by showing how sensible they can be. A year 6 class coming in from outside were full of pride when told what good role models they were being to the younger pupils. Lunchtime groups display great cooperative and friendly attitudes to one another in all the common areas inside and outside.

Attendance has improved over recent years, due to much improved monitoring and administration and is now broadly average. Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school and are punctual to lessons. Punctuality to Arabic lessons is better because of the good monitoring systems.

Pupils have a clear understanding of British values, law and order, right and wrong and democracy, which they feel they experience throughout their life in the school. They appreciate how this fits within the values of the culture of Abu Dhabi and the teaching of Islam. In discussions about equalities the pupils handled the understanding of context and an appreciation of difference extremely maturely.

Pupils feel very safe within the school. There is very little bullying but if it occurs it is dealt with very quickly within the agreed expectation of zero tolerance in the culture of the school. Good advice is given on how to stay safe 'on line' which is valued and seen as helpful by pupils. Parents have confidence in the school's procedures for welfare, health and safety.

There is strong support for pupils aged from 3 to 18 who are identified as having a special educational need. A full-time school counsellor works with pupils who are experiencing problems or facing personal challenges.

The older pupils are given excellent careers guidance, supported by work experience and many other activities that equip them well for their future education or career paths.

These good outcomes in personal development, behaviour and welfare are underpinned by excellent and robust policies and procedures.

Outcomes for pupils is outstanding

Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school especially when their different starting points are taken into account. They make sustained progress in developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills over time. Pupils achieve very well against the targets set for them in the short and long term. The school works with considerable mobility as pupils arrive and leave midyear throughout the school as parents' jobs dictate.

Those who are learning English from the beginning are well supported and quickly become integrated into the main learning life of the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well because teachers plan lessons well and staff in the achievement centre and secondary inclusion, support pupils effectively and seek to ensure that their needs are met.

Progress in the EYFS is strong with a sizable percentage of children starting with no or little English. There is a strong focus on communication and language, which has been effective, as by the end of the phase, the number achieving expected and exceeding outcomes is broadly in line with expectations. Other areas of learning also show that children are making appropriate or better progress.

Pupils build on this progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of year 2 achieve reasonably close to English levels for meeting or exceeding expectations. There are slight differences between boys and girls and between them and UAE Nationals but the school is working effectively to narrow these gaps. Work in books show that pupils are on track to achieve well in this year's SATs.

Progress is strong through Key Stage 2 and by the end of year 6 whilst boys are achieving slightly better in mathematics and science than girls, the gap is narrowing

and pupils are achieving outcomes that prepare them well for their work in the next part of the school.

Achievement in Key Stage 3 is strong, influenced by the broad range of subjects on offer and the high-quality specialist teaching which is able to build upon the secure and well-structured learning that has taken place in the primary section of the school.

Outcomes for GCSE are strong with Al Yasmina pupils gaining more GCSE 5 A* - C including English and Mathematics than in England. Progress observed in classrooms and in books indicate that results should be good again this year.

Achievement has improved in Arabic and in Islamic studies so that outcomes are now good. 98% of students achieved the necessary standard in the Ministry of Education exams last year.

The Sixth form has a very open entry policy and for some students this makes academic subjects very challenging. As there are no vocational ones to select, due to local regulations, this has an effect on overall statistics. However, taking this into account, observing work in classrooms and looking at likely results this year, progress is outstanding.

Pupils throughout the school read well with interest, fluency and comprehension at an appropriate level for their age. They are articulate and love to discuss their ideas and share their knowledge in a manner that is better than might be expected for their age.

Early years provision is Outstanding

The leadership of this area is excellent; there is a clear vision for the phase and an understanding of how to develop and continually improve. Staff are given excellent professional development opportunities and the knowledge and understanding of early years pedagogy is extensive and drives improvement.

Provision is of a very high standard and provides extremely well organised and accessible resources that support all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.

Investment in the outdoor area in recent months has resulted in challenging provision for physical development as well as open-ended resources that support creative thinking. The different needs of children in the two foundation stage years, FS1 and FS2, are met because the provision is so well focussed.

Programmes to develop communication, language and literacy are very well embedded and the children enjoy telling stories such as the 'Little Red Hen'. Themes are well used to develop vocabulary and language structures as seen in the Space theme. This generated enthusiasm for all; boys, girls and those with special educational needs as they shared books, wrote letters to Space Estate Agents and created their own aliens. As a result, children became confident speakers eager to talk about their work.

Children enjoy their learning because they are able to relate well to the adults and other children. They share and collaborate, for instance when working on construction, and the atmosphere in classrooms and the communal areas is calm and purposeful.

Sixth Form is Outstanding

Leadership and management of the sixth form are strong. The sixth form leader has a clear vision for the direction of the sixth form and has put new systems in place, such as a strong mentoring process, which are beginning to help students make even better progress. There is a good range of A levels on offer and students who require it can re-sit Mathematics and English. The school offers easy access to the sixth form and for some pupils a less academic pathway would be appropriate. Currently there are no Level 3 vocational courses. Students are given good enrichment opportunities including EPQ.

Students' achievements are outstanding, those students who enter the sixth form with appropriate prior attainment make rapid progress and achieve very well by the end of year 13.

Careers advice and guidance is strong and supports students to make appropriate next choices, including to University in England.

Students feel well supported by their teachers. They value highly the time teachers and mentors devote to them to help them to make good progress. Students have outstanding attitudes to their learning. They clearly love their work and study diligently. Students feel safe and secure and attend well. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a real love of their subject. Relationships between teachers and students are outstanding and teachers are skilled at matching tasks to the needs of students.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets in full the requirements of the common set of standards for British Schools overseas (BSO).

What the school could do to improve further

Improve learning further across the school by exploring how the 21st century curriculum can support the school's visible learning project.

Extend the sixth form curriculum to include vocational routes for those learners for whom the academic only route is not appropriate, once these routes are approved by the regulatory authorities.

Standards for inspection of British schools overseas

Quality of education provided

The quality of education is outstanding. All written policies are in place and monitored to ensure pupils have the best possible educational experience appropriate to their age. The fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs are evident throughout the school. Pupils make excellent progress in their learning and achieve well.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is exemplary. Their attitudes to school and to those within it are exceptionally positive. They are courteous to others and proud of their contribution to the school and the wider community. They relish in participating in activities offered in lessons and outside.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Pupils are well cared for. They are well guided and protected, to which their parents agree. All appropriate policies are in place and adhered to. Staff are well trained to ensure they fulfil their responsibilities in full. The school is an inclusive community in which all feel safe and valued.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Staff are all checked for suitability in line with the requirements to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the pupils. Excellent records are kept to ensure this is a rigorous and thorough process.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

The premises and accommodation are excellent. All are in the best repair and offer excellent learning spaces for the pupils. Indoor and outdoor facilities are of the highest order.

Provision of information

Information is of good quality and readily available to all, there are regular letters, open evenings, reports and a good website. Parents felt they had excellent relationships with the school and could always have access to more personal information about their child whenever they requested it.

Manner in which complaints are handled

The complaints procedure is clear, written down, and shared with parents. The process follows all appropriate stages and meets requirements in full.

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Leadership and management ensures that the BSO standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils so that the quality of provision is excellent

Minimum standards for boarding (where applicable)

Not applicable

Glossary of terms

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

School details

School status	Private School		
Type of school	Fee paying English national curriculum international school		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of pupils	3 – 18		
Gender of pupils	Male and Female		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	1683		
Annual fees (day pupils)	Primary 41,580AED	Secondary from 48,510 – 57,330AED	All in dirham per year
Address of school	P O Box 128166, Khalifa City A, Abu Dhabi		
Telephone number	0097 2 501 4800		
Fax number	N/A		
Email address	PA@alyasminaacademy.sch.ae		
Headteacher	Dr Tim Hughes, Principal		

