



Inspection report

British School Muscat

Oman

Date
Inspection #

14th - 16th January 2020
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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 covers the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students; 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 students and their achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. 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.

The inspection took place during challenging times for the School and for Oman. The demise of the ruler, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, was mourned with school closure at the start of the week and torrential rains caused significant hazards throughout the country, including in Muscat in the second half. Because of these difficult and dangerous circumstances at the beginning of the week, it was the whole of the last day (rather than the first day, which is the norm) that was spent in classrooms with the students and teachers. Teachers were observed in lessons and many learning walks took place during the visit. School documentation and policies were analysed and attainment data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the principal, the heads of both schools, senior leaders, teachers, other school staff, and representatives from the board of governors, parents and students. The inspection team worked with school staff over three days.

The lead inspector was Dr Mark Evans. The team member were Nigel Fossey, Karen Hanratty, Tamsin Harris, and Josie Kidd.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The British School Muscat meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

British School Muscat is an outstanding school with numerous exemplary features. Standards attained by the students are very high, both academically and in other spheres. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. Parents, staff and students are very supportive of the school. It has made outstanding progress since the last inspection. Many aspects of the learning and care provided at the school, both in primary and senior, are highly innovative.

3.1 What the school does well

The British School Muscat has many notable strengths.

- The spirit of innovation and creativity runs throughout the school – teachers are encouraged to try new ideas and techniques and have developed many creative approaches to promoting students' learning at the highest levels.
- Because of this, standards of attainment are very high. Academic results place the school in line with the top 5 schools in the Gulf region, top 9% of independent schools and top 3% of state schools in the UK.
- Students make impressive progress in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) with 82% making above expected progress. Standards achieved at the end of the Foundation Stage are higher than UK with 80% of students achieving a 'Good Level of Development' compared to 71.5% in the UK.
- Across the primary school, the percentage of students achieving above average in assessments is much higher than the UK: on average at least 4 points higher than the UK average, by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Senior school students perform significantly better than similar students in the UK, for example 99% achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade 4+, compared to 67% in the UK.
- The percentage of A*-B grades gained by A Level students is significantly above the average for schools registered with the Council of British International Schools – (62% compared to 43.9%), as is the percentage of A*-E (100% compared to 66.9%).
- Students' behaviour is outstanding: they have excellent manners, there are very positive relationships between adults and students, and between the students themselves.

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding.
- Curriculum innovations in the primary and senior schools are driving a real push for the highest possible standards: Discovery Learning and High Performance Learning are raising academic standards even further, as is the continued inclusive nature of instrumental music tuition. All students in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 learn to play a brass instrument.
- The best teaching is innovative, creative and challenges students, as well as engaging them in the excitement of learning: it is very well focussed on individual learning needs and strengths.
- The school's approach to welfare, health and safety of the students is exemplary: effective, efficient and secure.
- Communication with parents is exemplary. Parents make very positive comments about the ease of communication with the school, and regularity and quality of information provided.
- Governance, leadership and management of the school are exemplary: they focus on continuous improvement, innovation and creativity, empowering staff and ensuring outstanding support for students.
- An excellent example of this is the continued development of the school site to meet the students' needs, including the impressive development of the IT infrastructure.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- Ensure the quality of teaching is consistently as high as that of the best, for example by:
 - considering the most effective and efficient forms of feedback to students about the quality of their work and how to make it even better;
 - reviewing the options for ICT use in learning and teaching, to maximise the use of the network;
 - continue to develop *Discovery Learning* to ensure that it is extended to be equally effective in all classes.

- Further develop monitoring processes to measure the success of future innovations in all subjects and year groups.

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	British School Muscat		
Address	PO Box 1907 PC112 Ruwi Sultanate of Oman		
Telephone Number/s	+968 246 00842		
Fax Number	n/a		
Website Address	britishschoolmuscat.com		
Key Email Address/s	vacherk@britishschoolmuscat.com		
Principal	Mr Kai Vacher		
Chair of Board of Governors	Mr Dominic Myers		
Age Range	3-18 years		
Number of Pupils	<i>Total</i> 1,286	<i>Boys</i> 682	<i>Girls</i> 604
Pupil Numbers by Age	<i>3-5 Years</i> 110	<i>6-11 Years</i> 551	<i>11-14 Years</i> 345
	<i>14-16 Years</i> 162	<i>16-18 Years</i> 118	<i>18+ Years</i> -
Total Part-Time Pupils	0		

British School Muscat (BSM) 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 an education for English-speaking children in Oman in accordance with best British practice, in order to enable students 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 BSM has more autonomy than Omani government schools and other

international schools. It allows the school to set its own priorities and develop its own curriculum, in line with best UK practice.

Since September 2019, following a directive from the Ministry of Education, British School Salalah has become a branch of British School Muscat. This inspection focussed only on the British School Muscat. British School Salalah will be following a separate accreditation/inspection pathway over the next 3 years.

There are 1,286 students on the roll, representing 70 nationalities. A very small number of students attend the Dutch School and follow an after school programme which is housed within BSM and managed by its own staff. They were not included in this inspection.

The school was last inspected in 2017, under the same framework for British Schools Overseas.

4.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of BSM is clear and obvious.

BSM is a not-for-profit, co-educational, British international day school. The language of instruction in the school is English. The school is organised according to the structures used in English schools. The curriculum used is based on the National Curriculum (NC) of England and the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance. Key Stage 3 leads to GCSE examinations in Key Stage 4, with A Level and BTEC qualifications in Key Stage 5. This ensures that students can join or re-join the British education system without disadvantage, at any stage. Allocations of time and of subjects meet or exceed requirements. Assessments are based on national standards from the UK and UK examination boards.

BSM's appearance including uniform, classrooms and displays mirror those found in schools in the UK. The majority of students go on to British curriculum schools, either in the UK or internationally. Communications from the school to families and students are provided in English, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website. Every year, UK universities visit the school and meet with students.

BSM is an accredited member of the British Schools of the Middle East and the Council of British International Schools. It is also a member of the international division of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC); it is an accredited Cambridge Assessment International Examinations (CAIE) Centre and accredited BTEC Centre. The school has the UK Careers Mark accreditation. The British Ambassador serves as the School's President.

Almost all BSM teachers are recruited from and trained in the UK, or have UK teaching experience. Performance management processes, staff target setting and annual review meetings are based on best British practice and on DfE model policies. A

significant majority of the professional development for staff is provided through membership of COBIS, BSME, HMC, SSAT and other UK-based providers.

The current student roll in the school is 1,286 students aged 3– 18. They represent 70 nationalities, of whom 38% are British.

Enrichment provision including clubs and school trips are important in the life of the school, and are in line with British best practice. The school marks Remembrance Day; students with musical ability are invited to play every year for the British community in Oman; there is celebration of cultural festivals in line with British values, such as Christmas and Easter. British Theatre Company N-Act visited BSM in November 2018 and 2019 to perform their UK-focussed plays, 'Linked' and 'Invisible' covering internet safety and mental health issues, respectively. In the senior school, there is a British Film Club led by a Media Studies teacher which is linked closely to the new GCSE Media Studies curriculum which helps non British students understand British identity. Students take part in Mock Trial and Law Society debates which gives them insight into the workings of the UK legal system.

Visitors to the school are often from the UK: for example, the author Jonathan Meres in March 2019 and in December 2019, British Olympic silver medallist swimmer, Jazz Carlin, English international field hockey player Susannah Townsend and English rugby union player Fiona Pocock all visited the school recently. In October 2018, Paula Radcliff, OBE the former world and European champion visited BSM and addressed the students in a special assembly and took part in a community race on the all-weather pitch with students, teachers and parents.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided at BSM is outstanding.

5.1 Curriculum

It is broad, balanced, wide ranging, inclusive and meets the needs of all students very effectively across all key stages, as indicated by progress measures across the whole school and by examination results from Key Stage (KS) 2 to KS5.

Students achieve results which confirm BSM's position as one of the 5 highest performing British international schools in the Gulf Region and places BSM within the top 3% of UK state and top 9% of UK independent schools.

The school provides full-time supervised education for students of compulsory school age. A detailed curriculum policy is supported by schemes of work and related long and medium-term planning, which do not in any way undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The curriculum is broad and balanced, offering students the opportunity to develop across a range of academic, physical, creative, moral and social domains. Schemes of work are comprehensive and age-appropriate, taking into account the needs of all groups of students. The curriculum provides very effective preparation of students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. It ensures that everyone in the school, regardless of background or starting point, achieve the highest academic standards.

The curriculum for the youngest students is based on the EYFS framework, with students working towards the early learning goals (ELGs). In KS1, 2 and 3, the curriculum is based on the National Curriculum for England, which has been adapted as appropriate to fit the local context. In KS4 and KS5 students follow the syllabi for GCSE, iGCSE, A level and BTEC across an extensive range of subjects. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) reflects the school's aims and ethos, and pays regard to components of the UK's Equality Act 2010, whilst paying due respect to local Omani regulations.

The curriculum is reviewed on an annual basis, to take into account the changing needs of students and incorporate areas of research and development. Recent changes include a structured phonics programme in EYFS and KS1, and the introduction of a wider range of vocational options in the senior school. Building on the concept of free flow in EYFS, 'Discovery Learning', which balances direct instruction with enquiry-based learning, is now embedded in KS1.

This innovative programme allows for students to manage their own learning and make considered choices, exploring a range of spaces and activities over a two-week period some of these are prescribed while others are optional. The spaces, activities and

resources available are planned to allow students to consolidate and apply their prior learning and skills and allow them to explore their areas of interest. This concept has recently been modified and extended into KS2, the impact of this will be reviewed later this year.

Throughout primary, lesson planning is carried out collaboratively within each year group, ensuring consistency and optimising the expertise of teaching staff. Across the school, lesson plans are detailed and show due consideration for the specific needs of individual students within mixed ability classes, based on the thorough analysis and tracking of assessment data. An appropriate time allocation is given to each subject area.

In June 2019, BSM was accredited as a High Performance (HPL) Learning World Class School. HPL gives BSM a distinct philosophy of high expectations, a research-based language to support and focus student learning on what really matters for high performance and a flexible framework to organise innovative work on curriculum design and pedagogy. The school has taken the previously embedded BSM Learning Ethos and combined it with the HPL Values, Attitudes and Attributes and Advanced Cognitive Performance Characteristics to create the BSM Learning Ethos (ways of behaving) and BSM Thinking Skills (ways of thinking). In this way, the school ensure that all students have the opportunity for high support and challenge across all areas of the curriculum.

The BSM Thinking Skills and BSM Learning Ethos, linked to High Performance Learning (HPL) has a positive impact on students' attitudes towards learning. The values, attitudes and attributes promoted through these strategies set the basis for student's life and learning in school, into university, the workplace and beyond. HPL sets an ethos of high expectations for all, regardless of students' starting points. Challenge is well balanced with support and specific interventions, to actively engage students in their learning and enable all to succeed.

Individual students' progress is monitored and tracked, using gap analysis; regular student progress meetings ensure that planning in classes and across teams is appropriate, effective and well-paced. In the senior school, an accelerated maths programme allows the most able students to enter the GCSE examination one year early. Following a successful trial last year, the Lexonik reading programme provides additional literacy support to students, specifically in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Individual students in years 5 and 6 are selected to receive this support, while all students in years 8 and 10 are undertaking the programme this year. The programme has already been shown to bring about rapid increases in students' reading and comprehension. English as an additional language (EAL) support is available across the school for students who require specific, individualised intervention.

Curriculum enrichment takes place in a variety of manners, and is a particular strength of the school. Students take part in trips and excursions related to topics. In the primary school visits include the Royal Opera House, White Mosque, Natural History Museum, and National Museum, with residential and camping trips beginning from year 4. The

programme of visits expands in the senior school to include international trips, covering a range of academic subjects, sports, music, creative arts as well as community service. Students from year 5 may take part in The BSM Discover and Explore Oman programme of residential trips which leads into the Bronze, Silver and Gold International Awards in the older years of the senior school. An extensive range of clubs and extra-curricular activities (ECAs), provide opportunities for students to excel in specific areas. Last year, a total of 167 clubs and activities were taken up by 91% of students. These include academic subjects, games, sports, drama, dance and musical activities, plus Model United Nations (MUN), Law Society, World Scholars Cup and STEAM. Assemblies, international guest speakers, workshops, special focus days and weeks, and competitions provide additional augmentation to the formal curriculum.

Music is given particular prominence in the curriculum. As well as traditional music lessons, all students in years 5, 6, 7 and 8 are given the opportunity to learn a brass or woodwind instrument as part of their regular instruction. Each week, students receive 30 minutes of personalised, small group instruction on their chosen instrument, as well as having a weekly whole class band lesson. This programme has had a significant impact on students' enthusiasm for music and development of associated music skills. Many students go on to take formal examinations and continue with their chosen instrument throughout their school career and beyond.

The curriculum places a significant focus on students' personal, social and health education (PSHE). Through age-appropriate assemblies, dedicated PSHE and circle time lessons, and the overt promotion of the school's values, students are encouraged to develop a range of attitudes, attributes and beliefs that will prepare them for life as responsible and involved global citizens. Ongoing strategies such as Friendship Warriors and Box of Feelings, combine with specific focus weeks on themes including kindness, healthy eating, and anti-bullying to ensure the development of students' understanding and application of ideas to their everyday lives. A Learning Mentor offers dedicated support to students with identified needs, through focused social intervention groups with sessions such as Lego therapy and talking pets. Initiatives include (but not limited to) the Wellbeing and Social Time committees in primary together with Teaching and Learning and Green Committees in the senior school. Students support fund raising and practical community service projects, both locally and internationally. As an example, 14 Sixth Form students recently went to Sri Lanka to celebrate the opening of new facilities built through funds raised by students across the school. Parents express high levels of satisfaction, with 95% of primary parents and 94.5% of senior parents agreeing with the statement 'The school helps my child to become more mature and take on responsibility'.

The curriculum is enriched and enhanced significantly through an extensive programme of assemblies, visits from guest speakers, leadership opportunities, curriculum enhancement days and an extensive after school activities programme and trips. In 2018/19, 167 clubs were offered by teachers to BSM students. Over the past three years there has been a wide range of well attended clubs including curriculum, games, sports, drama, dance and musical activities. A range of talks from visiting speakers support

curriculum areas (book authors, N-Act Theatre in Schools company), and also build links with members of the community. Curriculum enrichment provides excellent opportunities for personal and cultural development. For example, the BSM Discover and Explore Oman programme of residential trips has gone from strength to strength starting in Year 4 and culminating in the Gold, Silver and Bronze IA in the older years of the Senior School. This year, over 100 primary and senior school students participated in the innovative and dynamic Peter Pan School production. All the rehearsals, supported by a team of more than 20 staff across the primary and senior schools, were held in the Oryx Theatre, under the very effective leadership and guidance of the head of drama. The show is expected to be seen by more than 1000 members of the school community.

Careers guidance is integrated into the KS3 curriculum, through the PSHE programme. This is carefully timed to link into options choices which students make before going into year 10. To supplement this, students in year 10 have the opportunity to take part in a work experience programme, as well as all students in KS3 and KS4 having access to a range of local professionals who are invited into school to speak with students about their careers. The Unifrog platform is used for KS4 and Sixth Form students to explore university and career options both in the UK and internationally. Students receive personalised support with university applications, tailored to meet the requirements of the desired destination, including Oxbridge where appropriate. Parents are very satisfied with the school's provision regarding careers and university advice, with 92.2% of senior parents expressing that they believe the school prepares their child well for the future in a recent survey.

There is strong communication between primary and senior staff, which guides planning for transition units: for example, year 6 Transition Week, year 6 MFL Taster Days, year 2 Primary students spending time in DT and Media departments; and senior school students working with students in EYFS.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is excellent. Almost all lessons observed were good with a significant proportion being outstanding and innovative. Assessment is very strong.

Across the school, teachers work with dedication and skill to plan and deliver lessons which are tailored to meet the needs of students. They demonstrate a deep understanding of the curriculum and the subject being taught, together with robust pedagogical knowledge. Teachers have high expectations of all students, in terms of attitude, behaviour and learning outcomes. The school's accreditation as a High Performance Learning (HPL) World Class school has had a significant impact on also raising students' expectations of themselves and making learning attitudes and attributes visible and meaningful.

Lessons are well structured and delivered in a manner which both engages and promotes positive attitudes to learning. Clear links between current learning intentions and previous learning are created and shared with students, future outcomes in terms of next steps are also often highlighted. In the majority of lessons, students are given clear success criteria by which they can judge their own progress towards these learning goals. Throughout the primary school, a topic-based approach is adopted. Clear links are made between different areas of the curriculum, and students develop knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects relating to a common theme. Students are excited about their learning, eager to ask questions and develop the learning journey.

The learning environment of the school, created together by teachers and students, contributes significantly to students' learning. Classrooms and shared areas are rich sources of instruction, supporting the academic curriculum as well as the school's ethos and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Learning walls are a significant feature in most classrooms, where topics and concepts are developed collaboratively over the course of a programme of study. A focus on the use of muted background colours, natural materials and pleasant aromas encourages a calm atmosphere. In many areas of the school, notably in EYFS and KS1, mood lighting is used to significant effect, creating warm, welcoming spaces, where students can find calm and develop mindfulness.

There is a strong emphasis on the development of English language skills and appropriate vocabulary across the school. From the very youngest children, correct language is modelled by teachers. Grammar and vocabulary are taught explicitly; this is evident in subject areas and age groups. In a year 5 lesson on Vikings, key vocabulary was highlighted in a text. Students discussed the meaning and correct use of these words and suggested antonyms and synonyms for some. The Lexonik programme, which is taught in a structured and fast-paced manner, has had a significant impact on students reading ability and comprehension skills, with its strategy of breaking down words into their component parts. Gains of up to 8 years have been made over the course of a six-week programme.

Teachers use questioning skilfully to check understanding whilst also extending students thinking and learning, the question "How do you know?" being used to good effect. Through questions, teachers encourage children to infer, predict and evaluate.

With the recent transformation of the school's IT hardware and systems, technology is increasingly used successfully to enhance students' learning. Teachers use digital media creatively and perceptively in their lesson delivery. A good balance is created between teacher talk, student interaction and digital input. For example, in a year 4 English lesson linked to the topic of 'Coastlines', the teacher frequently paused a video of a text-free picture book, to question, guide and develop the students understanding of the story. In French, students could listen to their teacher's pronunciation of key vocabulary on 'Showbie' and then record, hear and evaluate their own pronunciation attempts. Students are also taught explicit computing and coding skills in an engaging manner. Dedicated computing lessons offer students a comprehensive grounding in these areas.

Learning support is provided by the Inclusion Team, a dedicated group of 6 teachers and 5 intervention assistants. The Inclusion Team also covers the school's 'Language for Learning' (LfL) support, providing seamless provision. Interventions are individually tailored to the needs of the student, based on detailed observations and assessments. Support may be provided in-class, alternatively students are withdrawn to the 'Learning Haven', a tranquil space where they are able to focus on their area of need in a stress-free environment.

In EYFS, teachers and TAs are skilled at weaving multiple learning opportunities into their interactions with the students. There is a good balance between child-initiated activities and teacher direction; activities related to the children's interests are placed in the environment. Students are busy and engaged at all times and due to the free flow nature of the classrooms all staff are aware of the learning needs and next steps of the children.

In KS1 the language of the BSM Learning Ethos and Thinking skills are firmly embedded in everyday practice, and the teachers and students use the key words in their interactions. For example, the words 'precision, speed and accuracy' were used in both art and maths activities to encourage the application and development of these skills. One child was able to explain what it means to be a risk taker and how she was doing that in her writing. In the best lessons, teachers are responsive and adapt their groupings, input or support based on AfL outcomes. Teachers use a range of strategies to encourage and inspire students to achieve and improve. For example, in year 1 students are allowed to wear VCOP capes when they demonstrate excellent use of vocabulary, connectives, openers, or punctuation in their writing.

In KS2 the teaching of English and maths are a key strength. Students are frequently encouraged to verbalise in order to clarify their thinking. The use of talking partners is a fundamental part of most lessons across the curriculum. In year 3 English lessons observed, clever use was made of fictional story videos with no speech, in order for students to generate their own dialogue. Teachers produce resources such as vocabulary learning mats to also enhance the acquisition of key vocabulary and grammar skills. Through careful questioning, teachers make frequent reference to previous learning and encourage students to apply skills learnt previously in new contexts. Key skills are explicitly taught and frequently reinforced, effectively scaffolding and embedding students learning.

In years 4 to 6, students are set for maths. Whilst the same content and skills are taught, the pace varies between groups. Students are encouraged to choose their own starting point in an activity depending on their confidence in that area. Students speak comfortably about moving up or down on the range of challenge, when they feel ready. They are encouraged to work independently in the 'challenge zone' – at levels of comfort, challenge or danger. The White Rose Small Steps scheme is used to support the least able. Following regular student progress meetings, students' placement in sets is reviewed, also taking into consideration their emotional well-being.

In the senior school, the language of HPL is integrated into the best lessons and displayed across the school. Small interactive notice boards outside classrooms were updated frequently to reinforce learning happening that day. This was evident for example outside the ceramics studio. Practical lessons observed were well ordered and students treated materials and tools with respect.

Teaching in the senior school, as in the primary school, is at least good and often excellent. In art, there was clear evidence of levels being used to demonstrate students' progression, through both display and work in sketchbooks. Year 11 students were presented with individual and informative feedback which detailed 'where to next' and contained explicit advice on how to move their work forward. After 1:1 discussion with the teacher, students were able to develop their work independently and continue to refer to their feedback sheet beyond the lesson.

Facilities in design & technology are exceptional with the space and equipment necessary for students to work individually and achieve excellent results. Staff are knowledgeable of current trends in UK assessment and the benefits of the curriculum they offer. The PG Online programme was used to support the delivery of design and technology ensuring students are well prepared for the written exam. This is a popular subject at GCSE level and the subject is also offered at Advanced Level in years 12 & 13.

In year 13 psychology, HPL was clearly identified in planning documents and used through linking activities. Textbooks were available to support understanding and students were able to access further support materials via the class 'Book Club'. Learning was fast paced with opportunities to reference prior learning and for all students to be engaged in thoughtful discussions and ideas sharing while demonstrating a clear understanding of the subject taught.

In year 13 media, students worked independently on their individual music video projects. Every student was focussed and engaged in the task. They were articulate, using subject specific terminology with confidence and demonstrating a clear understanding of their progress to date. Assessment deadlines and course overviews were clearly displayed so that students could plot their path through the course.

Access to outstanding facilities and well cared for digital hardware and software enabled teachers and students to plan and complete exceptional work of which they are rightly proud. Both filmmaking and photography ECAs helped to build enthusiasm around the

subject as does the vibrant learning environment achieved in the area. The flexibility offered by the modular BTEC course had clearly benefitted some students who had needed to alter their study plans mid-course.

The dynamic approach to language teaching witnessed in one year 7 Spanish was exceptional. A lesson on popular and unpopular hobbies, offered the students the opportunity to move seamlessly between speaking, listening, writing and group discussion at a breath-taking pace. The students were upbeat and fully engaged while the teacher artfully guided them almost exclusively in Spanish! The lesson was exciting and truly brought the language alive while supporting learners of all levels and providing adequate challenge for the more able. Other MFL lessons observed in French and Spanish were good but lacked the same pace and level of student engagement. Arabic which is taught across the school also lacked the same pace and energy.

The English department is particularly strong at BSM. The clear leadership and direction from the head of department has enabled the whole team to make significant progress over the past few years. The climate in the department is one that inspires life-long learning and encourages students to spend time engaging in activities important to the subject. Air purifiers and soft lighting have been used effectively to create a homely atmosphere in some classrooms.

Lessons observed across the English department were dynamic and engaging. In year 8 the students were fully engaged in understanding dystopian fiction through their study of 'The Hunger Games'. The lesson was fast paced and interactive allowing the students to respond both verbally and with written word to visual prompts and question and answer sessions. Students were encouraged to share and collect ideas from one another to support their vocabulary acquisition. Challenging words such as 'connotations' and 'inference' were introduced and then used by the teacher to aid comprehension and to reinforce the high expectations of language usage in lessons. It was notable that students who were provided with support sheets during this activity were empowered to offer answers to the whole class with confidence.

Year 12 English students were studying Othello; the HOD was fully involved with all members of the small group enabling them to explore themes of racism with maturity. Resources were sourced from the text and modern-day examples to bring the issues alive. HPL was evident as students explained their opinions and recalled facts and character traits to support their views and opinions. At all times the teacher referred to the relevance of the learning and how this should be applied in an exam situation.

Across the whole school, students are assessed regularly in their progress towards individual targets and specific learning objectives.

Across the whole of the primary school, up to 4 students are selected each week as 'focus children' and all teachers, including specialist teachers, collect evidence of learning, put together observation notes and identify next steps targets, which are then discussed with

parents. This system was highly praised by parents, who said they feel fully involved in their child's learning development.

In the primary school, teachers mark students' work and provide some written feedback. In the best examples, the feedback is linked to the specific learning intention and, in some instances, success criteria, and highlights successes and next steps. In some cases, there is evidence of self-assessment and peer assessment, some of it carefully considered and sensitively written. Students are encouraged to respond to any written feedback and review their work. This is currently an area of dialogue and development, with procedures and practice under review.

The assessment system Learning Ladders is used for all curriculum areas to provide half termly monitoring of students' achievements and next steps. During termly student progress review meetings, a gap analysis is carried out and plans for the coverage of relatively weaker areas are generated.

All students from year 2 to 6 are formally assessed, at the end of each year, for English and maths. The resulting assessment data is analysed in depth, tracking individual student's performance and progress, as well as looking at trends and differences across cohorts. The results from assessment data are used effectively, in a practical manner, to influence student groupings, interventions and the overall School Development Plan.

Flexible academic pathways exist to support students who may need to continue to study GCSE subjects beyond the end of year 11. BTEC options are available at post 16 level in music, media and physical education, alongside traditional A level subjects which allows students to create an individualised programme of study to support their future needs. GCSE subjects such as photography can be picked up in Y12 or continued beyond Y11 to allow for resit opportunities. This flexibility has enabled BSM to increase the number of post 16 students choosing to continue their study at BSM.

Accelerated Maths is offered to extend learning at KS4. 'Dr Frost' online Maths programme is available to support learning through KS3 and 4. The introduction of the Lexonik programme has enabled students to, on average, progress their reading age by 27 months. The use of this programme with KS4 students is innovative and has helped to prepare them more fully with their comprehension of exam style questions.

5.3 Standards achieved by students

The standards achieved by students at BSM are excellent.

BSM is a high achieving school with impressive student performance. Academic results place the school in line with the top 5 schools in the Gulf region, top 9% of independent schools and top 3% of state schools in the UK.

Through high-quality teaching, care and support, students make impressive progress when in the Foundation Stage with 82% making above expected progress. Standards achieved at the end of the Foundation Stage are higher than UK with 80% of students achieve a 'Good Level of Development' compared to 71.5% in the UK.

The school has a transient population so closely monitors the progress of new students. A large proportion of students come from different curriculum backgrounds or have EAL needs. The data shows that across the year groups between 64% and 75% of new students reach expected levels of attainment within a year.

Across the primary school, the percentage of students achieving an above average scaled score in PTE and PTM assessments is higher than the UK. The average scaled score of a BSM student is at least 4 points higher than the UK average at the end of KS2.

Senior school results are consistently in line with the top 9% of independent, top 3% of state schools in the UK and place BSM in the top 5 schools in the Gulf region. BSM students perform significantly better than similar students in the UK and within the Council of British International Schools (COBIS)

Measure	BSM	COBIS average 2018	UK average
% Grades 7+	65	57.2	20.5
% Grades 4+	99	92.9	66.9

99% of students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4 +, significantly above the UK national average of 67%. This trend has continued and has been maintained since 2017. In 2019, 17% of students achieved grades 9 compared to 15.7% in 2018. Amongst the 40 students who received interventions during 2018/2019; all but one achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4+.

Results are similarly outstanding at A Level. The percentage of A*-B grades gained is significantly above COBIS average (BSM 62%; COBIS 43.9%), as is the percentage of A*-E (BSM 100%; COBIS 66.9%).

In August 2019:

- 2 students ranked as high achievers in Oman in A Level media studies (CIE)
- 2 students ranked as high achievers in Oman in AS and A Level geography (CIE)
- 1 student ranked as high achiever in Oman for IAL mathematics (Pearsons)
- 1 student ranked as top in Oman in IGCSE English language (CIE)
- 1 student ranked as top in Oman in IGCSE world literature (CIE)
- 1 student ranked as high achiever in the Middle East for GCSE art & design (fine art) (Pearsons)
- 3 students ranked as high achievers in Oman for GCSE biology (Pearsons)
- 2 students ranked as high achievers in Oman for GCSE chemistry (Pearsons)
- 1 student ranked as high achiever in Oman, Middle East and Internationally for GCSE mathematics (Pearsons)

6. *Standard 2*

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding.¹

The BSM Learning Ethos underpins the development of these areas in all students from FS1 to Year 13; it provides the scaffold and familiar language for students. They understand the meaning and importance of the development of such characteristics as resilience, respect, reflection and confidence, and these words, among others were seen being frequently used by staff and students during the visit. Throughout the school, there was a calm, purposeful and respectful atmosphere.

The friendly and welcoming community atmosphere is something highly valued by both parents and students and the relationships between staff, students and parents is particularly strong. The parents commented on the high level of care throughout the primary and senior schools that staff show towards the needs of their children, both academically and emotionally and the tutor system in senior school supports this.

The student leadership in the school has been considerably developed since the last inspection and is a particular strength in the primary school. A democratic process is followed which leads to the election of the student leaders and they then run four committees: Wellbeing, Environment, Teaching and Learning, and charities and social media. In the primary school these are supported by staff members for each, and they run a leadership training day at the start of the year for these students. The students develop action plans with smart targets, which results in an authentic approach that has real impact. Both schools are working together to develop more cross school collaboration with these committees, particularly with regards to the environment and sustainability efforts within the school community.

KS5 students also have the opportunity to lead their own ECAs, such as film making and dance. The dance ECA leads them to achieve a Level 1 Dance Instructor Certificate. The school is creating an increasing range of opportunities for students to lead assemblies in the senior school.

The school has a comprehensive PSHE curriculum in place in primary, which includes Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, and Living in the wider world. In the senior school a new curriculum has been introduced and staff are in the process of tailoring it to the school needs. Respect for Omani Law is included at all Key stages and UK law at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5. Particular attention is drawn to the local context for certain issues for senior students; for example students were clearly briefed about the consequences of drug and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancies in Oman. The MUN conference held in the senior school every year also develops student awareness of wider global and political issues which are discussed with balance and diplomacy. There are plans to introduce relationship and sex education via an 'opt in' scheme, with provision of materials for those parents who prefer to 'opt out' and cover the content themselves at home.

¹ The law of Omani and respect for local customs preclude support for certain aspects of BSO standards on the 'protected characteristics'.

Alongside the BSM Learning Ethos, the primary school has its behaviour policy of 'Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible'. This provides the structure for all conversations surrounding behaviour and students are familiar with language such as 'self-regulation' and 'restorative justice' and students are encouraged to manage conflict situations independently. Students expressed that they felt safe at school and have never experienced any bullying.

There is clear evidence that students have many opportunities to develop their self-esteem and confidence, through learning opportunities, assemblies, performances, and the ECAs. Students are also encouraged to be self-reflective right from FS1, and to gain self-knowledge of their own learning and development. Throughout the school and across subjects, students are given opportunities to work in a variety of ways that promote collaboration and communication, and also to explore and independently apply aspects of their learning in different ways. In primary, particularly KS1, 'Discovery Learning' is highly valued by the students as a vehicle for this. In the best lessons in senior school students were seen confidently transitioning between various methods of working that created a dynamic learning environment and promoted the HPL attributes and characteristics.

The school embraces and celebrates its multiculturalism on many levels, through individual student foci, assemblies, and festivals. National day is a huge event within the school where they celebrate the customs, colour and costume of the host country. The humanities curriculum also includes coverage of a range of cultural elements which promotes tolerance and harmony. The school demonstrates community engagement through a number of different charities such as the Oman Cancer association and Dar Al Atta, and also through schemes and initiatives for example the Big Brass Weekend and Opera House performers. It also provides learn to swim programs and swim training for all ages within the wider community.

Excellent peer mentoring opportunities exist between KS3 and post 16 students. KS4 students run Extra Curricular Activities for the younger students in KS3. The KS3 - 5 PSHE provision is currently under review as is the assembly programme. There is a clear vision of how this should look with robust UK endorsed resources being modified for use at BSM. The need for a separate programme of PSHE for post 16 students is understood and is currently being developed; this incorporates financial planning and other focussed activities to support students of this age.

KS3 assemblies have been separated from KS4/5 to allow for more targeted and appropriate content. Currently there are plans to introduce some sexual education content (as allowed by the laws of the country) to better prepare the post 16 students for their transition to university – Currently 67% of post 16 students progress to UK universities from BSM.

A range of activities were observed during some excellent tutor-time periods, for example revision advice with year 10 students and a learning focussed 'Pop Quiz' with year 13. Not all tutor times were of the same high standard.

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

The welfare, health and safety of the students are outstanding.

There are effective dedicated staffing structures and generous resourcing. Robust policies and procedures are in place to ensure students are safe and happy. All are reviewed on a regular basis in the light of evolving students' need and with an eye to UK best practice.

The BSM pastoral structure is very effective in meeting the needs of the students: academic progress is consistently monitored to allow to provide each student with the appropriate and personalised support.

The school has a clear and effective written policy to prevent bullying, with the emphasis firmly on developing positive relationships based on mutual respect so as to reduce the likelihood of it taking place. When occasional incidents of bullying do occur, they are treated very seriously. There is effective recording of pastoral concerns by all staff, monitored by the pastoral team. The ICT code of conduct sets out appropriate behaviours for all students and the school's firewall is CIPA compliant. Pastoral and behaviour policies are shared with new staff during induction process and regular CPD is given through staff meetings.

In primary school, 98% of the parents confirmed that their child liked the school, and 97% of the parents confirmed that their child felt safe at school. 96.4% of the senior school parents confirmed that their child liked the school (compared to 95% in 2017). 99% of the senior school parents confirmed that their child felt safe at school (compared to 97% in 2017).

In the primary school, the positive behaviour policy provides clear guidelines on sanctions and recording of behaviour issues. The pastoral team meets on a weekly basis and includes the Deputy Head of Primary (Pastoral), SENCO, School Nurse and the school's Learning Mentor. The pastoral register is updated and shared weekly with year leaders. In the senior school, meetings take place at regular intervals during which issues of concern are raised. There is a strong awareness amongst staff that a lack of engagement is an indicator that a child's wellbeing needs to be monitored and supported.

BSM adopts an appropriately cautious approach to health and safety. There is due regard for welfare, health and safety and where appropriate to UK standards. The school exceeds local regulatory requirements, including those of fire safety. There is an appropriate written policy on first aid which is implemented suitably. Despite the school's complex and often difficult topography, staff are deployed suitably to ensure the proper supervision.

The science laboratories conformed to British Standards, following CLEAPPs guidelines. Risk assessment procedures for trips were exemplary, clear, and easy to use by staff. Teachers undertake reconnaissance visits to trip locations. The fire safety systems in line with BSO standards.

8. Standard 4 The suitability of the proprietor and staff

93% of the teachers employed at BSM are UK qualified; 100% have experience of teaching the British curriculum in the UK and/or abroad. Recently recruited teachers are all UK trained and qualified, and/or have qualifications recognised by the DfE, generally with a minimum of 2 years' experience of teaching in the UK and have qualified teacher status (QTS).

The Ministry of Education in Oman pre-approves all of the school's visa applications (teaching and non-teaching staff) before the school can approach the Ministry of Manpower for a work visa. The Ministry of Education's requirements for pre-approval for teachers are a teaching qualification, experience of teaching, police clearance from last country of residence, qualifications in original, copies of passport, CV and filled in Ministry of Education form.

As a COBIS training school, BSM offers the *Straight to Teaching* and *Assessment Only* routes to becoming a UK qualified teacher with QTS. The school supports NQTs from the UK to complete their first year with specially trained experienced staff providing mentoring. There have been 5 teachers completing the *Straight to Teaching* Route and 5 completing the *Assessment Only* Route in the last 4 years, leading to UK QTS.

All new staff have a full induction training week on arrival. This includes training on safeguarding, the school internal IT Management Systems, school policies and procedures, first aid, local customs and the professional expectations of all staff. The 2019 staff survey has shown that 94% of staff feel that their team works together towards clear goals compared with 84% in 2016/17.

The school has recently introduced the Google Classroom for which training is provided. A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Coordinator was appointed recently to facilitate the availability of a wide range of CPD courses both internally, externally and online ensuring that all staff have up to date skills and knowledge to deliver the curriculum. The 2019 annual staff survey has shown that 80% of staff feel that there are sufficient CPD opportunities compared with 64% of staff in 2016/17.

The majority of teaching/inclusion assistants employed at BSM are educated to degree level. Recent instructions from the Omani Ministry requires that these classroom support roles within the school should be filled by Omanis: the school runs an award winning internship programme to ensure that a high standard of Omani graduates are employed with the correct aptitude and attitude for the role. BSM runs a 4 week programme which is classroom based and includes training and mentoring. Those completing the internship are invited to apply for a further 4 week extended programme which can lead to employment for the right person. This programme has proved successful with 5 Omani teaching assistants with excellent skills being employed as a result.

Prior to the confirmation of the appointment and issuance of an employment contract, the school requests a copy of the passport, screens the qualifications and experience to ensure eligibility for a work visa in Oman, receives at least two professional references (for teaching staff one of the

references has to be from the current Head of School) and asks to see the originals of their qualification certificates. The employment visa process requires police clearance from previous country of residence (dated within the last 12 months) and for teaching staff, a home country police check is required by BSM in line with safer recruitment standards best practice. On arrival, all staff undergo a medical assessment at a local hospital and complete a BSM Health Assessment form.

BSM Governors are well established and well regarded citizens of the wider community in Muscat. They are nominated by the school's founding companies; the parent governors are nominated by the students' parents. For each, the school holds CV, copy of passport, copy of resident card, certificate of good conduct from Oman and/or a DBS check from UK. For company nominated governors, the school also holds the nomination letter from the subscribing company,

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are outstanding. There have been further significant improvements in the last three years, and they continue to improve.

Since the previous inspection in 2017, the school has continued to implement its master plan, adopted by the Board in 2014 after a wide ranging consultation process with school stakeholders. Phase 1 of the plan delivered a 10 laboratory science block, consolidated staff car parking, a full size all weather pitch, 2 large sports halls, 3 swimming pools, a new sixth form block and 12 new senior classrooms.

Most recently, the sports hall was converted into a modern 300 seat theatre and the DT facilities have been redesigned and refurbished.

The school site provides an effective and engaging learning environment which has been enhanced by the delivery of the aforementioned new facilities, and the care and maintenance of existing facilities. Due effort is made to ensure that the campus is safe in terms of student movement.

Classrooms are spacious for the number of students that are taught in them, meeting or exceeding the Building Bulletin 103 guidelines published by the UK government. There are sufficient specialist areas and communal spaces to enable all aspects of curriculum delivery. There is generous resource allocation in the operational budget for refurbishment and maintenance of existing facilities, as well as capital expenditure allocations for the provision of new and improved facilities in accordance with the approved master plan.

The premises are well maintained to ensure that they are safe and provide a constructive environment for learning. An on-call maintenance team is available to deal with issues as they arise on a daily basis. More detailed work is planned out of term time. The school is regularly inspected by external consultants for any structural and condition issues. The cleanliness and condition of the premises is excellent and this is also regularly checked, to ensure that it remains so.

The school maintains a permanent security force who control access 24/7. There is CCTV in place to cover the complete perimeter of the school including entrances and car parks. All staff and visitors wear identification and are challenged if not. An incident plan is in place and this is practiced by students, staff and parents. Advice is received via the British Embassy on perceived threat levels and the appropriate school response. Identification for staff, parents and visitors has been recently reviewed and lanyards in different colours are now in place to more readily identify people on campus.

These outstanding facilities are in line with and driven by the school's vision to become one of the world's leading British international schools. Currently, the school is designing a new performing arts block that will also incorporate administration and senior school library, as well as a more structured dining facility.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and the wider community at BSM is outstanding.

Communication is cited as a strength of the school by the parents. They are kept well informed of school events via the primary and senior school newsletters that go out once a week, and can access more specific information about particular year groups on the primary and senior notices websites.

Information intended for individual parents is communicated via the student personal organisers which vary in layout depending on the ages of the students. An additional home-school link for tasks and homework etc is 'Showbie' in the primary school and Google Classroom in the senior school; these allow parents to see tasks set and for children to complete and upload media from home. One area for improvement that senior students raised however, was the internal advertising of events within school.

The school sends out parent surveys every year which show increasing levels of parental satisfaction across both schools. Parents are appreciative of the level of consultation they are given over key developments in the school. Over the past 12 months, meetings have been held with parents, related to the implementation of HPL (wholeschool), Showbie, Learning Ladders, Discovery Learning, The Early Years Curriculum, Homework, Communication, Assessment and Reporting, the use of Personal Organisers, the swimming provision and the new behaviour policy.

BSM has recently engaged a range of social media channels to promote events and allow the community to follow activity in the school. This has been a successful move and provides an additional platform for feedback which is closely monitored.

The school provides parents with reports of progress and attainment. In primary, these are twice a year, with an additional third term report which includes written comments for all subjects. Parents also see the three focus child summaries at the termly meetings. 'Ladders at Home' is used to support parental engagement. Student attainment and progress is also shared through this platform termly. In senior school, parents receive grade cards three times a year for all subjects, plus a tutor and subject comment once a year.

The school website has been recently re-launched and provides all the relevant information and key documents for both existing and prospective parents. This includes the name of the principal, address and phone number of the school, names of governors and information and policies on the following: school ethos, admissions, discipline and exclusions, SEN and EAL provision, curriculum, child protection, academic performance and numbers of staff. The school will as usual share the BSO report with parents.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints is excellent.

The policy in place is appropriate. The school's 'Who to contact and complaints procedure', with flow charts showing who to contact and how concerns should be escalated is available on the website. 83% of parents suggested that they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints compared to 78% in 2017.

The majority of concerns can be raised informally with a student's teacher or tutor (depending on the nature of the issue) and are dealt with promptly. Members of the senior leadership team have an open door policy. Complaints to the principal are very rare. On the odd occasion when a formal complaint is made, it is dealt with in line with the complaints procedure.

The school aims to respond to informal concerns as quickly as possible; a resolution (or action taken as part of seeking a resolution) is expected to take only a few days. Formal complaints are responded to within 5 working days. Clear timescales are prescribed for the appeals procedure.

Stage 2 of the procedure provides for a formal complaint to be made in writing if not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint.

Stage 3 provides parents with the opportunity to write to the chairman of the board of governors if they are not happy with the response from the school to a written complaint. There is provision for the establishment of a hearing before an appeals panel. The panel would consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint: one member of the panel would be independent of the governance or management of the school. Parents may attend the panel hearing.

If possible, the panel resolves the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. If further investigation is required, the panel decides how it should be carried out. After consideration, the panel reaches a decision and make recommendations, if appropriate, within five working days of the meeting. The panel then writes to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The findings and any recommendations are sent in writing to the parents, the principal, and the board of governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.

All formal complaints are logged on a confidential record in the principal's office and the nature of the complaint is reported at the following meeting of the school development committee, though not the names of complainant or employees involved.

12. Standard 8 Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management are outstanding: the vision and direction provided by the governors, the principal and the two heads of school are exemplary.

Governors make a significant contribution to the school's success: genuine, sharply focussed critical friends. They are supportive, attending many events held during the year. Feedback from stakeholders is sought actively and used, to improve further the school's performance. They hold the leadership team to account through the Principal's Performance Management Committee, through performance development, and through regular performance reviews of the school.

The school leadership team produces regular detailed reports twice termly for the board and various sub-committees on progress made against the school development plan, and on students' attainment and progress.

Parents are very supportive of the leadership and management of the school. Last year, 95.2% of parents stated that they 'understand BSM's vision and mission' compared to 88% in 2017; 96.5% of parents state that 'the school is well led and managed' compared to 85% in 2017. Staff are very supportive of BSM: in a survey last year, 100% of BSM staff stated that they 'feel proud to work at BSM' compared to 99% in 2017/2018 and 100% stated that 'they understand the vision here at BSM' compared to 92% in 2017/2018.

Since joining the school in 2011, the Principal has led BSM with vision, passion and determination, whilst always being aware of and sensitive to the school's context. As a result of his strong and effective leadership, the school has gone from strength to strength. It has gained an enviable reputation in the region and worldwide: it is recognised as a High Performance Learning World Class School, as International School of the Year and as British International School of the Year. The principal is very well supported by heads in each school and the other leaders.

As a result of the excellent leadership and management, over the last twelve months BSM has regularly showcased and shared best practice e.g. a visit by Wellington School China, the International Community School, Jordan, the Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham, UK, the TES Institute and the Ministry of Education, Oman.

All posts at BSM are filled with suitably qualified staff. There is a wide range of in-house CPD opportunities that are now available to BSM colleagues has been acknowledged, as in since May 2019, it is a designated COBIS training school.

Annual staff turnover is currently less than 5%, well below the 15-25% average for international schools. BSM articles regularly feature in educational publications such as TES, TES International, Global Insights, Teach Middle East, International School Leader Magazine and have received more than 3,500 hits on its school bog, blog.britishschoolmuscat.com.

Excellent improvements to the IT infrastructure of the school, driven by the very effective director of IT, have enabled the school to adopt the cloud based Google Suite set of applications right across the school. The impact on the way that the students learn is notable in many subjects. Staff have been trained in the software and are using its applications to support pedagogy, the curriculum and administration.