British International School Riyadh Al Waha campus

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 28 September to 01 October 2026

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Age Group: 3 to 18 years

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection report follows the English Department for Education (DfE) schedule for the inspection of British schools overseas. Education Development Trust (EDT) is a body approved by the British government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas and quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Education Development Trust is one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies, providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally. Education Development Trust employs staff worldwide, all working on projects relating to educational quality.

To be recognised by the Department for Education, a British School Overseas (BSO) must have an inspection report which shows that its performance against all the standards is at least satisfactory. This reflects the standards required for continuing registration as a school in England. Schools meeting the standards will have their inspection reports published on the Department's website and will be added to the register, 'Get information about schools'.

Inspectors report on the extent to which schools meet the relevant standards for BSO accreditation. The inspection follows closely the framework for the inspection of independent schools in England but, where appropriate, also takes account of compliance with local regulations.

The DfE updated the standards in August 2023. The new standards aligned the BSO standards with the Independent School Standards (ISS) and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding applied to schools in England; clarified and reiterated the relationship between the UK and host country laws and reshaped staff recruitment standards to ensure international applicability.

The BSO standards are as follows:

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment).

Part 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Part 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation.

Part 6. The provision of information.

Part 7. The manner in which complaints are handled.

Part 8. The leadership and management of the school.

Part 9. The quality of provision for boarding.

The purposes of BSO inspections are to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare
- provide rigorous and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and celebrate their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses
- inform parents and carers and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain.

Key for inspection grades

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

Information about the school

British International School Riyadh (BISR) Al Waha campus is an inclusive, co-educational, not-for-profit British school, located in Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). It is the largest of seven BISR campuses serving the expatriate community. The school first opened in 1979 and following a year of operation at the Al Hamra campus, relocated to its purpose-built Al Waha site in August 2025.

The school is governed by a parent-composed board of governors, reflecting the structure of a UK governing body. The principal has been in post since 2023, a new head of primary joined in 2024 and recent changes in deputy and assistant head positions have now been embedded, resulting in stable leadership.

Al Waha currently educates 1,850 pupils aged three to 18 years. This includes 157 pupils in the early years, 823 in primary school, 870 in senior school, of whom 190 are in the sixth form. The pupil body represents 93 different nationalities with British pupils forming the largest group (36%) and Commonwealth pupils comprising 12%. The school admits a broad ability range and manages high levels of pupil mobility. Approximately 9.7% of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A further 45.1% of pupils are identified as learners of English as an additional language (EAL).

The curriculum in the early years follows the UK's early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. The primary and senior schools deliver the national curriculum for England (NCfE), adapted to the local context. At key stage 4, pupils study for I/GCSE examinations. Sixth-form students pursue pathways including AS and A levels and IBTEC qualifications or transfer to the Diplomatic Quarter campus to follow the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme (IBDP).

The school's vision is to be an outstanding British international school, providing world-class learning experiences and developing students as positive global citizens. This vision is

underpinned by the school motto: Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Challenge, Happiness (REACH) and reinforced by a strong British educational ethos.

The school recently demonstrated resilience and adaptability during a period of sudden geopolitical regional instability. Although the inspection was disrupted by the successful emergency transition to remote learning, inspectors were able to gather sufficiently robust evidence to reach a secure judgement on the school's compliance with the BSO standards.

Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by four EDT inspectors who spent four days at the school. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed in advance and the inspection dates were confirmed with 10 weeks' notice. Inspectors reviewed key information about the school prior to the inspection.

During the inspection, the team visited 67 part-lessons and carried out learning walks, including extra-curricular and enrichment activities. A total of 51 lessons were jointly observed with leaders. Inspectors also attended assemblies. The team held 35 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and reviewed a broad selection of documentation, including assessment records, policies and strategic plans. Safeguarding arrangements were evaluated to check their compliance and effectiveness. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and staff gathered through the BSO survey, which was distributed shortly before the inspection.

Evaluation of the school

British International School Riyadh (BISR) Al Waha campus is an outstanding school and provides an outstanding quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years.

The school meets all of the Standards for British Schools Overseas except those which it is precluded from meeting because of the host country's legislation. These are explained later in the report. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified in relation to these unmet standards and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Attainment and progress in **English** are outstanding.

On entry to the early years, most children demonstrate communication and language skills that are below those typical for their age. By the end of this phase, children can say a sound for each letter of the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.

In the primary phase, pupils make rapid progress in their reading, grammar, speaking and listening skills. They develop reading fluency and comprehension skills through a systematic phonics approach and a focus on high-quality texts that build complex vocabulary. The school has accurately identified writing as the least well-developed skill, with girls' writing skills being stronger than boys. To remedy this, the school has introduced targeted texts for boys, daily writing accuracy tasks and a well-designed writing programme. These interventions are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' writing skills. By the end of the primary phase, pupils' attainment is above England averages and almost 50% of pupils work at greater depth.

In key stage 3, pupils' progress continues through additional literacy interventions. Across the senior phase, teachers have increased the rigour of their planning to engage all pupils' interest. Most recently, the school has introduced a unit on conflict poetry because many pupils, particularly boys, expressed an interest in poems inspired by the Iraq War. At the end of Year 9, pupils achieve almost one grade above expected progress in English language assessments.

Attainment and progress accelerate in key stage 4. In English language 96% of pupils achieved on or above their predicted targets and 91% did in English literature, reflecting the well-planned support they receive. In lessons, pupils demonstrate high levels of critical analysis of texts and poetry. Results have risen over the past three years due to targeted curriculum sequencing, a greater focus on developing analytical skills and a well-planned intervention programme.

Results at A level are significantly high with 50% of students attaining A* to A, and girls achieving particularly well. These results are well above England averages. The genre-based approach and thematic units across key stage 5, for example, crime and mystery, resonate with students and lead them to success.

Across all phases, pupils with SEND and EAL make very good progress from their starting points.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are outstanding. Evidence from both internal and external assessment data demonstrates that pupils make strong progress throughout the school. There are no significant differences in the progress made by pupils with SEND compared with their peers. However, attainment data indicates that boys currently achieve more highly than girls in mathematics.

By the end of the early years, almost all children make accelerated rates of progress to exceed the standards expected in numeracy in England. For example, children use standard measures and apply their understanding by placing resources in ascending order according to height.

In the primary phase, pupils' attainment is significantly above that seen in England. Children build on their mathematical competence, developing an awareness of the relationships between numbers and their calculation skills. Pupils in Year 2 add one- and two-digit numbers confidently, while pupils in Year 4 identify numerical relationships using subtraction involving an exchange. By the time they reach the end of key stage 2, external assessment results show that 45% of pupils achieve above the level expected for their age, compared with 27% in England.

In the senior phase, pupils continue to develop their mathematical reasoning, using algebra to solve equations. In Year 7, pupils use estimation techniques to quickly gauge values, developing their mental calculation skills. Pupils in Year 8 recognise different elevations when presented with a three-dimensional object.

Outcomes at both IGCSE and A level have followed a positive three-year trend, with attainment consistently exceeding that achieved in England. In the most recent IGCSE examinations, 48% of pupils attained at grades 9 to 7, significantly above the examination board average of 19%.

A-level outcomes are also strong, with 46% of students achieving at grades A* to A, compared with an examination board average of 42%. A small cohort of five students completed A-level further mathematics and achieved outstanding results. However, due to the small cohort size, meaningful statistical comparisons cannot be made.

Across the school, pupils develop their mathematical knowledge, reasoning and calculation skills rapidly, resulting in outstanding outcomes for pupils.

Attainment and progress in **science** are outstanding.

Science is a significant strength of the school. Across all phases, all groups of pupils make strong progress from their starting points and attain highly. Outcomes generally exceed England averages.

In the EYFS, children make excellent progress in Understanding the World. In 2026, all children achieved the early learning goal (ELG) in all three areas, reflecting highly effective provision. Children develop a natural curiosity and use senses to investigate. In a lesson about elephants, children demonstrated an understanding of the elephant's trunk to eat and to protect itself.

In primary, attainment is consistently high and improving. All groups of pupils make secure progress from their starting points. At key stage 1, 92% of pupils meet expectations, with 27% exceeding them in internal assessments. At key stage 2, 95% meet expectations and 45% exceed them. The move to discrete science lessons, stronger curriculum progression and increased practical learning has accelerated progress. Pupils learn predominantly through investigation and setting up fair tests. For example, in Year 3, pupils modelled rocks using plasticine and Year 1 performed an egg-drop experiment.

By the end of key stage 3, pupils achieve exceptionally strong outcomes. Science is the highest-performing core subject. Standardised assessment scores rise from 109 in Year 7 to 120 in Year 9, with pupils outperforming their predictions considerably by Year 9. Outcomes are substantially above global averages and indicate pupils' deep conceptual understanding and strong readiness for GCSE study. Boys outperform girls, although all groups including SEND and EAL make excellent rates progress.

At IGCSE, pupils' outcomes at grade 9 in biology and chemistry exceed examination board averages. Across all three sciences, pupils perform better than predicted, particularly in chemistry where the average is over half a grade higher. Pupils with EAL needs perform well and make strong progress. However, boys significantly outperform girls against their potential and pupils with SEND do not make the same rates of progress. Leaders have accurately identified these gaps as priorities and have implemented targeted interventions, mentoring and teaching and learning strategies to increase pupils' participation and confidence.

At A level, students' attainment remains strong, particularly in biology, where A* to A and A* to B outcomes exceed examination board averages considerably. Chemistry and physics outcomes are broadly in line with comparable averages. Students with EAL needs continue to achieve well, while the small numbers of students with SEND make particularly strong rates of progress.

Cross-phase collaboration ensures increasing curriculum coherence from EYFS to A level and contributes to the strong rates of progress evident across the subject.

Pupils' attainment and progress in a range of **other subjects** are outstanding.

External examination results over three years, the school's extensive internal assessment information and evidence gathered during the inspection indicate that pupils make outstanding rates of progress in every phase of the school.

In the primary phase, pupils work well above the expectations for their age indicated by the programmes of study of the NCfE.

At key stage 3, pupils' attainment is well above that expected in England. The strongest progress is seen in modern foreign languages, art, drama, food technology and design and technology. In other subjects, girls outperform boys and pupils with SEND make stronger progress than their peers.

This outstanding progress continues into key stages 4 and 5. In 2026 Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) business and sport, all students achieved at least a merit, significantly outperforming national benchmarks and those of the examination board. Results at GCSE and A level overall are well above world and England averages. Girls continue to outperform boys in other subjects, particularly in key stage 5 and in essay-based subjects. Pupils with SEND continue to make the most progress in most subjects.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is outstanding (see Part 1 below).
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding overall (see Part 1 below).
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding (see Part 2 below).
- The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding (see Part 3 below).
- The Standard for the suitability of the proprietor and staff is met (see Part 4 below).
- The premises and accommodation meet the requirements of the Standard (see Part 5 below).
- The provision of information for parents meets the requirements of this Standard (see Part 6 below).
- The school's procedures for handling complaints meet requirements of the Standard (see Part 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding (see Part 8 below).

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during September 2026, the school has demonstrated that it meets the BSO standards except for those standards that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. The school's provision prepares pupils well to enter or re-enter the independent school system in England. This judgement is endorsed by the British government, quality assured by Ofsted and is valid for a period of three years.

Part 1. The quality of education provided by the school

The standards relating to the quality of the education are met except for the standard in paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

The quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding

The school's curriculum is broad, ambitious and exceptionally well sequenced. It takes into account the school's context in the KSA. It flows logically from the EYFS framework to the NCfE and the specifications of examination boards in key stages 4 and 5. The breadth of the curriculum, particularly in the sixth form, allows pupils to follow a pathway which matches their interests and aspirations for future study and careers.

Teachers' use of the local environment enhances the curriculum. Visits to cultural and historical institutions enable pupils to learn about the rich heritage of the local area.

Leaders have closely matched the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme to the English national curriculum as well as thoughtfully adapting it to meet the needs of pupils in the KSA context. It develops pupils' knowledge and skills progressively as they mature. Staff undertake training to ensure that they teach the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme sensitively, considering the school's context in the KSA. Pupils learn about themes such as consent, personal safety and healthy relationships. Teachers inform parents about the content of lessons in advance and they can opt out if they wish.

The curriculum provides pupils with a strong understanding of life in British society and an understanding of British values. For example, in English in Year 10, pupils consider how the central character in 'The Explorer's Daughter' manages the conflict between her personal conscience and cultural acceptance. Pupils consider this in the light of the British value of individual liberty. In Year 2, pupils compare the UK with the KSA when they learn about the Masmak Fort alongside studying English castles.

The curriculum promotes respect for age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. The laws of the KSA preclude the school from promoting marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment and sex and sexual orientation.

A vast array of activities, educational visits and competitions significantly enrich the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities, some of which pupils lead, include an extensive range of sports and performing arts as well as clubs such as robotics, macrame and young engineers. They provide something for everyone and are very well attended, including by pupils with SEND and those who have EAL needs. These opportunities broaden pupils' horizons and enable them to discover and develop talents, interests and aspirations.

The sixth-form futures and enrichment programme makes a particularly strong contribution to students' preparation for life beyond school. Students learn essential life skills such as financial management and cooking, in preparation for living independently of family, including in other countries such as the UK.

Careers education begins in Year 7 and develops progressively as pupils move up the school. At each stage of their school career, teachers prepare pupils exceptionally well for their next stage, including transition to schools in the UK, further study and future employment.

Leaders ensure that nothing stops any pupil from participating fully in everything that the school has to offer.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** in the school is outstanding.

The 'Everyday Excellence' document identifies teaching basics and non-negotiables common to the whole school. This shared commitment to providing the very best quality of teaching for all pupils contributes to them making outstanding progress as they learn, remember and apply important knowledge.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use it effectively to select and sequence activities, explain concepts clearly and ask purposeful questions. They create calm, highly purposeful classrooms and build positive relationships that foster a strong culture of learning. Pupils understand what teachers expect of them and embrace challenging tasks. They take responsibility for the quality of their own learning. Teachers' infectious enthusiasm for their subjects stimulates pupils' curiosity, confidence and a genuine thirst for knowledge. Pupils ask thoughtful questions, articulate their ideas clearly with teachers giving them time to reflect before responding. Strategies such as 'think, pair, share' help pupils formulate and refine their thinking. Retrieval activities, including 'do now' tasks, routinely revisit important knowledge and help pupils to connect new learning to what they already know and remember over time.

Teachers use the school's exceptional specialist teaching facilities very effectively. For example, in design and technology there are enough machines and tools to allow pupils to choose the best ones to use for specific purposes and to apply their knowledge practically. Younger pupils benefit from learning in the same high-quality accommodation as older pupils. For example, they learn physical education (PE) in a large specialist sports hall and food and nutrition in a specialist kitchen.

Teachers use assessment as an integral part of teaching. They continually check pupils' understanding through skilful questioning, mini-whiteboards, multiple-choice questions and choral responses. They respond quickly when pupils reveal misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge. They adapt explanations, regroup pupils and intervene during independent work.

Teachers and leaders use assessment information effectively to identify patterns in learning and to shape curriculum planning. For example, in science, leaders identified a need for additional practical experiences to deepen pupils' understanding of non-flowering plants and animal adaptation. In the early years, adults observe children closely to identify emerging needs and track progress towards the relevant areas of learning and early learning goals. Moderation using UK exemplars helps teachers develop a shared understanding of expected standards.

Teachers use feedback well to help pupils improve. They provide clear guidance and next steps, which pupils act on to improve the quality of their work. Leaders analyse assessment information across different groups, including pupils with SEND and EAL and by gender to identify emerging patterns and evaluate the impact of adaptations and additional support. Teachers integrate provision for pupils with SEND and EAL thoughtfully into classroom practice and use targeted intervention or withdrawal according to identified needs. This approach enables pupils to gain access to ambitious learning while developing increasing levels of independence and confidence.

Leaders' well-devised quality assurance processes and professional development opportunities for teachers have contributed strongly to the outstanding quality of teaching across the school.

Part 2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The standards relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5(b)(vi). This is not met because of the requirements of the host country relating to the UK Equality Act 2010.

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

Pupils show a strong commitment to the school's REACH goals. They understand how these goals work together to develop kindness, high standards and responsibility for themselves and others. Year 5 pupils summed this up as: 'We work together to find ways of making the world fairer and happier and we make sure no one is left out!'

Pupils show remarkable attitudes to learning. They engage fully in lessons, respond well to challenge and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively, to meet their targets. Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. In the BSO pupils' survey the majority of pupils agree that pupils are generally well behaved.

Pupils lead a wide range of initiatives as student counsellors, sports captains and members of the inter-cultural committees, for example. Around 85 pupils from Years 5 and 6 act as 'playground pals.' They ensure that no younger child is left out at playtimes, arrange group activities and nurture friendships. Year 9 pupils reflected thoughtfully on the qualities that the leadership roles require, including listening closely to others, challenging misconceptions and negotiating for the greater good of all. Pupils thrive in a community where all stakeholders show empathy and respect and build strong relationships.

The school's SMSC provision actively promotes respect for all people and addresses nearly all the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The school embeds the protected characteristics in the curriculum through discussions and well-planned activities, fulfilling its aim to 'sustain a safe and supportive space where everyone is welcomed, represented, valued and can thrive.' Themed weeks, including Celebrating Differences Week and Black History Month, celebrate diversity and focus on key points. Pupils speak confidently about how diversity enriches their experiences and strengthens the community. They like learning about different cultural traditions and appreciate the opportunities to find out about others' experiences so that they can support peers who may experience discrimination.

The Vulnerable Pupils Index (VPI) identifies pupils who need support to gain access to learning for sensitive reasons, such as safeguarding, behaviour patterns or well-being. Staff recognise differences and target support systematically so that each pupil can meet their potential.

The structured PSHE curriculum equips pupils with life skills and helps them reflect on conflict and healthy relationships. Year 6 pupils explained that a 'Bystander' may simply watch a conflict unfold, whereas an 'Upstander' would 'stand up' for what is right. They believe these discussions

help them consider the impact of their behaviour on others and prepare them for life beyond school.

The school reviews the PSHE programme regularly and uses pupil well-being surveys to identify current concerns. For example, the school has recently included a unit on dealing with toxic masculinity as a direct result of pupils' experiences and extended the curriculum so that pupils can consider whom they select as their role models. In the Global Affairs curriculum, pupils discuss the differences between arranged and forced marriages and form their own views on which one, if either, is acceptable.

Teachers emphasise that it is acceptable to hold differing opinions and that pupils must acknowledge them respectfully. Partisan views are not promoted. Pupils believe that PSHE lessons give them the opportunity to consider these sensitive topics in a safe place and help foster a safe and respectful environment.

Teachers actively promote British values across the curriculum, including tolerance and individual liberty. They encourage pupils to consider the similarities and differences between the KSA, their home countries and the UK. Pupils speak confidently about British democracy and how it compares with the rule of law in the KSA. Year 4 pupils compare how decision-making works in both countries and recognise the similarities in voting for student council members. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils analysed the life of a refugee in a camp and discussed the importance of respecting and protecting freedoms and rights.

The Service-Learning group encourages pupils to contribute to the lives of others. Pupils initiated the most recent drive after they saw media coverage of the devastating floods in Nepal and set up fundraising events. The whole school joins in, raising awareness of social and global responsibility.

The quality and impact of SMSC provision are exceptional. Pupils are self- and globally aware, thoughtful, and demonstrate a strong moral code. They appreciate different cultures, traditions and viewpoints while keeping a strong sense of personal identity. The integration of British values in an international and host-country context prepares pupils well to be compassionate, reflective and responsible global citizens.

Part 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The **welfare, health and safety** of pupils and staff are outstanding.

The school provides a safe learning environment which complies fully with the requirements of KSA and those expected in the UK. The school's written health and safety policy clearly defines individual responsibilities.

The school ensures pupils feel welcome when they join, including those who join mid-year or at the beginning of a new phase. Transition days, parental awareness sessions and support from the pastoral team ensure that pupils settle into school rapidly and pupils confirm this. The school routinely shares its expectations and policies with parents. Attendance has consistently improved over time due to focused intervention, and is currently 95%, above the England average. Pupils arrive at lessons punctually and are ready to learn.

The school has established clear anti-bullying, behaviour and attendance policies which are reviewed regularly and communicated to pupils through assemblies. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary with instances of bullying rare. Staff respond rigorously to all reported or suspected incidents of bullying, promoting a strong culture of inclusion and mutual respect.

Safeguarding is exceptionally well managed by the safeguarding teams. Safeguarding and child protection policies are embedded across the school, with clear procedures that staff understand and consistently follow. Staff are confident in identifying and reporting concerns in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026. The roles of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies are clearly defined, with members of the safeguarding team highly visible and accessible throughout the school. All staff receive regular safeguarding training, with new staff receiving additional support to ensure that they understand the school's procedures. Parents understand how to report safeguarding concerns and receive appropriate guidance from the school.

Pupils fully understand the procedures to follow should they feel unsafe or have any concerns. The school employs three counsellors and further promotes pupils' well-being through initiatives such as 'peer listeners', which provide opportunities for pupils to talk openly and seek support from their peers.

Staff complete risk assessments for all activities, including educational visits and implement suitable controls to minimise identified risks, supported by a detailed risk assessment policy. In workshops and science laboratories, staff strictly control access to machinery and chemicals and supervise pupils appropriately, including face recognition to unlock doors. The school routinely tests electrical equipment, which carries the required certification. A full-time lifeguard supervises the swimming pool, with water temperature and cleanliness continuously monitored.

The school has a well-equipped onsite clinic, staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced medical professionals. First aid kits containing suitable equipment are readily available throughout the school, with the medical team overseeing contents and replenishment. A significant number of staff are trained in first aid and paediatric first aid, with designated staff also trained in the appropriate use of defibrillation equipment.

The school has clearly written fire evacuation procedures which are prominently displayed and well understood by pupils. Firefighting equipment is appropriately located throughout the school and routinely inspected and maintained. Staff conduct, record and learn from regular evacuation and lockdown drills. The unplanned fire drill during the inspection was calm and orderly.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school's arrangements for staffing, recruitment and safeguarding are highly effective and fully aligned with KSA's legal requirements. They also reflect the standardised approach used across all BISR schools, ensuring consistency and clarity in safeguarding practice.

The human resources (HR) department maintains a detailed and accurate single central record (SCR) that records staff appointments, start dates, identity checks, qualifications, medical fitness, right to work, criminal record checks and references. Recruitment procedures ensure that all required checks take place before staff begin employment. The SCR also includes visitors, supply staff, parent helpers, contractors and governors, providing a comprehensive overview of all adults who work in or gain access to the school.

Recommendations from a previous review have been implemented appropriately, demonstrating a culture of continuous improvement. Evidence of lessons learned from safeguarding cases demonstrates reflective practice and a strong commitment to maintaining high standards of safeguarding and recruitment compliance.

Staff verify identity through original documents, including passports and birth certificates, and record both the date of verification and confirmation that original documents were seen. Recruitment checks include prohibition checks, International Child Protection Certificates (ICPC) and police clearances covering 10 years from all the countries staff have worked in. Leaders have also updated recruitment criteria to reflect current KSA requirements regarding teaching experience.

Reference procedures are thorough. The school obtains three references for teaching staff and HR and senior leaders verify references through telephone calls or recorded online meetings. Social media screening forms part of recruitment, with clear thresholds for concern, documented risk assessments and candidate discussions. There is tight confidential access to the SCR by HR staff only. However, the safeguarding governor, the group safeguarding lead and the principal undertake regular scrutiny and spot checks. These robust systems ensure that only suitable adults work with children and contribute strongly to the school's safeguarding culture.

Staffing is a significant strength. Teachers are well qualified and predominantly from the UK. Twenty new staff joined the school in the current year, including additional posts of responsibility to add capacity. All benefited from a comprehensive induction programme.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school occupies a large, new, purpose-built building. Classrooms are spacious, benefit from natural light and have appropriate acoustic insulation, providing an enriching and inviting learning environment. Corridors are enhanced by extensive displays of pupils' work, including high-quality artwork and written work, creating a welcoming and stimulating environment. The facilities team maintains the school to a high standard of cleanliness and repair.

The school is accessible to all pupils, including those with physical disabilities. Lifts and ramps provide access to all areas of the building. The school library is used effectively by pupils for lessons and independent study. Specialist facilities for food and design technology provide pupils with realistic environments which closely reflect professional settings.

The school's sixth-form provision provides students with a large common room and dedicated study areas, with ample scope to expand these facilities as the provision grows.

Pupils benefit from a large number of high-quality indoor and outdoor facilities for PE and recreational spaces for use during breaks. Some outdoor areas provide ample shading, while it is planned for others. Separate changing facilities are clean, well maintained and provide pupils with appropriate privacy.

Staff and pupils' bathrooms, on every floor, are separate and easily identified by appropriate signage. Drinking water is readily available on each floor. The school clinic provides appropriate recovery spaces for pupils, welfare facilities, including toilets and an area for private examinations.

The school rigorously manages the arrival and departure of all pupils and visitors. Identity checks are conducted and different coloured lanyards are used to clearly distinguish between categories of visitors. Staff maintain a strong and visible presence throughout the school, contributing effectively to an environment which is safe and secure for all.

Part 6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Parents are highly positive about the school. They value the high levels of care, support and guidance that their children receive. They report that their children are happy to come to school, and they appreciate that senior leaders greet the children and parents at the start of each day. They value the regular communication which enables them to be actively involved in school life. Parents have a strong awareness of safeguarding procedures and have confidence in the school's commitment and ability to manage any concerns.

Parents value the opportunities to discuss their child's attainment and progress with teachers, both online and at parent-teacher conferences. They also appreciate the high-quality reports, which give information about their children's academic attainment, progress and personal development and identify next steps in learning. Parents of pupils who receive additional support value the weekly updates about their child's progress and confirm that these enable them to consolidate learning at home. Teachers are always willing to spend time clarifying any misconceptions in learning, and many parents use these opportunities regularly.

The school's website provides comprehensive information about the school, including a wide range of policies, information about governors and previous inspection reports. Parents report that the school offers several workshops during the year that give them greater clarity about the curriculum, assessment and behaviour policies. Regular updates, including the Thursday notices, help parents feel informed and involved in their child's education.

Parents appreciate that leaders always prioritise pupils' well-being. Senior teachers respond efficiently to any requests for meetings about individual children's education or wider school matters. Parents report that teachers and leaders communicate well, respond positively to new ideas and feedback, and place their children's well-being and learning at the centre of all discussions. Leaders find effective solutions and deal positively with any concerns that parents raise. Parents described the sensitive way the school handles behaviour concerns affecting their

children and appreciate the follow-up monitoring that helps their children feel secure in school again.

The school seeks the views of parents through a range of surveys and informal meetings. The discussions and ideas are woven into the school's development plans.

Parental feedback shows high levels of satisfaction with the school, children's academic progress and the wide range of additional opportunities that help pupils develop holistically. Parents report that children benefit from high-quality teaching and learning. They also value the opportunities that their children have to develop their artistic, sporting and musical talents and to take part in high-level competitions. The findings of this inspection confirm these views.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school's arrangements for managing complaints are very effective and fully compliant with BSO expectations. Leaders provide a clear written complaints policy to parents through the website and Family Portal. The policy sets out informal and formal stages, clear timescales, written procedures and access to a panel hearing comprising at least three members, including an independent panel member. Parents may attend hearings and bring a companion, while the panel provides findings and recommendations in writing. Leaders maintain comprehensive, confidential records of all complaints, outcomes and actions taken.

Staff understand and apply procedures consistently, resolving most concerns informally through early intervention and clear communication. Formal complaints directly to the principal are rare with no cases requiring escalation to the formal complaints process or board level. Leaders analyse complaints to identify themes and to inform improvement planning. The effective handling of concerns and complaints contributes to the school's culture of trust and accountability.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding.

Leadership and management represent a significant strength of the school. Leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities successfully and ensure that the BSO standards are met. A clear vision, rigorous self-evaluation, strong governance and a culture of continuous improvement give the school a high capacity for sustained improvement.

Governance is highly effective. The board comprises a diverse and highly skilled group of committed volunteers who bring extensive professional expertise to their role. Governors ensure that the school operates fully within both UK and KSA legal frameworks. Financial governance is strong, with robust committee scrutiny and effective oversight of budgetary decisions that prioritise educational outcomes.

Governors work in close partnership with the four principals of all seven schools and the chief executive officer (CEO), providing both support and challenge while respecting the distinction between strategic governance and operational leadership. The CEO conducts the principal's appraisal and the governing body monitors strategic objectives closely. Effective committee structures, regular monitoring and rigorous follow-up of actions ensure leaders are held to account and improvement remains sharply focused.

The school systematically gathers and responds to the views of pupils, parents and staff through surveys, consultation and open dialogue. Governors actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion, challenge discrimination and champion opportunities for all. Their diverse composition provides positive role models, while strong oversight of safeguarding, SEND and EAL provision helps create a highly inclusive, aspirational and effective learning community.

Senior leaders communicate an ambitious and values-driven vision rooted in the 'REACH' principles. These principles permeate all aspects of school life with pupils clearly displaying the values of 'REACH'. Leaders model these values through their visibility, interactions with pupils and families, and commitment to high standards.

Governors and leaders at all levels communicate ambition and drive improvement. Middle Leaders described a culture of high ambition where they are trusted and empowered to lead change. They highlighted strong support from senior leaders alongside the autonomy to implement initiatives. Middle leaders see themselves as role models through maintaining high expectations, delivering high-quality teaching, and leading professional development within departments.

Staff have many opportunities to pursue qualifications as a result of the school's exceptional investment in professional development. Leaders create a culture of continuous learning through coaching, peer observations and leadership development programmes. The school serves as a hub for national professional qualifications (NPQ) and Council of British International Schools (COBIS) qualifications.

Staff are extremely proud to work at the school and share a strong sense of belonging, confirming exceptionally high levels of staff morale and pride. Teachers described the school as supportive, collaborative, and professionally rewarding.

The quality of self-evaluation is excellent. Leaders use a wide range of evidence to evaluate performance accurately. The self-evaluation process demonstrates honesty, rigour and strong analytical insight.

Leaders at all levels promote equality and inclusion extremely successfully. Provision for pupils with SEND and EAL needs forms an integral part of curriculum planning and teaching practice. Targeted professional development strengthens staff expertise. No pupil is denied opportunities to be a part of the wider school community, for example, to take on leadership responsibilities. Leaders have also demonstrated responsiveness by redesigning key stage 4 pathways that better meet the needs and aspirations of different learners.

Safeguarding culture is strong. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures reflect both UK and KSA expectations. Staff understand their responsibilities and receive regular safeguarding training. Safeguarding is a clear strength of governance whose members describe safeguarding as central to all aspects of school life. Regular safeguarding meetings, scrutiny of recruitment

processes, single central record checks, safeguarding and health and safety walks, training audits and trend analysis demonstrate rigorous oversight and a strong safeguarding culture. These actions create a secure environment in which pupils state that they feel safe and supported.

Leaders gather the views of pupils, parents and staff systematically and respond constructively. Surveys, coffee mornings, consultations, governor learning walks and pupil voice activities influence decision-making. They listen actively and value opinions. Leaders have acted on feedback by refining communication systems, curriculum pathways, reading provision and outdoor learning opportunities. Parents express high levels of confidence in leadership, communication and safeguarding, with almost all reporting a clear understanding of the school's 'REACH' values.

Leaders and governors provide highly effective strategic direction, inspire staff and pupils and manage performance rigorously. They foster a culture of high expectations, ambition, well-being and continuous improvement.

Early Years Provision

The quality of the **early years'** provision is outstanding.

Children make outstanding progress from their starting points. Many arrive with varied formal education experiences. Most can follow simple directions but have limited communication and language skills and have not learnt to self-regulate. By the end of the early years, almost all achieve a good level of development (GLD) and are ready for the challenges of Year 1.

Over the past three years, GLD outcomes have improved from 72% in 2024 to 91% in 2026, significantly above England averages. The school achieves this through a well-planned, well-resourced curriculum aligned with the ELGs and continuous provision that promotes child-led exploration.

Specialist early years practitioners deliver targeted lessons that accelerate progress. A structured, systematic phonics programme develops early reading skills, builds vocabulary and promotes reading for pleasure. Daily targeted teaching develops fine motor skills, phonics, early reading and numeracy. Children build understanding through concrete and abstract exploration, while independent tasks encourage them to take risks. Children engage in exciting, purposeful learning based on high-quality literature. For example, four boys worked collaboratively to melt a large block of ice representing a frozen river from a favourite book. They tested different approaches to free the trapped animals and plants, demonstrating exceptional perseverance and problem-solving.

Teachers and learning assistants maintain high expectations and provide timely support. They create rich and varied learning environments across the EYFS, with high-quality activities linked to children's interests. They encourage children to explore, make independent choices, consolidate skills and extend their learning. Safe, well-equipped outdoor areas effectively support the development of children's gross motor skills.

Leaders and practitioners closely monitor continuous provision to assess children's progress and use these assessments to review the curriculum. Significant achievements are regularly shared

with parents through the school's online platform. Parents find this supportive because it enables them to support their child at home.

Leadership of the early years is outstanding. Leaders work closely with practitioners to identify innovative approaches and adapt the curriculum to children's needs. They demonstrate a good understanding of Year 1 literacy and numeracy expectations and ensure that the EYFS curriculum builds children's confidence and readiness for the next stage.

Sixth-Form Provision

The quality of the **sixth-form** provision is outstanding.

Sixth-form provision has consistently grown year on year, with further growth expected. The school predominantly offers this provision to existing students resulting in high retention rates, and those joining from schools within the group. The school applies rigorous academic criteria when determining entry requirements for most subjects, resulting in outstanding levels of students' attainment overall that is significantly above England averages.

Outstanding sixth-form leadership ensures that the culture is welcoming and inclusive, with students' welfare and progression a strength of the provision. Students, including those who are new to the school, appreciate the strong pastoral and academic support that they receive, with some taking examinations a year earlier than planned. The school has high expectations for students, which are supported and actively encouraged by parents.

The curriculum has evolved over the previous three years and now offers BTEC routes which continue to grow. For example, in addition to the current business and sport options, engineering, computing and applied science are being considered. These additions have been informed by detailed analysis of students' destinations after key stage 4, enabling the school to provide pathways that fully prepare students for progression to vocational undergraduate programmes. The flexibility within the curriculum allows students to combine vocational and academic programmes, providing them with a highly focused programme of study, enabling the routine development of students' mathematics and English skills.

Careers advice is highly valued by students. This is provided by a dedicated advisor who develops students' awareness of progression options available, including the academic and personal requirements of individual global universities. The school supports students by facilitating university fairs, visits and inviting former pupils to share their experiences, helping to shape high ambitions. Work experience at the end of Year 12 provides valuable insight into employment and helps students prepare for future career choices. Almost all students progress to universities around the world.

Students routinely develop their leadership skills by being offered opportunities to undertake roles such as head boy or girl and also form part of the students' council. The student-led eco-committee has recently supported the sustainability of the school, by enhancing recycling opportunities.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

British International School Riyadh (BISR) Al Waha campus meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country laws. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards in paragraphs 2(2)(d)(ii) and 5(b)(vi). BISR Al Waha campus encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, and religion or belief, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

What the school could do to improve further

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

There are gender differences in attainment and progress across the school with girls achieving less well than boys in mathematics and science, and boys achieving less well than girls in writing and English-related subjects. Leaders should analyse these differences systematically and adapt teaching to respond to identified barriers to learning. By narrowing these gender gaps, leaders can ensure boys and girls fulfil their potential in all subjects across the curriculum.

Summary of inspection judgements

The quality of education

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall quality of education	x			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	x			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	x			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	x			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	x			
The behaviour of pupils	x			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	x			

Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	x			

School Details

Name of school	**British International School Riyadh (BISR) Al Waha campus**
Type of school	**Inclusive, co-educational, not for profit**
Date school opened	**(1979) August 2025**
Age range of pupils	**3 to 18**
Gender of pupils	**Mixed**
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	**1,850**
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	**n/a**
Annual fees (day pupils)	**50,568 to 111,172 SR**
Annual fees (boarders)	**n/a**
Address of school	**2822 Muhammad Ali Janah, Ghirnatah, Riyadh 13242**
Telephone number	**+966 (0) 9200 33963**
Email address	**kjones@bisr.com.sa**
Headteacher	**Karen Jones**
CEO of BISR	**Mr Nick Prince**

GLOSSARY

Achievement – Progress made by a pupil taking his/her individual circumstances and starting point into account.

Accreditation – The system whereby a school or similar organisation is assessed against agreed standards and if deemed as having achieved the standards required is provided with some form of official certification or recognition.

Accreditation Board – The body responsible for the strategic direction, operation and conduct of the accreditation service provided by Education Development Trust.

Assessment – The process of finding out how well pupils have learnt what they have been taught. It is a continuous process that occurs throughout the school year, using a variety of forms for different purposes.

Attainment – The level pupils reach, usually measured by reference to benchmarks, such as test and examination results.

British Schools Overseas Inspection (BSO) – Inspection framework and standards defined by the DfE for British schools overseas to opt to be inspected against.

Education Development Trust – Formerly CfBT Education Trust, we are one of the world's leading not-for-profit education companies providing a range of education services in the UK and internationally.

Central Support Team – Personnel based in Education Development Trust Head Office who are responsible for the administration of the various educational services provided to international schools.

Combined or Joint Visit – a BSO Inspection visit combined with an ISQM accreditation or re-accreditation visit conducted at the request of the school. This will be carried out concurrently with reference to both frameworks and sets of standards. Some of the standards against which the school will be inspected are common, but some of the BSO standards relate to the British nature of the school.

Cycle of Inspection – The period of three years between BSO inspection visits.

Curriculum – The educational programmes or courses of study taught by a school including subjects and activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extra-curricular enrichment programmes.

Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) – Private schools in Dubai are required by the authority to be inspected. A joint KHDA/BSO inspection may be requested through the KHDA's strategic partner, Education Development Trust.

Leadership – Leadership at any level (for example principals/headteachers, governors, board members, team/subject leaders) involves setting direction, empowering staff to work effectively, creating a suitable environment for learning, and setting an example to others. It entails different skills from management.

Learning – Pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

Management – The practical business of running a school, department or aspect of a school's work in an efficient and useful way.

Ofsted – The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England and is responsible for school inspections in England.

Progress – The gains in learning made between two points in time. A pupil can be described as having made insufficient progress, satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress in relation to his/her starting point.

School self-evaluation – The identification by the staff of a school of its strengths and weaknesses across the key aspects of its performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of the school's work on the outcomes for pupils.

Standards –

(1) The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils and a school demonstrates at a particular point in time.

(2) The evaluation requirements to be used in the inspection of British Schools Overseas.

Teaching – All activities undertaken by the teacher aimed at enhancing pupils' learning.

With 50 years' experience of delivering education services worldwide Education Development Trust's vision is a world in which all lives are transformed through excellent education. We strive to improve education for learners globally, grounding our work in research and evidence. We support leaders to raise standards, improve school performance, develop great teachers and open career pathways.

Teaching and learning are the essence of what we do and we have more than 2,500 staff around the world designing and delivering services. Education Development Trust staff support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train.

We have built a reputation for providing high-quality educational support and inspection services. One of our main aims is to improve schools through high-quality school inspections. We have strong values and a clear vision to deliver a world class inspection service that will directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and care of all children and young people in settings, schools and colleges.

Education Development Trust first delivered inspections on behalf of Ofsted in 1993. Since then we have developed our experience and expertise in the field of school evaluation and improvement to become one of the UK's first major providers of inspection services.

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